

Film as a Medium for Improving EFL Students' English:

A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Using film as the content material for teaching and learning in the foreign language classroom is becoming popular. This thesis reports the first full-scale and in-depth investigation on the relationship between film and English learning, with reference to an English language course named *English Through Film* offered through the English Language Teaching Unit at The Chinese University in Hong Kong. By employing triangulated methods of data collection—naturalistic classroom observation, questionnaire survey, personal semi-structured interviews with the instructor and students, and text analysis of handouts and student papers, this study provides a realistic account as well as pedagogical implications on the use of film in the foreign language classroom.

The results indicated that prior to taking this course, students were already aware of the possibility of improving their English skills through watching films. Students reported they had benefited from the authentic and natural language, the English captions, and the foreign culture presented in films. With reference to the course, this study demonstrated that the students' learning process was heavily influenced by various unpredictable and uncontrollable factors, such as the role of the instructor, the students' own background, personal interests, and language proficiency, the student-centered approach, the choice of film and the foreign culture presented, the lecture material, workload and other miscellaneous classroom factors. Nevertheless, results indicated that through this course the students made improvements in familiarity with foreign culture, presentation skills, critical and analytical abilities, listening and leading and participating in discussions and presentations.

This study suggests that teachers should be aware of the differences in students' cinematic sophistication, language proficiency, cultural orientation, and preferences, and to provide appropriate guidance and support, such as reference notes and pre-viewing activities. Film is a rich and valuable resource for EFL learning, given it is handled with care and caution.

論文摘要

近年，「英語教學」採用電影作為教材一方法已日漸普遍，故本研究乃專從電影與英語學習兩者關係作出深入探討。研究對象為中文大學英語中心之「看電影學英文」一課程。而研究方法為全面的探討，包括問卷調查、課堂觀察、老師及學生訪問及學生功課之研究，希望藉此了解及評估看電影學英語的實際成效。

研究所得的結果可歸納為下列三方面：一、學生在未修讀這個課程前，已意識到看電影有助於學英語。看電影的過程中，確能學到許多地道、純正的日常會話、字彙，也認識了許多外國文化。二、看電影雖能學到英語，但研究又發現在學習過程中會有許多變數，這些變數是無法預知或控制的；例如導師的教學方法、學生本身的英語水平、接受能力、個人興趣、「以學生為本」教學方式、電影類型、功課等等都是。三、雖然有第二點的變數，但研究又發現學生始終能藉看電影而於英語聆聽及會話方面有所改進。此外，更能加深對外國文化的認識、思考及批判能力、報告及專題研究的技考。

總結以上三點研究結果，老師可得到一個「英語教學」的原則：老師必須清楚了解學生的語文能力、接受程度、文化定位、價值取向、興趣等，方可因材施教，在課前活動和資料提供方面作出適當的處理，才能令學生得到最大的裨益。

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In 1910 Thomas Edison wrote: “I believe that the motion picture is destined to revolutionize our education system, and that in a few years it will supplant largely, if not entirely, the use of textbooks in our schools” (quoted in Madsen, 1974, p.441). What Edison prophesized obviously did not happen immediately or completely. It is true, however, that educational films and television programs have been introduced into schools, businesses, industry, and armed forces since the 1910s (Madsen, 1974). Nevertheless, it had taken another 60 years for teachers and educators to notice and make use of the video pedagogy in language classrooms.

Ever since the 1970s, video has been introduced into the foreign language classroom. Over the past 30 years, although much has been written on the theory of video/film and second language (L2) acquisition, not many formal research studies have been conducted on the matter. Nevertheless, film has become an increasingly popular teaching material in the ESL/EFL classroom. Among Asian countries, Japan has seen the most flourishing amount of articles written on film and ESL/EFL (Cady, 1995; Casanave & Freedman, 1995; Fujishima, 1995; Furmanovsky, 1997; Hardy, 1995; Liversidge, 2000; Redfield, 1999; Ryan, 1998; Shimizu, 1995; Takahashi, 1995; Tatsuki, 1997c, 1998, 1999, 2000).

Today, Hong Kong is a postmodern city bombarded by popular culture and its teenagers grow up in the era of electronic media. Film, being one of the most popular forms of entertainment in people’s lives, is highly accessible everywhere. Foreign films, especially Hollywood’s, can be found in cinemas, on local and cable English TV channels, in VCD/DVD shops (in both original and pirated versions), in public and university libraries, and on the internet available for download. However, most

people treat films only as a form of entertainment, and only a few realize the possibility of using film as the medium for learning in the L2 classroom.

At the tertiary level, the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) at The Chinese University of Hong Kong has been offering an English language learning course using film as the content material for about ten years. The course, now called *ELT 3104: English Through Film*, has gone through several name changes throughout these years. Pierson (1992), the founder of the course, claimed that the use of film in ESL/EFL teaching was still in its experimental stage, and urged practitioners to make good use of the medium for language teaching. Recently, Chapple & Curtis (2000) conducted a small-scale study based on the course, employing an end-of-course questionnaire survey, on the students' beliefs about their improvements in English abilities after taking this course. To the best of my knowledge, this was one of the two formal research studies done on film and ESL in Hong Kong so far, the other being a study on a film discussion project at The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) (Christopher & Ho, 1996).

In order to investigate film and ESL in a more in-depth analysis, I conducted a full-scale research study on the course ELT 3104 during the Fall term, 2001. The study, reported in this thesis, was an expansion of the idea from Chapple & Curtis' (2000) study; the data collection was achieved using the "triangulation" concept—to view the same case from different perspectives. The methods included pre- and post-course questionnaire survey, naturalistic classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and text analysis on lesson and presentation handouts and students' term papers. A pilot study was conducted in the summer of 2001, focusing on the summer session of the same course. The findings are presented and analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5.

In this study, three main research questions (revised) are addressed:

- 1) What was the role of film in helping students from the course ELT 3104 improve their English language skills, according to their past experience?
- 2) With reference to the course ELT 3104, what were the factors affecting the learning process? How did they affect the learning process, both positively and negatively?
- 3) How effective was the course ELT 3104 in improving students' English language skills?

1.2 Significance of the study

This is the first attempt on a full scale, in-depth research study on the role of film as a medium for enhancing L2 learners' English abilities. It is also the first study employing the "triangulation" concept in the data collection method. Most past research studies and articles written on film and ESL/EFL were written from the teachers' points of view; rarely was student responses taken into account. Those student responses generated from a questionnaire survey could not give a full picture of the situation in regard, as they were mostly impressionistic and their comments were not followed up in say, personal interviews. Thus, Chapple & Curtis (2000) urged for more in-depth research to be conducted. This study does not intend to provide a perfect answer to using film as the content material for English language teaching and learning in the L2 classroom, but it does intend to better illuminate the situation and give pedagogical implications to teachers, educators, researchers, and students who are, or are not yet, interested in this medium.

1.3 Organization of this thesis

This thesis consists of six Chapters. Chapter 1 offers a brief introduction to the background and rationale of the study. The research questions and significance of the study are also provided. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature in the area of film and ESL teaching/learning, and the focus is put on the use of film in the L2 classroom. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in the study. It starts with a discussion of the qualitative case study approach, followed by a detailed outline of the methods of data collection. The results of a pilot study conducted are also offered at the end of the Chapter. Chapter 4 is a presentation of the summaries of this study's findings. That includes results obtained from the questionnaire survey, naturalistic classroom observation, personal interviews, and text analysis of handouts and papers. Following is Chapter 5, which offers a thorough and in-depth analysis and discussion on the results. It starts with the discussion of the revision of research questions, followed by three sections directly providing answers to the three research questions respectively. The concluding Chapter 6 offers pedagogical implications based on the study as well as the limitations and suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Video has been introduced into the foreign language classroom since the mid-1970s, and has provided students with “the raw material necessary to simulate or replicate a real-life immersion experience in both the target language and the target culture” (Garza, 1996, p.3).

Although formal research in this regard has been lacking even until today, the number of articles written on video and film in the language classroom has been tremendous. This literature review provides a detailed look at books and articles written on the theory and brief history of video and language acquisition, its usage in the EFL classroom, the selection and preparation of suitable film materials, and arriving back at the local Hong Kong context in the end. A brief touch on the use of film in the L1 classroom is also made for reference and comparison.

2.2 Theory: video and L2 acquisition

Video is a very broad concept encompassing different electronic, visual medium formats such as television soap opera, feature films, commercials, documentaries, newscasts, Music Television (MTV), sports shows, animation, as well as educational and instructional videos specially tailored for language learning purposes. Although my focus here is mainly on film in the EFL classroom, the basic video pedagogy still applies in this regard, as film is also one of the video types.

Over the past thirty years, much has been written on the theory of video/film and L2 acquisition. Many researchers and authors have developed video/film and language acquisition theories based on Krashen’s “comprehensible input” theory (Altman, 1989; Cady, 1995; Cheung, 2001; Goldman, 1996; Hess & Jasper, 1995;

Holden, 2000; Kasper & Singer, 2001; Redfield, 1999; Tudor, 1987). The theory claims that simply by reading and listening to comprehensible input, that is, target language speech or texts that include challenging yet comprehensible portions, even beginners can make rapid progress in their ability to understand and eventually produce the language (Altman, 1989, p.2). Altman, author of the book *Video connection: Integrating video into language teaching*, argues for the video pedagogy over the traditional language approach, stating that video not only has the capacity to provide extremely faithful renditions of the world associated with the target language, but also to exemplify how often authentic language ignores prescriptive grammar rules (Altman, 1989, pp. 10, 15). Altman has identified six fundamental aspects of language, “the six S’s,” that must be addressed in the language-teaching process: sounds (diversity of regional accents), segmentation, semantics (cultural variety), syntax (grammar), systems of discourse (discourse patterns and rules), and systems of culture. Video materials, he argues, are able to provide all the six S’s for language learning. More recently, in *Film communication theory and practice in teaching English as a foreign language*, author David Wood (1995) offers a most comprehensive discussion and evaluation on the use of film in the L2 classroom, including the history of video technology, rationale behind using film, considerations in choice of materials, suggested classroom activities, copy right concerns, and case studies of how 3 entire feature films can be taught using the teaching techniques discussed.

Closely associated with the “comprehensible input” theory is the concept of authenticity. Authors have agreed that authenticity is the key essence in ESL/EFL (Altman, 1989; Garza, 1996; Stempleski & Arcario, 1993; Wood, 1995). Wood (1995) states clearly the benefits of using film as an authentic learning source: “While

video movies may be just fiction dressed in reality, and should therefore not be mistaken for life, they offer a linguistically valuable alternative to living in a full-time English environment” (p.14). Meanwhile, “authentic” sources have been defined by Garza (1996) as video materials that are originally produced for native audiences, and written “to convey relevant situations, depict believable characters, and use authentic language” (p.7). Likewise, Stempleski & Arcario (1993) claim that authentic materials are programs which are designed for entertainment rather than for language teaching (p.7). For students who have not yet visited the foreign country or who may not have the opportunity to do so, video input of this nature may be the only means for them to experience anything like the fully contextualized non-academic language interaction among native speakers of the target language (Tudor, 1985).

Besides providing comprehensible input and language authenticity, film/video can also trigger learners’ interest and motivation in the learning process. Because of its wide appeal, film is found to have been a prime motivational force in studying English (Wood, 1995). Hess & Jasper (1995) state that films work as an effective language teaching tool because “the visual medium attracts and engages” and “it stimulates the imagination and hooks the senses with the promise of extended enjoyment “ (p.7). Learners are therefore strongly motivated to engage themselves in language learning based not on extrinsic factors, but on intrinsic ones as the process becomes fruitful and fun at the same time. As Krashen has claimed, “heavy movie goers, those who attended more than three films per week read more books and read higher quality books” (quoted in Hess & Jasper, 1995, p.7). In other words, the emotional impact of film serves to stimulate responsive engagement, which is at the heart of authentic communication, even though it is characteristically absent in the traditional English classroom (Shea, 1995). Similarly, Vaughan (1999), focusing on

the bigger umbrella of “multimedia,” states that the use of this newly integrated technology can make the language learning process involving and motivating by providing an exciting, dynamic and autonomous learning environment.

However, despite all the fervent claims of the enormous beneficial effects that video materials can bring to the L2 classroom, the popularity has still led to surprisingly little research in this area. Very few published and legally available support materials of a genuine pedagogical nature exist for teaching EFL with movies (Wood, 1995, p.11). Fortunately, “the absence of definitive research into the effectiveness of authentic video in second language teaching, however, has not deterred educators from advocating its use,” as evidenced by the growing numbers of articles written on the topic (Stempleski & Arcario, 1993, p.8).

2.3 Selection and preparation of lesson materials

It takes time and careful preparation to arrange a film/video to be used in class. From the selection of appropriate content materials to the mastering of the VCR requires careful planning and good technical knowledge and skills. Many books and articles have been written on different issues in this regard, such as the criteria for selection, guidelines for teachers in teaching with video/film, and videotape copyright laws (Altman, 1989; Cady, 1995; Chapple, 1999; Farrell, 1998; Furmanovsky, 1997; Gareis, 1997; Garza, 1996; Goette, 1992; Kajornboon, 1995; Kelly, 1985; Nathanson, 1992; Stempleski & Arcario, 1993; Tatsuki, 1997a, 1997b, 2000; Voller & Widdows, 1993; Wood, 1995; Williamson & Vincent, 1999).

Tatsuki (1997b) presents three main problems with movies (the grading, incorrect samples of speech, and irrelevancy to the learner’s language learning needs) often cited by the people objecting to this medium as an EFL teaching tool, and gives

rebuttals and explanations accordingly. She claims that by careful selection of movies based on learner characteristics, learning characteristics, and thematic characteristics, these problems can be readily avoided (Tatsuki, 1997b, p.59). Meanwhile, Stempleski & Arcario (1993) suggest several factors which affect comprehensibility and thus should be taken into account when choosing the appropriate materials. The factors are: degree of visual support, clarity of picture and sound, density of language, speech delivery, language content, and language level. Moreover, interest, appropriateness of content, length and independence of sequences, and availability of related materials should also be considered. Exotic accents, mistaken identities, and topic comedies should be avoided in beginner's classroom for they are too difficult to understand without considerable L2 knowledge (Cady, 1995). In addition, based on her own experience, Goette (1992) urges teachers to transcribe the dialogue of the film beforehand. For example, when trying to transcribe *A Room with a View*, Goette realized that it was a visual film instead of a verbal film, and was therefore totally unsuitable for her teaching purposes (Goette, 1992, p.42).

On the contrary, however, Gareis suggests teachers not to “opt for safe material” such as old films, G-rated motives, or TV programs. For these “safe materials” may have drawbacks: the subject matter may not be relevant or interesting to adolescent and adult students and therefore fail to inspire optimal involvement and language learning (Gareis, 1997, p.20). Instead, she offers caveats for selecting more “sophisticated-content” or controversial films such as those concerned with sex, nudity, homosexuality, abortion, substance abuse, violence, and gore, and then suggests classroom activities to be conducted based on these issue-problematic films. While films with explicit sex, gratuitous violence, and excessive profanity should probably be ruled out, films with brief and restrained scenes of the above can still be

shown provided they are approached with caution. It is also important that teachers consider the cultural and religious background of the students as well as their maturity level and cinematic sophistication. For instance, it would be too radical to show films with sex scenes in an EFL classroom in a fundamentalist Muslim country (Gareis, 1997, p.23). Based on the controversial issues in films, classroom activities such as initiating topics on cross-cultural comparison, film theory, morality and ethics, etc., can also be carried out among reasonably advanced EFL learners (Gareis, 1997).

After selecting appropriate film materials to be shown in the L2 classroom, the teacher needs to design how the lesson should run and what the students would learn. Many authors offer guidelines for teachers in preparing for the screening as well as pre- and post-viewing activities to be carried out in class (Farrell, 1998; Kajornboon, 1995; Kelly, 1985; Nathanson, 1992; Stempleski & Arcario, 1993; Tatsuki, 1997a, 1997b). Most important of all, teachers must be very clear of what their objectives are. The broad aim is viewing comprehension, or language learning, instead of entertainment (Kelly, 1985, p.55). For the videotape is a double-edged sword, as Nathanson (1997) states, “misused videotape material can become a tedious and nonproductive classroom experience or a sterile routine” (p.88).

2.4 Film/video in the L1 classroom

The aim of using film/video in the L1 classroom is not so much for language acquisition but for other purposes. At the primary and elementary school level, film/video has been used for the purpose of instruction (showing how to do something), educational (moral values), and historical (Madsen, 1974). At the secondary/high school level, film/video is mostly used to train students’ narrative writing skills (Gallagher, 1986), analytical and critical thinking skills towards the

media, society, history, and culture (Brooks, 1998; Cates, 1990; Considine & Haley, 1992; Fehlman, 1996; Guista, 1992; Hobbs, 1998; Krueger, 1998; Leland, 1994), and to complement literary works (Fehlman, 1996; Lynch, 1986).

2.5 Film in the L2 classroom

Although almost no formal research has been done on the use of film in L2 classrooms, many articles have chronicled the teachers' experience of using the medium in their L2 classrooms. These articles offer valuable insights on the application of film in various creative ways to facilitate language learning. Some teachers use film for the improvement of just one language aspect, while others use film for the purpose of raising students' entire English abilities. In fact, as early as 1971, Morley & Lawrence had already advocated the "use of documentary films for the improvement of aural comprehension, speaking, writing, and reading in English as a second language" (p.117). This article was a report on the development of a film program offered through the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan. Ever since then, many articles have surfaced, chronicling the beneficial results of using film in teaching ESL/EFL.

2.5.1 Listening comprehension

Many authors have demonstrated how film viewing can improve L2 students' listening comprehension, with reference to their own teaching experiences in the L2 classroom (Doye, 1998; Farrell, 1998; Holden, 2000; Kelly, 1985; Linder, 2000; Linke, 1981; Morley & Lawrence, 1971, 1972; Tatsuki, 1997, 1998). In Morley & Lawrence's report (1971, 1972), films were chosen based on two purposes: linguistic and informational. The former aimed to provide students with realistic

listening/speaking practice, while the latter with up-to-date, relevant information about contemporary affairs (Morley & Lawrence, 1972, p.103). Repeated showings of the same film is also recommended to provide students with the chance to “re-listen” to it—to get more out of the film and to reinforce vocabulary (Morley & Lawrence, 1972, p.104). Doyle (1998) also suggests reading reviews of the films prior to its screening so that students can have a general idea of what the films are about.

On the other hand, Kelly (1985) redefines the concept “listening comprehension” as “viewing comprehension.” He states that “the verbal element of the message is conveyed in a discourse package that includes the paralinguistic features of intonation (stress, key, pitch and voice quality, volume etc.), as well as visual features such as proxemics, kinesics, and the setting” (Kelly, 1985, p.53). Likewise, Holden (2000) claims that “visual information facilitates understanding of unfamiliar language” and that “learners are encouraged to ‘listen with their eyes’ as we do in life” (p.41). Kelly (1985) claims that the development of comprehension skills is better achieved with video sequences where real speakers are presented in unscripted and spontaneous interaction or exposition. Therefore, he advocates the use of off-air recordings, talks, documentary films, interviews, and demonstrations etc. instead of conversation from TV drama and comedy. Yet, not all authors favor the use of unscripted materials. Linder (2000), instead, suggests choosing parts from scripted “wholes” such as segments of films, television series, or sports broadcasts, or segments that last only a few minutes, such as commercials, music videos, or news items.

There are, however, still many authors who prefer to use the full length (60-120 min.) commercial video-taped movies spread over a term of 10-15 weeks to teach listening comprehension (Linke, 1981; Voller & Widdows, 1993). Viewing the film in

chunks of approximately fifteen minutes and choosing points where the story breaks naturally, students are provided with the chance of notetaking and discussion on that particular scene/part (Voller & Widdows, 1993). Meanwhile, in using the film *The Graduate* in his advanced ESOL classes at the Language Institute of Japan, Linke's (1981) main objective was to get students to listen for ideas instead of individual words. Moreover, students were also trained to be accustomed to reduced and omitted speeches, such as:

Reduction—Mrs. Robinson: “Whaduhya wanna drink?” = What do you want to drink?

Omission—Mrs. Robinson: “Ya wanna geddit now?” = Do you want to get it now?

Such reduction and omission in speech are commonly used in the real world of the target culture. Using the same film, *The Graduate*, and also *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Tatsuki (1998) identified 10 factors (“hot spots”) contributing to listening break down (“slip of the ear”) when viewing the films based on the investigation of student logs over a course of three years. She then suggested remedies and pre-viewing activities to overcome each of these problems. Therefore, familiarizing students with these “everyday” speeches improves their listening comprehension of other films and also in real life.

Listening comprehension can also be enhanced by using TV soaps (Farrell, 1998). TV soaps, claims Farrell, shown daily or weekly, provide continuity which would “allow the individual student room for self-correction, self-pacing, and increasing familiarity with the show’s characters, setting, mood” (Farrell, 1998, p.43). He also stresses that the goal of any ESF/EFL language program should be learner independence, which can be achieved by TV soaps, which give students the

opportunity to continue watching the programs even after the class/semester has been completed.

2.5.2 Oral skills

There have been claims that the listening and speaking skills are very closely related, and that good listening comprehension facilitates effective oral expression (Fujishima, 1995; Morley & Lawrence, 1972;). For the students, the oral experience of pronouncing phrases and words with the resultant moto-kinesthetic as well as auditory stimulation can be an important aid to their recognition of the words and phrases the next time they hear them (Morley & Lawrence, 1972). Films have generally been used to trigger oral discussion in the L2 classroom. However, oral practice of the target language may not be easy for all L2 learners. In particular, Asian L2 learners were found to feel more comfortable in writing their thoughts and opinions in English than articulating them orally, as they usually seem reluctant and unsure in responding. To help students overcome this problem, Fujishima (1995) first let students write out their ideas and thoughts of the film in a journal, which acts as a means to crystallize ideas, and to give them “a self-constructed scaffold which will later support oral discussion and contributions to small groups as well as large class interaction” (p.8). In encouraging students to express their ideas orally, the role of the teacher in leading discussions is essential. By doing things like noticing ideas, asking for more explanation, extending important implications, and pressing for clarification, the teacher is engaging with students as “authentic partner in a joint, scaffolded construction of talk” (Fujishima, 1995, p.8). Quebbermann (1991), also in favor of teacher-led discussion activities, suggests a number of oral activities to be carried out after watching the film. They are: general discussion of the film, summary, small and

large-group roleplays, and grammar structures. However, these activities seem to require less thinking and analysis on the content of the film than Fujishima's journal-writing-and-then-discussion activities, and are therefore more suitable for beginners. Another suggestion for the advanced ESL classroom is to capitalize on ESL students' visual literacy. By using silent films, students are encouraged to "author their own conversational texts, using English creatively to develop a personally meaningful interchange between characters that fits within the action viewed on the screen" (Kasper & Singer, 2001, p.20).

2.5.3 Writing

The ways to articulate ideas and responses to film is to express them either by talking or writing. While oral practice aims to improve students' language fluency in using English to express themselves, writing programs aim to develop general fluency in exposition. Many authors have suggested different writing activities complementing film watching (Cook, 1995; Kasper, 2000; Kasper & Singer, 2001; Morley & Lawrence, 1971; Quebbermann, 1991; Tatsuki, 1997b). Morley & Lawrence (1971) suggest starting the writing program by teaching narrative writing, for it is easiest for students to just identify and describe the content in the film. From narration, students can then proceed to writing classification, comparison, contrast, cause and effect, and definition based on films. In the writing program, students are required to combine and use skills such as active recall, data manipulation, question-framing, extrapolation, and synthesis. The students may also be asked to write on topics which demand a combination of information from the films and from their own personal store of data and experience. This kind of writing program, however, is only suitable for more advanced L2 students (Morley & Lawrence, 1971). Likewise,

Tatsuki (1997b) suggests students concentrate on organizing their thoughts first in paragraphs and then in short essays with minor emphasis on form-focused elements. Since movie themes are thematically, critically, and structurally complex, she advises teachers to concentrate on one movie/theme per term (Tatsuki, 1997b).

Meanwhile, over the past several years, Cook (1995) has been using a clip of the first four minutes of the film *Top Gun* in his freshman university composition ESOL classes in the U.S. to stimulate ideas and to develop observation skills of the students, which can then be used to enhance their essays. As a result, Cook found that the students' observation skills strengthened with practice and also led to more sharply defined theses and better organized and supported essays (Cook, 1995).

On the other hand, Kasper (2000) has demonstrated how film imagery can be integrated into a discipline-based high intermediate ESL course in a college in New York. She chronicles her use of documentary films to teach academic writing skills in three separate disciplines: linguistics, environmental science, and anthropology. Implications are for ESL students, who must develop proficiency in both linguistic and academic skills to succeed in college. By establishing strong connections between discipline-based visual and verbal media, ESL students are equipped with the skills to construct meaning, thus leading them to increased levels of English language literacy (Kasper, 2000).

Responses on the part of the students from both Cook and Kasper's classes were overwhelmingly positive. Students from Kasper's class say that after they see the films, "it is easier to write about the topic because the film gives extra material to talk about in their essays" (Kasper, 2000, p.57). Cook's students also reported that this observation skill is useful for their other classes as well as in relationships and jobs (Cook, 1995).

2.5.4 Critical thinking

A big issue in ESL writing is the concept of critical thinking. Due to the limited scope of the thesis topic, I will only focus on the critical thinking skills applying to film. Pally (1997), who has reviewed past literature and researches on the concept of critical thinking, defines it as the knowledge to “extract, question, and evaluate the central points and methodology of a range of material, and construct responses using the conventions of academic/expository writing” (Pally, 1997, p.299). Pally argues that through sustained content studying, that is, the study over one area over a period of time, students’ critical thinking skills can be greatly enhanced. In fact, she and other authors claim that content-based ESL has the beneficial effects of raising students’ motivation and interest in the target culture (Chapple, 1999; Chapple & Curtis, 2000; Pally, 1997). Students in Pally’s course “Film & Society” learnt to explore and relate films with familial, social, cultural, and political issues. They wrote on films such as *Interview with a Vampire*, *The Untouchables*, *Edward Scissorhands*, *Taxi Driver*, *The Age of Innocence*, *Fatal Attraction*, and *Wall St* (p.303). However, one weakness of Pally’s article is that it spends a big portion discussing the history and definitions of critical thinking and its relation to sustained content study, and does not provide a more in-depth analysis of the students’ written works.

On the other hand, Bassham & Nardone (1997) have successfully demonstrated to students that critical thinking and reasoning abilities are of significant personal and public value by using Oliver Stone’s award-winning film *JFK* which presents an alternative explanation to the assassination incident. At first, virtually all of the students agreed with Oliver Stone’s claim in the film that the assassination of JFK was a direct result of a secret conspiracy. Gradually, though, through group discussion, writing assignments, projects and presentations (which included looking

up historical evidences), students, to their own surprise, discovered that Stone's version is in fact terribly misleading, and is more fiction than serious history. Consequently, students "see how easy it is to be fooled by slick media presentations and artful flimflam" (Bassham & Nardone, 1997, p.11). Students are thus more convinced of the importance and essentialness in applying critical thinking to the mass media and to, eventually, anything that happens in the real world, in order not to be misled by falsehood.

Besides full-length feature films, "short silent films" can also be used to facilitate the development of students' critical thinking skills. Kasper & Singer (2001) demonstrated this through the use of D. W. Griffith's *The Painted Lady* (1912) to provoke discussion and stimulate critical analyses of discipline-based themes and issues such as social psychology, health, personal development, and cultural norms (Kasper & Singer, 2001, p.18).

It is, however, not easy to teach critical thinking concepts among L2 students, for they are saddled with the additional burden of incorrect grammar, syntax, semantics, and other linguistic mistakes. Williamson & Vincent's book (1999) aims to serve as a beginner's guide to film interpretation and discussion for high intermediate and advanced students. Offering an excellent arrangement of materials, this book introduces students to different film genres and issues, such as classic films, feminism & the feminist films, discrimination, romantic comedy, suspense films, and Hitchcock films. Students' analytical and critical thinking skills are trained through learning to identify formulaic conventions, unique techniques, ideas, and concepts in film. One big merit of the book is that its explanation of film critique techniques and special terms is done in a plain and easy-to-understand manner, which makes it easier for both students and teachers to follow. On the other hand, Chapple (1999) describes

some alternative content-based approaches to the teaching of feature films based on an elective course she taught at The Chinese University of Hong Kong: language-based, theme-based, aesthetic, genre-based, literature-based, and theoretical (auteur, sociological, ideological, cultural studies, and post-colonial). However, Chapple stresses that these approaches and activities are meant for relatively advanced students.

The articles analyzed so far are all written on the teachers' personal experience in the L2 classroom and their perspectives. A rare exception is Shimizu (1995), who recounts her experience of developing critical thinking skills by taking an intensive English course for high level English students which used films as the lesson material. After this course, Shimizu describes herself as having changed from an "indifferent viewer" to a "critical viewer," and her English writing ability improved greatly as well (Shimizu, 1995, p.43). Yet, not all students agree with Shimizu. Another student from the same course, Yamada, is strongly in favor of "reading" instead of "watching films" in fostering critical thinking. She claims that reading requires active involvement on the part of the reader such as intellectual engagement, imagination, and interpretation. Adaptation films, on the other hand, are just the "director's interpretation of the book," and therefore restrict the readers' imagination and interpretation based on the original text alone (Yamada, 1995). However, Yamada might have been too one-sided on this issue. It seems she has only been commenting about adaptation films with regard to the deviations from their original literary versions, and not films of an original screenplay, which should have been, otherwise, evaluated differently.

2.5.5 Language: Vocabulary, idioms, slang

Films are obviously one method of enlarging students' vocabulary, for they not only contain vocabulary and terms pertaining to the film content, but also contemporary vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, slang, and dialects. Both dialogue and non-dialogue films can be used to help expand students' vocabulary size (Epstein, 1999; Goldman, 1996; Kasper & Singer, 2001; Linke, 1981; Morley & Lawrence, 1971; Tatsuki, 1999; Voller & Widdows, 1993). The composition teacher can devise vocabulary exercises which demand the manipulation of the most useful vocabulary items, both single words and phrases. However, students must be aware not to fall into the trap of memorizing vocabulary lists indiscriminately. Instead, they should choose for themselves the more appropriate and useful vocabulary to remember. With non-dialogue films, on the other hand, teachers can elicit questions about the words and phrases required to summarize or comment on the film (Morley & Lawrence, 1971).

Drawing on the same aim, Epstein (1999), while teaching a beginning-level grammar class at a university intensive English program in the U.S., used TV episodes of *Mr. Bean* to generate language and vocabulary exercises for the students. He claims that "With little or no dialogue and lots of physical comedy, these episodes provide fully comprehensible, very entertaining stories, as well as enjoyable material for language practice" (Epstein, 1999, p.41). Having the students retell the story, new vocabulary items were taught, and the students' narratives gathered by the teacher were then made into cloze exercises containing verbs, articles, prepositions, conjunctions, or transitional words and phrases. Activities focusing on adjectives and adverbs can also be done by examining Mr. Bean's hilariously exaggerated movements and facial expressions (Epstein, 1999, p.42). Concerning the students'

response, Mr. Bean “always gets a very high rating on the students’ course evaluations,” for “his humor seems to appeal to students from a wide range of cultures” (p.42).

Captioned television, whether it is situation comedy, cartoon, news, drama, or documentary, has also been claimed to improve ESOL students’ English vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, and reading comprehension (Goldman, 1996). For these students, reading the printed words of the actors they hear clarifies the often slurred, accented, or elided speech of TV dialogue, such as:

“Jeet yet?” = Did you eat yet?

“We had morneothers...” = We had more than the others...

“How’re ya gonna do it?” = How are you going to do it?

Goldman identifies three reasons for using captioned TV: to absorb large amounts of comprehensible input, to let L2 students learn in a familiar environment of reduced anxiety, and to acquire new vocabulary, idioms, and special terms (p.15). Regarding the choice of content, Goldman recommends showing situation comedies to adult intermediate- and advanced-level ESOL learners and cartoons to intermediate-level ESOL learners (pp.16-17).

2.5.6 Communicative performance

Video-based materials are said to be the facilitator of communicative performance, for they are “raw material necessary to simulate or replicate a real-life immersion experience in both the target language and the target culture” (Garza, 1996, p.3). As claimed by Lonergan (1984),

Video brings a slice of real life into the classroom. It presents the complete communicative situation. Language learners not only hear the dialogue, they also

see the participants in the surroundings where the communication takes place. This visual information not only leads to a fuller comprehension of the spoken language, but can also benefit learners in a number of other ways.

Likewise, Garza (1996) comments that “within the context of the video segment, much of the linguistic material, such as lexical meaning and usage, is made clear to the student” and that “social relationships and inherent behavior are contextualized visually so as to clarify intangible concepts such as emotion, disposition, demeanor, and tone” (p.3). In addition to offering a simulation of real life situations of the target culture, films also help develop communicative skills by providing a natural basis for conversation (Holden, 2000; Pierson, 1992; Tatsuki, 1997b). Films can hook students’ interests and provide them with high motivation to share their feelings and thoughts on the films with other students, therefore creating a “real” need to communicate, instead of communicating for the sake of “language learning.”

Another way of developing L2 learner’s communicative competence is by the “learning through doing” theory. Charge & Giblin’s article (1988) presents a rationale for the creative use of a video studio in the context of task-based communicative language teaching. It is claimed that the process of planning and filming sequences involves the learners in real communication tasks, which cannot be completed successfully unless the necessary linguistic skills have been mastered; and the goal of producing something provides motivational force (Charge & Giblin, 1988, p.282). The aims of engaging L2 students in real “hands-on” film production experience was threefold: (1) to equip students with basic technical knowledge and vocabulary to write, film, and edit a short sequence of film; (2) to make use of task-based lessons to teach students the necessary vocabulary and language patterns needed to cope with the video tasks entailed in film production; and (3) to produce a short film with

students taking a major role in the work involved (Charge & Giblin, 1988, p.283). Results revealed that students who began the course unsure of their ability to operate effectively in a foreign language gained in confidence week by week and emerged as successful members of a production team. Through the collaborative process of actually producing the directing short films themselves, the students practiced and improved their English “almost without realizing it” (Charge & Giblin, 1988, p.286). However, this method of teaching is probably more effective among a class of students who are from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. If the context is set in, say, a place where most of the students’ native language is the same, such as Cantonese for Hong Kong students, these students may be prone to using Cantonese to communicate during film production instead of using English. In contrast, if the context is set in, for instance, the U.S., where EFL students are from different countries all over the world, they must communicate in English for this is the only “lingua franca” among them.

Learning can also be achieved by “collaboration and teaching” (Casanave & Freedman, 1995). This film presentation course offered at a Japanese University aimed to “involve students in an intellectual and communicative activity that requires complex thinking, organizational and presentational skills, and language” (Casanave & Freedman, 1995, p.38). Although students did improve their communicative skills through film presentations, there was still room for improvement. For the authors found that the students’ concepts outstripped their linguistic skills, thus rendering some parts of the presentations unclear and weak. Questionnaire surveys and interviews indicate that 80% of the students said they had learned presentation skills and felt more confident speaking, while only 15% of them said they had learned critical thinking skills (Casanave & Freedman, 1995).

2.5.7 Cross-cultural issues

It is widely claimed that cross-cultural comparison exercises in the L2 classroom can raise students' awareness towards the target language and culture (Kasper & Singer, 2001; Lebedko, 1999; Linke, 1981; Pierson, 1992; Tudor, 1987). Linke (1981), for instance, used *The Graduate* to explain Western culture representations, especially American, social structures and mores. Although the viewing of films/videos alone will not lead to societal competence in the target language, it is certainly one means of furthering its development (Tudor, 1987, p.206). In addition, students can also learn to observe cultural patterns, identify "culture-loaded" phenomenon, comment on customs, traditions, and behavior, and master communication and cultural competence (Lebedko, 1999). Students can as well make connection between the film's theme and their own dreams and reality (Shea, 1995). Film is also described as "one of the new forms of cultural expression capable of filling the cultural void in the second language classroom" (Pierson, 1992, p.50). Likewise, Kasper & Singer (2001) claim that through the discussion of nonverbal cues in silent films such as gestures, facial expressions, music, and tone of film, ESL students' metalinguistic awareness and cultural understanding of the differences of ethnic culture, religion, or class concepts can be enhanced (p.22).

However, caution must be taken when teaching "outculture" films—films made in or depicting other cultures. Takahashi (1995), who analyzed the portrayals of women in several American films (*Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, *Thelma and Louise*, *Switch*, and *Working Girl*), has argued that the messages in these films can easily be misinterpreted by Japanese students, who evaluate feminist issues in the films according to their own cultural and social values. Teachers, therefore, should always be aware of this potential for misunderstanding and provide proper cultural guidance

(Takahashi, 1995). Hardy (1995), on the other hand, finds that American and Japanese films can be used productively in teaching students to recognize the stereotypes they hold about Americans, as well as to reflect their new understanding back on their own cultural values. Students' response were generally positive and commented that the course helped them develop objectivity when evaluating different cultural values and issues.

2.5.8 Complementing literary works

“Great filmmakers tend to be painters rather than novelists; in short, they make words *look* right” (Guista, 1992, p.206). There have been myriads of films and TV series which were adapted from or based on novels, dramas, and plays. Ever since the birth of the motion picture, for instance, over three hundred films and TV series based on Shakespeare's plays were made. In the ESL/EFL classroom, adapted films have been used to complement their original literary works (Fehlman, 1985; Hess & Jasper, 1995; Lynch, 1986; Ross, 1991; Tatsuki, 1997c; Yamada, 1995). Ross (1991) reports on their use of the BBC video series of *Great Expectations* to accompany a 1950 abridged version of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Comparison exercises were conducted between the book and film version, and the book/film and personal experiences or thoughts. The authors recommend teachers choose appropriate films/videos based on the following criteria: that the vocabulary range of the text should be challenging yet not impossible, that the plot should be interesting and easy to follow, that the film version should be compatible with the text version so that it does not cause confusion, and that the themes of the text/film should be universal and appeal to cognitive as well as emotive levels of interpretation (Hess & Jasper, 1995, p.8). In asking students to comment on the film, however, Ross (1991) claims that

“one of the dangers in studying literature, especially for non-native speakers of English, lies in students relying almost totally on published critical studies” (p.153). Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to encourage and insist students to write their own critical analysis and commentary.

In response to educators who still value a film’s worth on its faithfulness to its source, Wood claims that “a film has no binding obligation to tell the same story as the novel that may have prompted its creation,” and therefore should be valued independent of the original version. In fact, when used properly, a filmed version of the original novel can bridge the “seeping gap” for ESL/EFL students.

2.5.9 Movie tie-in novels

An experimental research was conducted by Redfield (1999) to determine the effectiveness of using *Eiga Shosetsu* (movie tie-in novels) alongside film in the L2 classroom. This pilot program was designed to provide massive “comprehensible input” to Japanese college students. The participating 28 students were required to see six contemporary films (*Dead Poets Society*, *My Girl*, *The War*, *Braveheart*, *The Net*, and *The Assassins*), read the related six tie-in novels, plus one more of their personal choice (seven readings altogether). Results from pre and post tests indicated that the pilot program was successful in raising students’ English reading, listening, and vocabulary levels. However, the program was still at its experimental stage, and Redfield in conclusion suggested that qualitative research such as student journals, think-aloud protocols, in-depth interviews, and ethnographic observations, should also be undertaken to investigate more thoroughly about how the program affects the students on a personal level.

2.6 The Hong Kong context

In the past decade, local universities in Hong Kong have been offering ESL courses using film as teaching material. Despite the growing attention and interest of the teachers, students, and researchers towards the medium, in-depth and thorough investigation into this topic was not seen. To the best of my knowledge, only four articles have been written on using film in the ESL courses in the local university context (Chapple, 1999; Chapple & Curtis, 2000; Christopher & Ho, 1996; Pierson, 1992), of which two were research studies (Chapple & Curtis, 2000; Christopher & Ho, 1996).

Christopher & Ho's study (1996) aimed to assess the effects of a film discussion project course offered by the Self-Access Center at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) in the Spring semester of 1994. The aims of the course were to improve students' oral proficiency and to give them the confidence to become more independent and active viewers. Data collection was achieved through pre- and post-course questionnaires which were semi-structured, and naturalistic observation of student discussion sessions which were audio- and video-taped. Questionnaire results indicated that students perceived themselves to have improved the most in their ability to express opinions in small group discussions. Their oral skills, listening comprehension, and confidence in speaking English obtained significant enhancement as well. From the audio and video recordings, students were found to have developed their own communication strategies to enhance smooth flow of discussion: self-correction, comprehension checking, and vocabulary contextualization. They generally thought that films "provided entertainment and elicited commonly-shared topics such as love and marriage and familial relationships for discussion" (Christopher & Ho, 1996, p.192). However, not

all students shared the same view, as two students commented that only “films which were easy to understand were a good basis for discussion” (Christopher & Ho, 1996, p.192). However, what is meant by “easy” or “difficult” was not further examined, as there was no follow-up on these student comments. On the other hand, while students’ oral proficiency had obviously improved, their becoming more independent and active viewers might just be a tentative finding, for no follow-up investigation was conducted to assess students’ long term performance.

Pierson (1992), similarly, argued for the use of film in the foreign language curriculum, with reference to *ELT 321: English Through Visual Media*, a course he taught at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The aims of the course were to “enhance the confidence and competence of students in using and understanding English, and to help students develop a tolerant and critical attitude when viewing films about people and behavior from cultures different from their own” (Pierson, 1992, p.52). In other words, films were used to enhance communicative performance, critical thinking, and understanding of cross-cultural issues. Regarding the choice of film, student responses generated interesting insights. Initially, Pierson thought that the film *Casablanca* would be more difficult to understand, both culturally and linguistically, as it is “a dated black and white film whose socio-historical story line would be totally foreign to Hong Kong students” (p.56). Despite the film’s complicated historical background, the majority of the students could still appreciate it as it was already famous for its passionate love story. On the other hand, Pierson’s attempt in persuading students to understand the brilliant craft and making of the masterpiece, *Citizen Kane*, was not so successful. In the end, only a few students were able to appreciate the genius and wit of Orson Welles, the director of this film. As this was only a course offered under the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU), and

not a professional film course, the instructor must be aware of the students' cinematic sophistication in choosing appropriate films. Films that are too difficult for students to understand or relate to may discourage students from participating in discussions and other classroom activities (Christopher & Ho, 1996). Applying film to the ESL curriculum, claims Pierson, is still in its experimental stage, and therefore practitioners are urged to make good use of this effective medium for language teaching and learning.

Going through several name changes throughout the 10 years, the course ELT 321 has now evolved into *ELT 3104: English Through Film*. The on-going challenge of the course, as claimed by Chapple (1999), has been to “find more flexible ways of catering to the needs of the students” and to “develop students’ analytical skills, understanding of cultural issues, and aesthetic appreciation” (p.20). Later, Chapple & Curtis (2000) conducted a small-scale study to explore 31 students’ beliefs about their own language and academic development after taking the course. An anonymous end-of-course questionnaire survey was administered in which students were asked to rate their improvement in six areas. Results showed that students rated their English language skills as having increased in all areas, particularly in confidence, listening, and speaking. In addition, students also reported a substantial improvement in their analytical and critical thinking skills. However, just looking at numbers and statistics is not enough. Student comments on the open-ended questions in the questionnaire are in fact a good source for further analysis. Some students claimed that their listening comprehension improved mainly because of listening to their teacher speaking native English, while the role of the film content itself seemed less significant (Chapple & Curtis, 2000). As a consequence, the authors raised the question of “what exactly the students are responding to and evaluating about the course: the methodological

approach or the use of film as content?" (p.427). Their question remains unanswered as it is outside the scope of this study.

A shortcoming in both Christopher & Ho's and Chapple & Curtis' studies is the limitations of questionnaire survey (Nunan, 1992). It is, true, that students' responses on the questionnaire were very positive. But then, the intricate process of how the English abilities were developed/improved through the students' exposure to film and related classroom activities remains unexplored. These two research studies only report the impressionistic views of the students towards their own improvement, while no measure was taken to assess the "real" improvement in their written works. Also, student insights gathered from the questionnaire survey were not followed up by personal interviews to allow further investigation and analysis.

Another shortcoming is that both studies have not attempted to assess the relative importance of different variables in the courses, such as the pedagogical model, methodology, classroom setting, choice of film, and the students' original English proficiency. It is, therefore, impossible to isolate any of these factors as responsible for the significant improvement of the students' English abilities (Chapple & Curtis, 2000).

2.7 Conclusion: The need for further study

The above discussion reveals that although there have been numerous books and pedagogical articles written on the theory and positive effects of using film in ESL/EFL classrooms, formal research studies are still lacking. All articles were based on the teachers' personal experience of using film in their classrooms, while the students' point of view was rarely taken into account. An exception is Yamada (1995), who voiced out her preference for reading over film watching and presented

her case with sufficient explanations and examples. Other students' negative responses or difficulties encountered in film watching have not been investigated thoroughly. And as we have discussed in the last section, a questionnaire survey is not without limitations. A better approach would be to follow up insights and ideas elicited from the questionnaire survey with semi-structured, personal interviews with selected students. The reason is that although teachers' perception of the students' improvement in various English abilities is indeed valuable and insightful, it is still an outsider's perspective. The students themselves would be the most essential source of reference as they are the primary experiencer of their language development process. First-hand thoughts and feelings of the students must be examined in great detail to account for the effectiveness of employing film as content material in L2 classrooms.

In Hong Kong, a postmodern city bombarded by popular culture, film has always been highly popular with young people (Cheung, 2001). Teachers and educators are strongly recommended to make good use of this medium to facilitate ESL learning (Chapple & Curtis, 2000; Cheung, 2001; Christopher & Ho, 1996; Pierson, 1992). At the secondary school level, film is only included in the syllabus of the Advanced Level English Literature subject, one of whose aims is to train students' critical thinking and analytical skills (Hong Kong Examination Authority, 2000). Yet, the number of secondary schools offering this subject is rare. At the tertiary level, courses using film to enhance ESL learning have been offered in various universities (Chapple & Curtis, 2000; Christopher & Ho, 1996; Pierson, 1992). Again, the only two studies to date are for the most part impressionistic, therefore unable to provide concrete evidence to support the claim of using film as an effective content material in ESL/EFL classrooms. Although both Christopher & Ho's (1996) and Chapple & Curtis' (2000) studies do offer valuable insights into the benefits of using film, it is

only the first step of a long journey. What is urgently needed is a more detailed, systematic, and longitudinal study involving triangulation of data.

Consequently, I have chosen the same course, *ELT 3104: English through Film* (as it is now called), for further study. The idea is based on Chapple & Curtis' study (2000), yet the methodology is expanded and triangulated. For there are different factors affecting the learning process, such as the teaching pedagogy, film choice, course curriculum, and classroom methodology, it is wiser and more effective to examine how these factors might enhance or hinder learning, and take full precaution in the course design and conduct. This could be achieved by triangulating the data collected for the study. Adopting the "triangulation" concept, which is "the most desired pattern for dealing with case study data" (Yin, 1993, p.69), this study includes not just questionnaire survey, but also non-participant observation, interviews, and analysis of relevant texts and documents. Gathering data from different sources (researcher's observation, students and teacher's point of views) enables the researcher to view the case from different perspectives, and to separate out factors which have deep impact on the learning process using film.

This study does not attempt to provide the perfect answer to the use of film in the ESL/EFL classroom, but it does attempt to better illuminate the situation and to provide pedagogical implications to educators, teachers, and learners of ESL/EFL.

CHAPTER 3: METHDOLOGY

3.1 Research design: The case study approach

In order to investigate the role of film as a medium for improving L2 students' various English abilities, I adopted a qualitative method, specifically a case study approach, to carry out my research. According to Merriam (1998), a qualitative research uses naturally existing classes for data collection, and places emphasis on the "discovery of new relationships, concepts, and understanding, rather than verification or predetermined hypotheses" (p.13). A case study, is, "an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group" (Merriam, 1998, p.9-10). Thus, my adopted "inductive" case study approach does not intend so much to prove a theory or claim, but more to discover new phenomena, thus building new theories instead. There is also little or no manipulation of variables, and no predetermined outcomes. Variables and data gathered are not controlled, but rather, they are analyzed to discover new patterns, and to provide explanations and pedagogical implications based on these pattern findings.

In this study, the researcher was interested in examining not just *what* English skills that the use of film in the L2 classroom could help students to improve, but also *how* the process was done, as well as other unforeseeable factors which enhanced or hindered the learning process as a whole. In order to conduct an objective investigation, different opinions must be gathered from different sources, such as the instructor and the students. Observing the classroom activities naturally and continuously is also important for collection of the students' learning patterns and progress. Therefore, the researcher adopted the "*triangulation*" technique, which is in fact the major strength of case study approach, in the design of the data collection method in this particular study. Merriam claims, "Methodological triangulation

combines dissimilar methods such as interviews, observations, and physical evidence to study the same unit” (p.69). Based on this idea, the data collection of this study included pre- and post- course questionnaire survey, semi-structured interviews with the instructor and students, naturalistic classroom observation, and analysis of students’ assignments and course handouts.

Prior to the formal study, which spanned throughout the whole Fall semester in 2001, a pilot study was conducted on the same course (with two sections, taught by Instructor A and Instructor B) in the Summer semester, same year. The questionnaire survey was piloted and the classroom observation method tried out. Revisions were made to the questionnaire consequently.

This chapter starts with a discussion of the research questions, followed by a brief introduction to the history of the course, the instructor, and the students. Then, the aims and detail descriptions of the data collection method are provided. The last section is devoted to the discussion of the pilot study and related revisions.

3.2 Research questions

The following research questions were developed at the start to guide this study:

- 1) With reference to the course ELT 3104, what was the role of film in helping L2 students improve their English language skills?
- 2) With reference to the course ELT 3104, what were the factors affecting the learning process? How did they affect the learning process, both positively and negatively?

Due to the emergence of unexpected data and patterns during the course of the study, the first research question was slightly altered. As a result, two research questions emerged and replaced question one. The two questions emerged were:

- 1) What was the role of film in helping students from the course ELT 3104 improve their English language skills, according to their past experience?
- 2) How effective was the course ELT 3104 in improving students' English language skills?

A detailed discussion on the revision of the research question is provided in Chapter 5.

3.3 Subjects

3.3.1 The course ELT 3104: English Through Film

The course is offered by the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) at The Chinese University of Hong Kong as an elective open to all students in the university. Offered through the ELTU, the course is different from most traditional language courses in Hong Kong; it is student-centered and content-based instead of teacher-centered and grammar-fronted. Originally designed and set up by Dr. Herbert Pierson in 1992, the course has gone through major changes in terms of the course aim, workload, choice of film, and even the title of the course itself. What remained unchanged throughout are the lesson approach and the target students of this course. The course is specifically directed to undergraduates who are already advanced learners of English, who are relatively fluent, confident, and comfortable in speaking English. With that made possible, the lesson structure is very much student-centered, which consisted mainly of student-led discussions and presentations.

However, there have been various changes made to this course throughout the years as mentioned. *ELT 321: English Through Visual Media*, as it was first called, intended to “enhance the confidence and competence of students in using and understanding English, and to help students develop a tolerant and critical attitude

when viewing films about people and behavior from cultures different from their own” (Pierson, 1992, p.52). In other words, the course aimed to expose students to other cultures of the world and to help them appreciate and understand these cultures, through applying analytical and critical thinking skills. Some of the films studied in the course then included *Dead Poets Society*, *Citizen Kane*, *Eleni*, and *Casablanca*. These films are of clear cultural significance, such as social/moral values, social problems, class structures, national crisis, and personal choice and freedom. Although the course’s name was later changed to *Thinking Through the Culture of Film*, its goals were still similar, that is, to “develop students’ analytical skills, understanding of cultural issues and aesthetic appreciation” (Chapple & Curtis, 2000, p.424). The selection of films has varied, and even included non-English Asian films such as *Chung King Express* and *Raise the Red Lantern*.

At present, the course is called *English Through Film* and is designed for students “who want to improve their English analytical, discussion, and written skills,” and is also focused on the “analysis of linguistic, cultural, and intellectual aspects of films” (*Full-time Undergraduate Programmes of Study 2001-2002*, p.66). Although stated in the handbook as such, however, it is actually up to the course instructor to decide what kinds of activities and assignments are to be carried out. There has been a big change in the workload of the course, as described by Instructor A, one of the current instructors: “initially it was very biased towards writing, there was a heavy workload, 4 big assignments, but now we found that the students, they just don’t come to classes, they just walk away. The workload was too heavy, so we more or less eliminated the writing element, now it’s very much an oral class.” According to Instructor A, the course started out having 4 long paper assignments, while now, the only “written” assignment is reduced to “one short paper.” In other

words, the course now seems to be focusing more on the oral and communicative aspect, and less on written skills. The course now has two sections, and are taught by Instructor A, a native English speaker, and Instructor B, a local Cantonese. The lesson structures of these two sections were somewhat different and are discussed in detail in the subsequent Chapters.

3.3.2 The course instructor: Instructor A

Instructor A, a native speaker from England, has lived in Hong Kong for around 15 years, taught in CUHK 11 years, and taught this course for about 8 years. Before teaching at CUHK, he taught in Spain and Australia for some time as well. The ethnicity of students he has taught include Spanish, Italian, Vietnamese, German, Swiss, Arab, and South American. He is a firm believer of the student-oriented classroom approach, and this is reflected in his actual classroom management and conduct of the lessons. He is also teaching two other courses at the ELTU, namely *Listening and Response* and *English Through Nature and the Environment*.

3.3.3 The students

There were 14 students in ELT 3104B, Fall semester, 2001. Among them, there were 9 female students and 5 male students, of which one male student was an exchange student from Japan. They were mostly year 2-3 students, and their majors included Business, Language Education, and Geography. The students' names used in this thesis were changed to protect their identity. Here is their background information:

Table 3.1 Student information

No.	Name	Sex	Age	Year	Major
1	Cora	F	21	3	Business Administration (BBA)
2	Evelyn	F	20	2	Business Administration (BBA)
3	Isabel	F	22	4	Language Education (Chinese stream)
4	Jessy	F	19	2	Business Administration (BBA)
5	Liz	F	20	3	Geography & Resource Management (GRM)
6	Nicole	F	20	2	Business Administration (BBA)
7	Sue	F	20	2	Business Administration (BBA)
8	Verona	F	22	4	Language Education (Chinese stream)
9	Yukie	F	20	3	Business Administration (BBA)
10	Gilbert	M	21	3	Geography & Resource Management (GRM)
11	Hirosaki (on exchange)	M	21	4	English Linguistics
12	Korey	M	21	2	Business Administration (BBA)
13	Pete	M	19	1	Language Education (English stream)
14	Timothy	M	21	3	Geography & Resource Management

* Names have been changed to protect interviewees' identity.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Questionnaire survey

Two questionnaire surveys were conducted, one at the beginning and another at the end of the course. The first one, a pre-course questionnaire survey, was divided into two parts. The first part aimed to extract background information of the students, such as their age, sex, major, Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) English grade and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) English grade. The second part aimed at investigating students' preferences in film watching, difficulties encountered, exposure to English media, reasons for taking the course, and expectations for the course. Lastly, students were asked to make a self-assessment of their present English abilities (such as confidence in using English, writing, listening, speaking, discussion & interaction, presentation skills, knowledge & use of English vocabulary, analytical & critical thinking skills, and familiarity with foreign cultural issues) by rating each category on a scale of 5 to 1, ranging from Very good to Poor. Please refer to Appendix A2 for the sample pre-course questionnaire.

The post-course questionnaire survey was conducted at the end of the course. Students were asked to evaluate and comment on the course in terms of the lesson

structure, classroom atmosphere, film selection, workload, and topics covered. Students were also given the opportunity to express their opinions on the course in open-ended questions (“What do you like best about this course?” “What do you NOT like about this course?” and “What do you think, can be improved about this course?”). Other open-ended questions aimed to assess, if any, the difference in film viewing habits of the students after taking the course. Lastly, they were asked to make an assessment of their self-perceived improvement in various categories of English abilities (the same as in the pre-course one), by rating each on a 4 to 1 scale—*a great deal, quite a bit, only a little, no effect/remained the same*. This rating system was adopted from Chapple & Curtis’ study (2000), in order to “differentiate the degree of improvement as clearly as possible for the students” (p.425). Please refer to Appendix A3 for the sample post-course questionnaire.

Students’ comments made on both questionnaires formed the basis of the questions asked in the personal interviews. The interviews were follow-up efforts to analyze the students’ feelings and thoughts expressed in the questionnaires in greater depth and detail. In respect of this, I deemed it necessary to require the students to include their names in the questionnaires. The reason and intent for doing this was explained clearly to the students before handing out the questionnaires.

3.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

All interviews conducted with the instructor and students of the course were audio-taped and transcribed. A total of 3 interviews were conducted with the instructor throughout the term. The first interview aimed at understanding the instructor, his teaching background, philosophy on EFL, teaching method, and the structure and make-up of the course. The following two interviews aimed at

examining the progress of the course and students through the instructor's point of view.

Regarding the students, 2 personal interviews were conducted with each student at the beginning and end of term, except that one more interview was conducted with Hirosaki (the exchange student) in the middle of the term. Thus, there were 32 interviews altogether. All the interviews were conducted in Cantonese (except the interviews with Instructor A, Hirosaki, and the first interview with Cora) to allow full expression of the students' thoughts and feelings. The interviews did not intend to assess the students' English proficiency, but rather to get at how their minds work during the learning process. All students were asked more or less the same set of questions; however the specific details and directions of the questions themselves were set up based on the comments that that particular student made on his/her questionnaire.

3.4.3 Naturalistic classroom observation

Each lesson unit of the course throughout the whole Fall term was observed and field notes were taken. The content of the lesson, classroom atmosphere, lesson approach, students' and the instructor's responses as well as the researcher's comments were recorded. The researcher mainly took a stand of the non-participant observer; however, sometimes exceptions were made. As group activities and games were frequent, the researcher was always invited to join. As the instructor also joined as one of the participants, it would have been too odd for the researcher to be left out. Thus, occasionally the researcher joined in the group discussions and activities. Please refer to Appendix E for the entire classroom observation notes.

3.4.4 Text analysis: Course syllabus, lecture handouts, student papers

In this term, each student was responsible for two group presentations, one on the assigned films, and another on topics and films chosen by the group members themselves. All presentations were recorded as a part of the classroom observation. The students were also required to write a short paper, a scene analysis, to be submitted at the end of the term. These assignment papers were photocopied and collected. All other lesson and presentation handouts, assignment guidelines, and course schedules were collected for analysis.

3.5 The pilot study

This pilot study was conducted from mid-May to early June, 2001, on the same course (summer session) which was then called *ELT 3104: Thinking Through the Culture of Film*. As mentioned, the course had two sections, taught by Instructor A and Instructor B respectively. The focus of this pilot study was on Instructor A's class, while Instructor B's class was also examined for reference and comparison. In the study, a classroom observation method designed by the researcher was tested and questionnaires completed by the students from both classes. However, due to time limitation, personal interviews were not conducted. The results of the pilot study are discussed in full detail and used as reference for comparison and contrast to the formal study in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Meanwhile, in this section, I will briefly describe these two data collection methodologies, as well as the revisions and amendments made to them.

3.5.1 Classroom observation

The summer course consisted of 16 lesson units spread over four weeks. There were four lessons per week, 9:30am to 12:00pm, every day except Wednesday. Since this was an intensive course, one day's lesson was equivalent to one week's lesson in the normal semester. Instructor A's class was observed for four different days spread over the term, while Instructor B's last class day was observed for reference and comparison.

The purpose of this pilot classroom observation was twofold. First, to devise a suitable method of classroom observation to be used in the formal study, and second, to get a feel of what the real lesson was like. In this observation, the setting, instructor, students, behaviors, activities & interactions, and other latent themes and/or patterns were observed and accounted for. I have found that being a participant observer allowed me to mix with and built rapport with the students; however I was not able to record their behaviors and learning process as accurately as being a non-participant observer. While being a non-participant observer I could catch hold of pretty much all of the activities in the classroom, even each group's discussion process, I felt somewhat left out for I had to retain an outsider's point of view, and from a distance. Despite all this, I decided that a non-participant observation of the classroom would be the most suitable, for this not only allows me to accurately record classroom activities and student behaviors in greater detail, but also renders the students less conscious of the fact that someone is "observing" them. This allows the students to act naturally as usual.

It was during this pilot study that I realized some patterns and behaviors, such as reluctance to talk, were difficult to account for just by the surface observation

during class time. What was needed was further investigation into such problems. In-depth personal interviews would have been a good way to provide answers.

3.5.2 Questionnaire survey

There was a slight difference in the format of the questionnaire survey conducted in this pilot study than the formal study in Fall. Instead of conducting a pre- and post-course questionnaire survey separately, I combined the two into one impressionistic questionnaire survey, and it was carried out during the last class day of both Instructor A's and Instructor B's classes. The purpose was to provide room for the revision of the questionnaire and to gather data on students' film viewing behaviors and comments towards the course 3104. Please refer to Appendix A1 for the sample questionnaire (summer) and Appendix B, Table B1 for the selected results of the questionnaire. Overall, the students all agreed that the course had helped them improve their various English abilities one way or another. However, this questionnaire only served to extract larger ideas and patterns on students' film watching behaviors and comments towards the course, while the intricate process of developing, translating, and expressing their mind in English remains unexamined as no interviews with the students were done. Revisions were made on the questionnaire to improve clarity and to elicit wider ranges of opinions. Questions were rephrased; more options were offered for questions 6, 9, and 10, and new questions were added such as "What do you like/NOT like about this course?" and "What do you think, can be improved about this course?" and other questions related to the students' change in viewing habits and motivation after taking the course. Please refer to Appendix A2 and A3 for the final versions of the pre- and post-course questionnaire.

3.6 Conclusion

This Chapter has described the aims and details of the data collection methods employed in this research study. The methods included pre- and post- course questionnaire survey, semi-structured interviews with the instructor and students, naturalistic classroom observation, and analysis of students' assignments and course handouts. A brief introduction to the course ELT 3104, its history and origin, Instructor A, and the students of the Fall term has been given as well. Lastly, the Chapter has also touched on the pilot study conducted on the summer session of the same course. Brief results to the pilot study and revisions to the questionnaire have been presented. In the next Chapter, summaries of the results of the formal study on the Fall class are presented.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in the following chronological manner:

Questionnaire survey results, Interview results, Classroom observation results, and Text analysis. In Questionnaire survey results, main results from the pre- and post- questionnaire survey are presented and important findings are highlighted. Brief summaries of the interviews with both the instructor and the students are provided in the following section, Interview results. Then, a general picture of the progress of the course throughout this Fall term is depicted in Classroom observation results, and lastly, all texts including lesson handouts, presentation handouts, syllabus, and papers are classified under three types for further analysis in the next Chapter. All questionnaire results, classroom observation notes, and interview transcripts are presented in Appendixes C to F.

4.1 Questionnaire survey results

4.1.1 Pre-course questionnaire

There were 14 students in this class, of whom 9 were females, and 5 were males. One male student was an exchange student from Japan. Their ages ranged from 19 to 22, and their majors included BBA, Geography, LED, and English Linguistics (the Japanese exchange student). (Appendix C, Table C1)

A majority of the students (79%) had taken other ELT courses before, whereas only a few (21%) indicated that they had taken courses (in high school or university) that included the study of film. However, surprisingly, over half of the students (57%) had gone abroad for either short-term or semester-based exchange programs. Speculating on this course, students hoped to improve themselves the most in the areas of listening (79%), speaking (79%), and knowledge of films (50%). Outside the

classroom, students were mostly exposed to these English media: the internet (79%), films, (64%), newspapers (50%), and TV shows on local English channels (50%).

Of all film genres, romance (86%), drama (79%), and comedy (79%) were the most popular, while art films (0%), independent/cult (7%), thriller/adventure (7%), and western (7%) were the least popular. Among the difficulties encountered when watching films, topping the chart were slang, idioms, & colloquial expressions (79%), speaking speed (71%), and vocabulary (50%). When choosing a film to watch, students' main considerations included the story/plot (79%), the cast (71%), and the genre (50%).

In the self-assessment section (question 12), most students rated themselves “good” in the areas of listening (57%), speaking (43%), discussion & interaction (43%), leading presentations (50%), “okay/average” in the areas of confidence (43%), writing (43%), knowledge & use of vocabulary (64%), analytical & critical thinking (64%), and foreign cultural issues (50%). A lesser amount of students considered themselves “not very good” in the following categories: foreign cultural issues (29%), listening and knowledge & use of vocabulary (both 21%), speaking, discussion & interaction, leading presentations, analytical & critical thinking skills (all 14% respectively). Only a very small number of students rated themselves to be “very good” in the areas of confidence (29%), oral (21%), and writing (14%). Nobody considered themselves to be “poor” in any of the areas. Overall, the mean score was the highest in the areas of confidence and oral (3.71), writing and discussion & interaction (3.43), and lowest in knowledge & use of vocabulary and foreign cultural issues (3).

Please refer to Appendix C, tables C1-7 for all the pre-course results in detail.

4.1.2 Post-course questionnaire

In general, students rated the course “very interesting” (50%) to “somewhat interesting (43%), and they all found the atmosphere of the course to be “cordial, comfortable” (100%). Most of the students found the workload of the course “fair” (79%) and the choice of film “quite interesting” (71%). However, only one student found the film techniques/knowledge covered in this course to be “very adequate,” most of the others thought it was “quite adequate” (50%) and “okay” (43%). They also considered the instructor’s role to be “very resourceful & helpful” (57%) and “somewhat helpful (43%).

In the section of the students’ self-assessment of their improvements in the course, most students considered themselves to have “improved quite a bit” in the areas of speaking (71%), foreign cultural issues (64%), confidence, discussion & interaction, analytical & critical thinking skills (57%), and listening and presentation skills (50%). In other areas such as knowledge & use of vocabulary, most students (57%) thought that they have “improved only a little,” and most students (57%) thought that their writing skills pretty much “remained the same.” Only a few students rated themselves to have “improved a great deal,” in the areas of leading presentations and foreign cultural issues (14%). Overall, the mean score was the highest in foreign cultural issues (2.93), presentation skills (2.79), and analytical & critical thinking skills (2.64). The lowest mean score was found in writing (1.57).

In the open-ended questions, when asked what the students liked best about this course (question 7), almost all students commented that it was the relaxing, free, fun, and comfortable atmosphere that they liked best. Some others commented that the small-class format encouraged discussions and interactions among students. On the other hand, when asked about what did they NOT like about this course (question

8), comments diverged very widely, ranging from the workload to the choice of film. As every student expressed a different idea or point, their comments were further investigated and accounted for in the personal interviews. When asked for the suggested improvements/any other comments on the course (questions 9 & 10), students mostly commented that having a three-consecutive-period lesson, thus having more time, would be better than splitting the periods up like the present lesson structure. Others also commented that more Hollywood films should be shown.

Please refer to Appendix D, tables 1-12 for the above results in detail, and Tables C9-12 for the entire students' comments in questions 7, 8, 9, & 10.

4.2 Interview results

4.2.1 The three interviews with Instructor A

The first interview (Appendix E, p.171) with Instructor A was conducted at the beginning of the Fall term. Through this interview, the researcher got to know the origin, history and development of the course, and a little bit of Instructor A's personal history, his teaching experience, philosophy, and lesson approach. He also gave comments on the course and students so far, and talked about his expectations for them as well.

Instructor A has been teaching this course for about 8 years. He had also taught English in England, Australia, and other parts of Europe for quite some time, and his students included Vietnamese, Italian, German, Swiss, Icelandic, Arab, Spanish, and other Mediterranean and South American students. Being a firm believer in the student-oriented approach, he organized his courses around student-led discussions and student-presentations, while he himself just took up the role of a "facilitator" in class and exerted minimal interference. However, he does have his

bottom lines in that he “get[s] very irritated when students talk Cantonese in class,” and he is quite strict on prohibiting students from doing so. Being a keen bird watcher, Instructor A was also teaching another ELT course, “*English Through the Nature & Environment*,” which is student-centered as well.

Instructor A did not comment so much on the students as it was still too early to do so. Instead, he talked about his own experience in learning a second language, Spanish. He never learnt Spanish in school but had lived in Spain for some time. By being extremely fanatic about football, listening to all football shows/talks on radio, playing and talking football with Spanish friends, his Spanish “got okay.” He commented, “I always believe that, if you can be, if you can motivate yourself to be interested in the topic, then you kinda go straight through the barriers of languages, so if you’re sufficiently interested in a topic, you can be motivated to learn a language.”

The second interview (Appendix E, p.175) was conducted half way through the semester in mid-October. By this time, Instructor A had formed some impression of the students, which was not too positive in general. He thought that the Fall class was weaker when compared to the Summer class, in terms of the students’ English level, personalities, and technical film knowledge/experience. The problem was that some of the students’ English was not that advanced, and they were not very cinematically sophisticated. And since most of the students joined the course with their friends, the class seemed to be split among smaller groups, and whole-class interaction was lacking. He also commented on the student-led discussions of assigned films done so far, what went well and what did not. However, although his initial reactions to the students of this course were not as positive as for students in his previous classes, he did think that it was getting better. He ended the interview by saying, “I’d like them to talk a bit more together, to laugh a bit more, to kinda enjoy

the company of the students. Just a bit more relaxed and easy, yeah, it's still a bit frigid. I think it's getting better.”

In this last interview (Appendix E, p.177), Instructor A gave a brief evaluation on all the student discussions and presentations done. He thought the presentations on *Alien*, *Wayne Wong's* films, *Pulp Fiction*, and *American Beauty* went quite well, while the presentation on *Trainspotting* was not very good, due generally to students' lack of enthusiasm, understanding, and appreciation for the film. He was also disappointed with the group presentation of “romantic comedies,” in reference to *Sleepless in Seattle* and *You've Got Mail*. However, he was amazed at how these films sparked lively conversations among the students. Concerning the choice of film for future classes, Instructor A claimed that he will quit using *The Decalogue* (a black-and-white Polish film) to illustrate cross-cutting, as students generally thought this film to be too slow, boring, and very difficult to comprehend. As students also expressed that including non-English films in the viewing list did not seem to be appropriate for an ELT course, Instructor A claimed that he may drop either one or both of the two Italian films, *Cinema Paradiso* and *Life is Beautiful* in the future. However, he did express the view that the term papers were better than what he had expected, and that things got better towards the end of the term, the class mixing quite well.

4.2.2 Brief student profiles and interview summaries

In order to give the readers a clear picture of the general particulars of the students, I have decided to describe them in their natural groupings. All interview transcripts are in Appendix F.

Cora (Appendix F, p.180) and Yukie (Appendix F, p.208) were both Year 3 BBA students. Coming from the same high school, a prestigious Catholic all girls' EMI school, these two students were very good friends. Cora's English had a very strong North American accent, and she talked like a native. Initially, I thought she must have been born in the U.S. or had studied in some international school to be able to achieve such fluency and nativity. It turned out that she has picked up her native North American accent by frequent travels abroad (having family and friends in USA), watching American TV programs and films, and having studied in a high school which provided an excellent English learning environment. Her main film preference was straightforward Hollywood films, and this remained the same throughout the course. Yukie, whose English was not so perfect as Cora's, was still able to speak very fluently and expressively. She maintained her pleasant personality throughout the course and was one of the most actively participating students in class discussions. She viewed films as "a doorway to other cultures in the world." She admitted in the second interview that having watched non-mainstream films such as *Trainspotting*, she came to realize that Hollywood films such as *You've Got Mail* were actually quite shallow, simple, and boring.

Evelyn (p.184), Jessy (p.192), Sue (p.202), and Nicole (p.199) were Year 2 BBA students. They joined the course together, and mainly stayed in their own group throughout. Maybe because of her out-going personality, Nicole's English was, though far from perfect, spoken with confidence and fluency. She seemed to act as the spokesman frequently for her group as well. And being used to watching only Hollywood films, she found Instructor A's choice of film a refreshing experience. Jessy was relatively more quiet in the group, and mixed less with other students. However, in the questionnaire survey and interviews, she revealed herself to be a

fanatic of American movies; she appears to watch all American TV shows (e.g. *Friends*, *ER*, *Dark Angel*, *Felicity*) and listens to American pop music as well. She was generally satisfied with the choice of film in this course, and claimed that she was the only one among her group members who really understood the story/plot of *Pulp Fiction*. In terms of English proficiency, Evelyn and Sue did not really fit the criteria to enter this course. Anyhow, they made it through. Evelyn was one of the students who talked frequently in Cantonese during class most likely because her English was rather weak. Sue was the only student who came from a Chinese-Medium-Instructed (CMI) high school; she never watches foreign films, and only sticks to watching local films. To my surprise, she was one of the few students who were “quite satisfied” with the choice of films in the course. She seemed to be quite receptive, as she did not express any shock or dismay towards those more “alternative” films such as *Pulp Fiction* and *Trainspotting*. And when other students felt that the course did not include enough Hollywood films, she had a different opinion: “I don’t think there’s any problem with that. I don’t think these [Hollywood] films are worth analyzing anyway, and they’re too easily accessible, so it’s okay he didn’t include them in the course.”

Three Year 3 Geography majors, Gilbert (p.212), Liz (p.196), and Timothy (p.232), made up another “group.” Liz, coming also from a prestigious girls’ school, spoke good English. As she had studied English Literature (which syllabi include films) for her HKCEE and HKAL examinations, she was very used to looking at films with a critical eye. Prior to this course, she had taken two other ELT courses taught by Instructor A as well. Therefore, she was already familiar and comfortable with Instructor A’s teaching style. Her two male friends, Gilbert and Timothy, did not share her level of English proficiency. Gilbert thought that Instructor A “did a good

job” in introducing students to different film styles such as *Trainspotting*, and he also enjoyed the relaxing, free atmosphere in the class. He kept claiming that his passive personality prevented him from making full use of the opportunity to practice his oral skills, and, therefore, he was not too satisfied with his “own” performance. On the other hand, Timothy, whose English was hard to comprehend most of the time, seemed to be the only student in the class who had previous experience in watching alternative, independent/cult films. He complained that the class was too “mainstream,” and that including the two Italian films at the beginning was somewhat irrelevant to an ELT course.

Two Language Education (Chinese) majors (LED), Verona (p.204) and Isabel (p.186), added the course late. Both of them had little contact with English since their major focused on Chinese language education, and both had some difficulties in catching up with the class. Isabel revealed that she did not enjoy the course at all. On the first day she came into the class, she was immediately paired up in a group with Cora and Yukie. Already not familiar with the course and the content, and facing such strong students in the group, the experience had, in her words, totally “crushed” her, and throughout the whole semester, she could not really overcome her bad feelings. Meanwhile, Verona had a better experience; she seemed to have enjoyed the class and got along with other students better. However, both students indicated to me the same aspect which I have never thought about before, and which was actually very important, and could have influenced or even damaged the learning process. Maybe because they were both Education majors, they tend to be very aware of the teacher’s point of view and his interactions with students. They indicated to me that Instructor A obviously had preferences for students who had better English. They noticed that he called on almost the same students for questions and to read out notes. This could

have a very discouraging effect on the weaker students, and the issue is thoroughly discussed in the next Chapter.

The last three other “individual” students were Pete (p.229), Korey (p.225), and Hirosaki (p.215). Pete, a Year 1 LED (English) major, responded quite negatively to the course initially, mainly due to the choice of film at the start of the semester (the two Italian films, and the violent *Trainspotting*). Gradually, things got better and he quite liked the film that his group presented (*American Beauty*). His main concern throughout the course was that he did not like the idea of “chop[ping] up the films into bits and pieces” to show them in class, as it was very annoying and discouraging. Korey, having joined a one-year exchange program to Texas during high school, spoke very fluent English. He was fond of Hollywood films and was actually a bit disappointed that Instructor A did not include enough of them in the course. Anyhow, with his out-going personality, Korey was able to share his opinions with the class as much as he wanted.

Lastly, it was interesting that this course included Hirosaki, an exchange student from Japan. Although he was majoring in English Linguistics, his English was difficult to understand. But by using bodily gestures and being generally relaxed and comfortable when speaking, he got along very well with all students and became quite popular. Although he had already watched most of the films in Japan before, he was delighted to watch them all again here in Hong Kong, for the subtitles are in English rather than Japanese. Reading Japanese subtitles, as he claimed, made him unable to think in English. He was very satisfied with Instructor A’s choice of film.

Although every student had their own unique opinions towards the course, some general common views were spotted. Most students agreed that having a three-period lesson would have been much better than the present lesson structure. All

students agreed that *The Decalogue* should be taken off the list because it was slow, boring, and way too hard to understand. Part of the class suggested including more Hollywood films, and others felt that providing more explanation notes, background information, and vocabulary lists to difficult films would have been useful for the comprehension of the films.

4.3 Classroom observation results

Table 4.1 Course schedule

Week	Date	Content: Student-led discussion / presentation	Presenters	Date	Content: Teacher-led discussion
1	4/9	Introduction to course	Instructor A	6/9	Narrative & narration
2	11/9	Shot, scene, sequence / trip to ILC	Instructor A	13/9	Point-of-view (POV) shots
3	18/9	<i>Cinema Paradiso</i>	Evelyn, Hirosaki	20/9	Presentation schedule setting/ Pre-course questionnaire done
4	25/9	<i>Life is Beautiful</i>	Gilbert, Liz	27/9	Filmic device, sounds
5	2/10	Holiday		4/10	Free will, necessity, pure chance/ Cross-cutting
6	9/10	<i>Trainspotting</i>	Cora, Yukie	11/10	Elements of Sci-Fi films
7	16/10	<i>Alien</i>	Jessy, Sue, Nicole	18/10	Reviewed "free will" topic
8	23/10	<i>Gary Oldman: Good at Bad *</i>	Hirosaki, Korey, Pete	25/10	Holiday
9	30/10	<i>Dim Sum & Joy Luck Club: Wayne Wang *</i>	Gilbert, Liz, Timothy	1/11	Mise-en-scene, montage, Long take, deep focus, realism
10	6/11	<i>Hollywood romantic comedy couples: Tom Hanks & Meg Ryan *</i>	Cora, Isabel, Verona, Yukie	8/11	Follow-up on romantic comedies: strengths & weaknesses
11	13/11	<i>Cartoon Films *</i>	Evelyn, Jessy, Sue, Nicole	15/11	Introduction to Pulp Fiction
12	20/11	<i>Pulp Fiction</i>	Isabel, Timothy, Verona	22/11	Spoofs/ course evaluation
13	27/11	<i>American Beauty</i>	Korey, Pete	29/11	Graduation ceremony: no class

* Student-presentation on self-chosen topics

The first lesson was observed on September 4, and the last on November 27. The entire Fall term consisted of 13 weeks, with two lessons per week. The Tuesday lessons were double-periods, while Thursday lessons single only. There were altogether six assigned films, and four group presentations on topics chosen by the group members themselves. The double-period-lessons (Tuesdays) were used for

student-led discussions on assigned films and presentations on self-chosen topics, while the single-periods were lectures and/or discussions on filmic techniques led by the instructor. In other words, about 2/3 of the lessons were run by students. Please refer to Table 4.1 for the course schedule, and Appendix E, p.147-170 for all observation field notes.

It was not until the beginning of Week 3 that the enrollment had settled down, for the first two weeks were still within the add/drop period. Therefore, the first two weeks were, in Instructor A's words, "pretty much nonsense." The class was less smooth at the start. There was clearly a lack of whole-class interaction, as most of the students sat with their own friends. It took the class some time to warm up, and in the first few weeks, the students seemed not clear of what they were expected to do in the class. For example, during the presentation of the film *Trainspotting* in Week 6, although the presenters (Yukie & Cora) managed to exhibit good presentation skills, the audiences' response was only lukewarm. Instructor A became quite worried at that time. Fortunately, from Week 8 onwards, the class got more familiar with each other, and started mixing together. Generally speaking, the class did not have a very strong cinematic background knowledge; some students were apparently dismayed or bored by the film clips shown in class, and this lack of understanding and appreciation towards the films somehow affected the learning atmosphere. The students' skills in managing the lesson gradually improved with the progress of the term, and students got along with each other better. Instructor A was quite satisfied with the class at the end of the term, as there were clearly some very happy and interesting moments, and the students' final essays were much better than what he had expected.

4.4 Text Analysis

4.4.1 Course syllabus and schedule

The assessment scheme was basically similar each term, with an emphasis placed on “participation in class,” which comprised 30% of the total grade. Film presentation, leading discussion of assigned movie(s), and written papers weighted 20% each. Lastly, 10% went to attendance and punctuality. (Appendix G, p.239) The viewing schedule, on the other hand, was not settled until the third week. Instructor A usually had an idea in mind of what films to be covered, but it was not until the class enrollment had finally settled down (number of students in class) and the instructor had a basic idea of the students’ cinematic knowledge and English skills, that he would devise the final schedule. Usually, the number of films covered were around 8. However, as there were relatively more students in this term than in the last (summer), and that a holiday got in the way as well, the class ended up covering just 6 films. By the end of Week 3, the schedule for all student-led discussions and presentations were settled. (Table 4.1)

4.4.2 Lecture handouts

The first two weeks of the term and all Thursday lessons thereafter were devoted to explaining film terms and techniques, accompanied by handouts prepared by Instructor A. These handouts can be loosely classified into 3 types. First, there were handouts on the definition and explanation of film terms, techniques, and key concepts. The content included narrative patterns (linear and non-linear), narration (restricted and omniscient), mise-en-scene, montage, POV shots, etc. These were the basic lecture content of the class, and the related handouts were identical every term. They were usually covered during the first few weeks. The second type of handouts

consisted of guiding questions for group discussions on film clips shown in class and they varied accordingly every term. The third type consisted of anything that the Instructor deemed appropriate to introduce or include in the course. For example, after the presentation, "*Hollywood romantic comedy couples: Tom Hanks & Meg Ryan*," Instructor A decided to do a follow-up discussion on romantic comedies, and so he did that in the following Thursday lesson, accompanied by a worksheet with questions he had prepared. Another example was when Instructor A got worried about the presentation on *Pulp Fiction* due to the difficult plot of the film, the bad language, many allusions, and among all, the class' lack of film knowledge. He therefore created several handouts introducing some background information on the film. There is a big possibility that Instructor A would not do the same thing in future terms; it all depends on the class situation and his own preference and insight. Please refer to Appendix G, p.244 for sample handouts.

4.4.3 Student-led discussion & presentation handouts

Students were responsible for two group presentations in this class: one on an assigned film, another on topics/films to be decided by the group themselves. The presenting students needed to provide handouts as necessary. The format of the presentation on assigned films was left for the students to decide, but usually Instructor A would suggest them to include games and discussion questions so that every student in the class could participate (Appendix G6). Concerning the presentations on students' own topics, they were free to do what they liked. There was no strict format. In fact, during the summer course, one group's presentation just contained the showing of a video, which was a mock role play of scenes selected from the films covered, shot and acted by the students themselves. In that case, they did not

even provide any handouts. In this Fall term, a typical topic presentation included brief background information on the director/film, games (with prizes consisting usually of candies and chocolates), film clip viewing, and group discussions. The presentations were more interactive than presentative, and the contents of the handouts were thought-provocative rather than heavily-information-loaded. Appendix G7.

4.4.4 Final term paper

The only written assignment was a short scene analysis consisting of 500 to 800 words (2-3 pages). Please refer to Appendix G3 for the assignment handout. Students needed to choose a scene from one of the films discussed in class (both teacher and student-chosen) and discuss why it was effective, analyzing it in terms of the visual and sound elements. As the scenes were already discussed in class, the students should not find it a difficult assignment. It turned out that the students' papers were better-written than Instructor A had expected, and their grades ranged from B+ to A, with most students earning an A-. Instructor A made photocopies of Yukie's paper and distributed to the class. In the paper she demonstrated high English proficiency as well as critical thinking skills. (Appendix G8)

4.5 Conclusion

This Chapter has presented in detail the results of the questionnaire survey, interviews with Instructor A and the students, classroom observation, and the classification of students' presentation handouts, term papers, course syllabus and lesson handouts. The next Chapter provides an in-depth analysis and discussion of the findings, which would provide answers to the research questions.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

This Chapter is devoted to the analysis and discussion of the data collected in this study. Specifically, it will provide answers to the following research questions (revised):

- 1) What was the role of film in helping L2 students improve their English language skills, according to their past experience?
- 2) With reference to the course ELT 3104, what were the factors affecting the learning process? And how did these factors affect the learning process?
- 3) How effective was the course ELT 3104 in improving students' English language skills?

This Chapter is divided into four sections: **Revised research questions; Film and ESL: Students' past experience; The course ELT 3104: Factors affecting the learning process; and Effectiveness of the course ELT 3104 in improving students' English skills.** The first section discusses the reasons contributing to the revision of the research questions, while the following three sections provides answers to the three research questions respectively.

5.1 Revised research questions

When this study was still in the planning stage, two research questions were formed (refer to Chapter 3). During the course of the study, new patterns and unexpected results emerged, leading to the revision of the research questions. The original question, "With reference to the course, what was the role of film in helping students improve their English language skills?" was dropped, and split into two more specific questions, that is, question 1 and 3 as shown above. The reason contributing to this change was that during the data collection stage, I realized this course only

lasted for three months and students' improvements, if any, were not prominent and explicit. It was therefore very difficult to gauge the students' improvements in this short period of time. Furthermore, there was no intended follow-up investigation on the students after six months' time or so, for instance. Also, the effectiveness of the role of film in this course was, as predicted (in the second research question, which stayed unrevised), heavily affected by other factors that occurred in the learning process. Furthermore, when collecting background information on the students' views of how films had helped them improve their English in their past experience, an unexpected amount of interesting findings were generated. As students of this course were from diverse backgrounds and secondary schools, many different opinions towards the issue were gathered. The data collected was so rich and interesting that I decided to present them in an individual section. Therefore, the revised research question (number 1) emerged.

And instead of investigating the role of film in this course, I decided to investigate the *effectiveness* of the course as a whole, using film as teaching material, in improving students' English skills. The different factors affecting the learning process are also taken into account. Therefore, revised research question number 3 emerged.

The remaining Chapter is devoted to answering the three (revised) research questions.

5.2 Film and ESL: Students' past experience

Film, being one of the most popular forms of entertainment in modern people's life, is highly accessible everywhere. Foreign films, especially Hollywood's, have invaded many parts of our globe. In an attempt to investigate how films have

helped L2 learners in Hong Kong to improve their English abilities, I included the following question in all the student interviews, “What, in your past experience, has film helped you to improve, in terms of English language skills?” Student responses are analyzed; language and cultural problems encountered by them in watching films are also investigated, as they directly or indirectly contributed to the overall effectiveness of learning English and the learners’ motivation in watching films.

5.2.1 Authentic and natural language

All students agreed that the authentic, daily conversation in film is a valuable resource for language learning. The realistic, informal, natural conversational interactions in the normal lives of habitants in English-speaking-countries were something the students did not have access to. It was found from the pre-course questionnaire that most students (79%) indicated the item “slang, idioms, colloquial expressions” to be one of their most frequent difficulties encountered when watching films, and this situation was echoed by results of the summer pilot study as well (86% of Instructor A’s class; 88% of Instructor B’s class). This made logical sense: the authentic, natural, and slangy language in film gave them a peep at the target culture’s world, while at the same time it was very difficult for them to comprehend, as they did not have access to this aspect in their immediate surroundings. These natural conversations include slang, idioms, and colloquial expressions which are often used by native speakers, but are not taught in textbooks and English lessons. Timothy commented, “I got to know how foreigners really speak in this world, as they include slang in their conversations... you don’t get to learn slang and idioms in high school, right? Not even in university.” Even *if* some idioms and colloquial terms are occasionally taught in English lessons, films *do* offer a better way in the explanation

and exemplification of them. Yukie claimed, “the movie itself provided the location, occasion, manner, reason, and the way which the slang is being used, when, why, and how.” Being a (English) language education major himself, Pete put it precisely:

Learning language is not just about words, sentences or how to construct a meaning, but also how to incorporate them with body gestures, facial expressions, etc., to facilitate meaningful and effective communication. Through watching films, you learn not only to “speak” the language, but also how to “use” the language.

Indeed, the main aim of learning a second language is to equip one with the ability and skills to communicate with people from the target culture, using the target language. If you are not even aware of the way natives speak in their normal life, how are you going to communicate with them? The English learnt in textbooks is formal, modeled, and grammatically correct. However, what these textbooks lack is the authenticity and naturalness of the native speech used in the real world. That is why many foreign language learners, who have spent over 10 years of study on the target language, still find themselves speechless in trying to communicate even very simple messages to people from the target culture.

5.2.2 Benefits of using English captions

However, understanding an English film is not always easy for everybody. Difficult vocabulary and unfamiliar slang may discourage learners from watching that film altogether. Isabel, whose English was very weak, claimed, “if the vocabulary used was too difficult, I would feel less motivated to watch the film.” Fortunately, thanks to ever-advancing technology, captions/subtitles now serve as the ultimate solution to the problem. The captions work for different students in different ways; some preferred English captions, some Chinese, some both. Students who preferred English captions claimed that when the viewers could not understand the lines in the

film, they are prone to reading the captions; and reading English captions is at least better than reading Chinese captions. Isabel, on the other hand, expressed an opposite opinion. She preferred to have Chinese captions instead of English, as her listening skills were not even good enough to keep up with at least a little of the speedy conversations. If she did not even understand the story at all, she would be even less motivated to continue watching the film. In this case, English caption would just work to her disadvantage.

Captions are not only useful to intermediate ESL students, but are also a valuable support source for advanced speakers as well. Cora, whose English was on a par with native speakers, occasionally missed out lines spoken in films-- when they were spoken in idioms, in a mumbling fashion, or in a different accent. As she was always consciously and actively spotting American slang and idioms, she found turning on the English caption a big help. Without the English caption, she could not locate any unknown words in the dictionary, as she might have spelt them wrongly. With English captions, she could know how it was spelt and used. Nicole also compared her experience of watching English films with and without captions. Without captions, she claimed, the film “forced [her] to really listen to the lines,” while with Chinese captions, her eyes would just naturally follow the words. However, for the former situation, she “could only hear short and simple lines, while for more complicated and longer lines, [she] wouldn’t be able to catch them.”

Meanwhile, Hirosaki (the exchange student), citing his example of watching *Die Hard*, made use of both Japanese and English captions to enhance language learning: “First I watched in Japanese, so that I understand [sic] what they’re talking about, and then ah, second time, I watched in English, the third time in English, the fourth time in English...” In this way, he got to know the basic plot first, and then

proceeded to learn how the plot developed in the English language. However, this strategy depended very much on the learner's own motivation; many people would just give up when they come across films which looked too difficult to comprehend at first sight.

5.2.3 Listening, speaking, and conversation

Accustoming oneself to the native speaker's language and communication context through film is also believed to enhance listening, pronunciation, speaking, and conversation skills. Most students agreed on this. Evelyn claimed, "through constant listening, listening, and listening, I think it would help my pronunciation." Meanwhile, drawing from his own experience, Gilbert claimed that although his oral, listening, and vocabulary skills did improve temporarily, gradually these language skills would decline once he did not make an effort to keep them up: "Unless you keep up with watching one or two films per week, short term results can't sustain." Another student, Jessy, complained that although she has learnt new vocabulary, there is not much opportunity to use it, as her immediate surroundings do not involve any kind of English interactions.

5.2.4 Doorway to other cultures

As indicated in the self-assessment of English abilities section of the pre-course questionnaire, the item "familiarity with foreign cultural issues" scored one of the lowest overall mean together with "knowledge & use of vocabulary" (both 3). 50% of the students considered themselves "okay/average" in the culture issues, and 29% "not very good." As Hong Kong is basically a traditional Chinese society, it is not surprising that students find other cultures difficult to comprehend.

For people who never or rarely have the chance to travel abroad, films are an invaluable source of reference, telling them how people live on the other side of the globe, how they interact with each other, what standards and values they uphold—just like a “doorway to other cultures in the world.” Yukie claimed,

Sometimes, your English ability doesn't necessarily correlate with your familiarity and understanding of that country's culture. Through watching movies, as the locations are set in foreign places, and that the movie is shot according to the director's point of view, you get to see life, values, and behaviors of people from other countries, which is very good... I think that a good movie can “strike a chord” among people from different countries. They can also be the conversation topics for communication between different countries.

Meanwhile, Isabel, who mainly relied on reading Chinese subtitles to keep up with the plot, expressed that watching films did not really seem to have enhanced her English skills too much, but rather increased her familiarity with foreign cultural issues.

However, there are always two sides to a coin. While films presenting exotic culture can be an eye-opening experience for some people, others find it difficult to comprehend and thus may become discouraged from watching foreign films altogether. Sue, who was the only student in the class coming from a CMI secondary school and who had never watched foreign films, claimed that “due to the difference in cultural issues... western films aren't as attractive as local films.” And Yukie expressed, sometimes possessing advanced language skills does not necessarily equate with possessing the capacity, mindset, and attitude to appreciate and understand cultures which are very different from ours. In fact, Yukie herself was a good example. She was shocked the first time she watched *Trainspotting*, because the film was loaded with swear words, slang, sex, and violence, and she normally did not have contact with such kinds of films. Since her group was responsible for leading the discussion on this film, she had to force herself to understand it. Fortunately, after

several viewings, Yukie “ended up from totally clueless to eventually understanding more about what the movie’s talking about.” It did take her some time, effort, and perseverance, though.

5.2.5 Analytical and critical thinking

Actually, most of the students were not aware that film watching could be used to develop and train analytical and critical thinking skills. Most of them just treated film as an entertainment rather than a piece of text to be analyzed. Students who joined this course did not expect to go so deep as to analyze the films professionally or academically. The only student who was fully aware of employing critical thinking while watching films was Liz. She had taken English Literature in high school and got good grades for it in the HKCE and HKAL examinations (“B” grade and “A” grade respectively). English literature stresses critical thinking and includes the study of film as part of its HKAL syllabus (quote from HKAL handbook) Having been trained, Liz was always able to look at films with a critical eye. Hirosaki, though he did not express the concept “critical thinking” literally, somehow did manage to convey to us his experience of employing such skills after watching *Pelican Brief*: “Well, there’s some kind of serious film, like uh... the film which shows racial discrimination, or uh, sexual discrimination, I became like, anti-discrimination... .. after I watched *Pelican Brief*, or some kind of movie like that, we just talk about it, in many times. You know, usually we never talk about such serious films.” (These were his actual words, as his interviews were done in English.) Although he could not or did not state it explicitly, we know that the film *Pelican Brief* has somehow triggered him to think about issues such as racial/sexual discrimination, and when discussing such “serious” films with his friends/classmates,

he had already been employing critical thinking skills—to make judgments, to form his ideas and stand point, and to share them with others.

In conclusion, students in this course who watched films frequently in the past were generally aware of how watching English language films could help them in improving their English skills. The most prevalent view was that films contain abundant authentic, natural, slangy, and non-formal conversations which gave the students a glimpse of the fashion of communication and interaction in the real world. And this could rarely be found in formal language textbooks and English lessons at school. Other students stated the benefits of making use of captions to learn new and difficult vocabulary; when, how, and why were they used. And of course, film is an invaluable source to get to know other cultures of the world, their lifestyle, and their values. Fewer students realized their critical thinking skills could be developed and trained through film watching. However, this skill only comes after the others have been developed, since if you do not even understand the film (the language, the text, the story, the vocabulary, etc), it would be virtually impossible to analyze and critique the film in-depth.

5.3 The course ELT 3104: Factors affecting the learning process

It is impossible to just analyze the role of film as a medium for enhancing L2 learners' English abilities without concurrently giving attention to other variables which have a strong impact on the learning process. In this section, I have identified various variables under separate subheadings for analysis. They are looked at in terms of how they affect the learning process, whether they strengthen or weaken the use of film as a teaching tool for effective English language learning, and how each variable relates to others. The variables are as follows: The instructor (his role, personality,

interests, philosophy, lesson approach); The students (background & major, English proficiency, cinematic sophistication, personal interest, motivation); Student-centered approach; Choice of film; Cultural shock; Film knowledge covered; Classroom factors (workload, lesson arrangement, classroom atmosphere). The focus of analysis is on the Fall term class, while results from the summer pilot study are occasionally brought in for reference as necessary.

5.3.1 The instructor

The role of the instructor is an important factor influencing the learning process, as he is the person in charge of the course, syllabus, schedule, choice of film, and to a certain extent, the classroom atmosphere and lesson activities. Here we take a detailed look at the instructor of this course, Instructor A, and how his personality, interests, philosophy, and lesson approach affected the students' learning process in his course.

5.3.1.1 Personality, interests, philosophy & approach

Instructor A was an Englishman in his forties, gentle, friendly, easy-going, casual, and relaxed. He was not fond of Hollywood films; but he was a big fan of Sci-Fi films. His personal interests were reflected in his selection of film for the course in Fall term: *Cinema Paradiso*, *Life is Beautiful* (both Italian films), *Trainspotting* (Scottish drug film, with violence, sex, and drugs), *Alien* (classic Sci-Fi film), *Pulp Fiction* (cult turned mainstream), and *American Beauty* (dark drama requiring thinking). Among the films, *Trainspotting*, *Pulp Fiction*, and *American Beauty* were released as category III films (those under 18 years of age are prohibited from watching) in Hong Kong cinemas for their sex, violence, and bad language. It was

clear that his choice was not mainstream, as he stated in the interview, “I don’t try to use very simple, accessible films, I do try to use films that take a bit more thought, and um, a bit more difficult to approach.” Indeed, his choice of film did impose some difficulty on the part of the students in comprehending them, which is further discussed in the section **5.3.4 Choice of film**.

As discussed in Chapter 3, over the 8 years that it has been offered, this course has changed from originally a very writing-biased course to a very “oral” one. Instructor A explained the present aim of his course: to provide students with good opportunities to improve their English, fluency, learn vocabulary, idioms, and cultural knowledge of other countries and other people from films, and to develop students’ critical thinking skills. Being a fervid believer in the student-centered approach, Instructor A exerted minimal interference in the student-led discussions and presentations, allowing the students a high degree of freedom in both the organization and conduct of the presentations. (The strengths and weaknesses of his student-centered approach are discussed in detail later in the section Student-centered approach.) His only bottom line was that he strictly prohibited students from talking in Cantonese, for that gave him the impression that the students were not interested in the course. Apart from that, he got along very well with the students, and all students agreed that he was a very nice and helpful instructor.

5.3.1.2 The role of the “facilitator”

Instructor A acted as the “facilitator” rather than lecturer in the course, and the interviews showed that he was very conscious about it. On Thursday lessons, during which he was supposed to explain film techniques and concepts to students, he did it in a very casual, easy-to-understand, non-formal manner. He walked around and

joined in students' group discussions (which were usually formed by grouping students seated nearby each other), and when students gave negative comments on film clips he had shown, he did not even attempt to argue or explain, but just listened with a smile. His neutral standpoint and easy-going personality enabled students to express their opinions freely without the fear of being "wrong." And during Tuesday lessons which were run by students, he retreated to the back of the classroom and joined in the rest of the students as audience. He interfered only if the presenters got some concepts mixed up or confused. Often, he acted as a participant, and joined in games, activities, and group discussions. His hands-off policy had both positive and negative impacts on the lesson run-down, which are discussed in the section, **5.3.3 Student-centered approach.**

5.3.1.3 Students' views of Instructor A

Students generally thought Instructor A was a very nice and friendly instructor, and they appreciated his help and guidance on student-led discussions and presentations prior to the presentation dates. However, students did hope for more—they wanted Instructor A to give more explanations as well as his own comments and opinions on the films. Nicole stated, "I think [Instructor A] can talk more, I think I would be able to learn more if he can talk more about the films." Conveying this particular comment of the students to Instructor A in the interview, it was clear that he would still adamantly adhere to his principle: "my approach's student-centered, and I'm not gonna talk too much. It's not a lecture, it's meant to be an ELT course and they're meant to be the ones who're doing all the talking" and "I get plenty of chances to say what I want to say anyway." Obviously, he did not and would not let his own opinions get in the way of the approach.

Another issue was the instructor's bias towards certain students. Initially, I did not notice this, until the second interviews with the two (Chinese) Language Education majors, Isabel and Verona. As mentioned briefly in the last Chapter, these two students' English proficiency was rather weak, and they added the course late. Thus, both had some difficulties catching up with the rest of the class. Isabel, in particular, could not really fit in, and felt very "crushed" throughout the whole term because of her weaker English abilities. Both girls noticed that Instructor A often called on more or less the same students to read out passages/notes and to answer questions, which was very discouraging to the other often un-called students. As a language education major, Verona was able to provide the explanation to the teacher's behavior: "I, myself as a teacher, I know that this happens a lot, coz the teacher would want to go on with the class smoothly, no mistakes allowed, and wouldn't want anything to disrupt the run-down of the class, and those certain students (usually the same ones) could give the teacher what he wanted. That's why he tend to call on the same students." Isabel was deeply affected by the instructor's biased behavior. Claiming that Instructor A had *never* called on her, Isabel felt that she was the "supporting cast" to the "main characters." She also explained clearly the negative effects this behavior would have on students:

If the teacher pays more attention to a student, for example, he/she would build up more confidence in doing things in that lesson, while others would feel being neglected, thinking that even they worked hard, they wouldn't be "noticed" by the teacher. I have a feeling that he [Instructor A] is prone to praise a student's ability instead of effort... however, sometimes ability comes after effort, and he seems to be lacking in making encouragements to us, those less-gifted, or average English students, if you will.

Isabel's confession shed light on how a teacher's overt preference for "better" students would create bad feelings and discouragement among other "weaker" students. Verona also commented that the opportunity for her to practice oral skills

was diminished due to the Instructor's biased behavior. "Yes, he did provide us with the chance to discuss with our classmates in groups, but in the end, he'd still call on more or less the same students to summarize." Teachers themselves are often unaware of their biased preferences towards certain students, and as shown in this study, this could tremendously dampen the motivation and confidence of the "unfavored" students in learning the language.

5.3.2 The students

The students themselves and their backgrounds also play a significant role in the learning process. Here, I have identified various student factors that had direct effects on the students' own learning: their cinematic sophistication, English proficiency, personal interest, grouping, and motivation. Actually, all of these factors relate to each other intimately, and the change in one factor would affect the others as well.

5.3.2.1 Cinematic sophistication

Students' cinematic sophistication and receptiveness often determines what films can be shown and taught. From the start, it was clear that this class did not possess the same degree of cinematic sophistication and film knowledge that the summer class had. Most of the students' preference here was for straightforward Hollywood films, with a few exceptions (Timothy, Hirosaki). The students' lack of background knowledge and weak cinematic skills affected their learning and progress in the course. When asked to compare the two groups of students (summer & fall), Instructor A commented, "I think the students in the summer were much better actually, and I had students who're familiar with films and had home-made films,

they knew about editing, and so we got kind of a stronger technical basis, and also they seem in the summer I think they'd generally, or some of them had seen more films, and I'd got more of the background to work with. Whereas this particular class weren't really so strong." Indeed, this fall class took longer than usual to warm up, and in the second interview with Instructor A, he expressed that "they've not made as much progress as [he's] hoped." One example was the response to the film *Trainspotting*. Normally, according to Instructor A, this film received positive and enthusiastic response from students; they were excited by its hip style and kookiness. However, the fall class' response to this film was lukewarm. Even though the presentation of this film was led by proficient speakers (Yukie & Cora), the presentation had somehow failed to arouse any interest in the student audience at all. Probably, for them, a sudden shift from mainstream Hollywood films to a kinky Scottish drug film was too radical, and they did not know how to handle it. Thus, the so-called led discussion of the film went nowhere, no interesting insights were generated, and the lesson was full of silent periods and awkward moments. (Appendix E, p.156)

5.3.2.2 English proficiency

Students' different levels of English proficiency have a direct effect on their expression, sharing of ideas, and psychology. Isabel, as mentioned earlier, could not fit in and enjoy the class due to her weak English. Paring with proficient students on the first day she joined the course had totally "crushed" Isabel and she was burdened with the bad feeling thereafter, throughout the whole term. Meanwhile, her friend, Verona, from the same major, had a different experience. She was put into Nicole's group, and had lots of fun. She commented,

Talking about getting along with the classmates, I was first put into [Nicole's] group... the girls were kinda crazy, playful and talking to them seemed kinda

fun, I mean, our English was of comparable standard, we spoke unauthentic, Hong Kong-like English... it's like, I spotted your mistakes, and you spotted mine, but still I could understand what you said and you could understand what I said!

Verona also claimed that “maybe the first impression made a lasting mark in [her] memory,” and so her experience in the course was totally different from Isabel’s. In this case, both of them demonstrated that first impressions *did* matter.

On the other hand, in cases when Evelyn, Sue, and Isabel were first paired with proficient speakers such as Yukie and Cora, they seemed uncomfortable, pressured, and unable to express or share their opinions at all. However, the situation did get better when the students got more familiar with each other. For example, during the student presentation “*Gary Oldman: Good at Bad*” (Week 8), Evelyn was once again grouped with Yukie and Cora. By that day, they had got along very well already. Evelyn was more comfortable and at ease while speaking up, and was quite enthusiastic and active in discussion and participation as well. (Appendix E, p.160) This demonstrated that students with lower English proficiency tend to feel uncomfortable when grouped with high proficiency speakers during discussions. The situation, somehow, might improve after students cultivated a cordial relationship with each other. Once the rapport and friendly feeling existed, students felt less intimidated and became more confident and motivated to talk in English, even in front of very proficient speakers.

5.3.2.3 Personal interest

Evidences in this study showed that personal interest triggered increased conversation output. Students were enthusiastic in participation if the topics pertained to their personal interest and life experience. This was the case with the student presentation, “*Hollywood romantic comedy couples: Tom Hanks & Meg Ryan*” in

week 10. (Appendix E, p.163) Although the presentation was disappointing to Instructor A, as the games and discussion questions involved were fairly easy and superficial, it nevertheless got a very good response from the students. Especially during the debate on “Finding love through the internet,” students were enthusiastic and presented different interesting viewpoints. Sue, who usually did not speak up much, was particularly active and talkative, and even ended up winning the “Best Debater” award. On the following Thursday, Instructor A did a follow-up discussion on romantic comedies. Students were asked to list the strengths and weaknesses of romantic comedies, and male vs. female spectator’s point of view was explored. However, Instructor A’s effort in trying to engage students in deeper thinking and critical evaluation of the genre proved unsuccessful, as students generally welcomed the genre (maybe except Timothy). Even Instructor A himself commented that the students seemed to be really having fun discussing romantic comedies. He was particularly amazed that students came up with insights such as “You don’t need to think when you watch a romantic comedy” and “The plots are predictable” but still thought it was a good genre. The student response in the presentation of *American Beauty* was similar: students got into a heated debate of whether the character Colonel Fitts was gay or not. Furthermore, the pre-course questionnaire survey indicated that romance was the most popular film genre (86%), with comedy and drama second (both 79%). So in a nut shell, topics such as love, sex, relationships, and teenage problems received active response from students, as these are issues pertaining to their immediate daily experience, rather than say, the drug subculture presented in *Trainspotting*, which Hong Kong students found unfamiliar and unrelated.

Meanwhile, the lack of interest in certain topics also created negative results, such as the case of the presentation on “*Cartoon films*” in week 11 (Appendix E,

p.165). The cartoons included were: *Mulan*, *Toy Story 2*, *Wallace and Gromit*, and *Casper*. Despite the presenters' enthusiasm, the audience response was only lukewarm, mainly due to unclear explanations on lesson activities, somewhat confusing guidelines, and a lack of interest toward the cartoons. Very often, questions did not spark discussion, but instead, long periods of silence and bored faces prevailed. The male students looked particularly bored during this lesson, and Pete and Timothy later commented that "the cartoons they showed were boring." Again, this demonstrated that the "interest" factor is very important in language learning. Once learners are interested in the topic, they will participate more automatically.

5.3.2.4 Grouping

As mentioned in the last Chapter, students in this class joined the course with their existing friends from the same majors; thus they mainly sat together and ended up conducting discussions and presentations within the same groups often. Here were their "natural" groupings:

Table 5.1 Student grouping

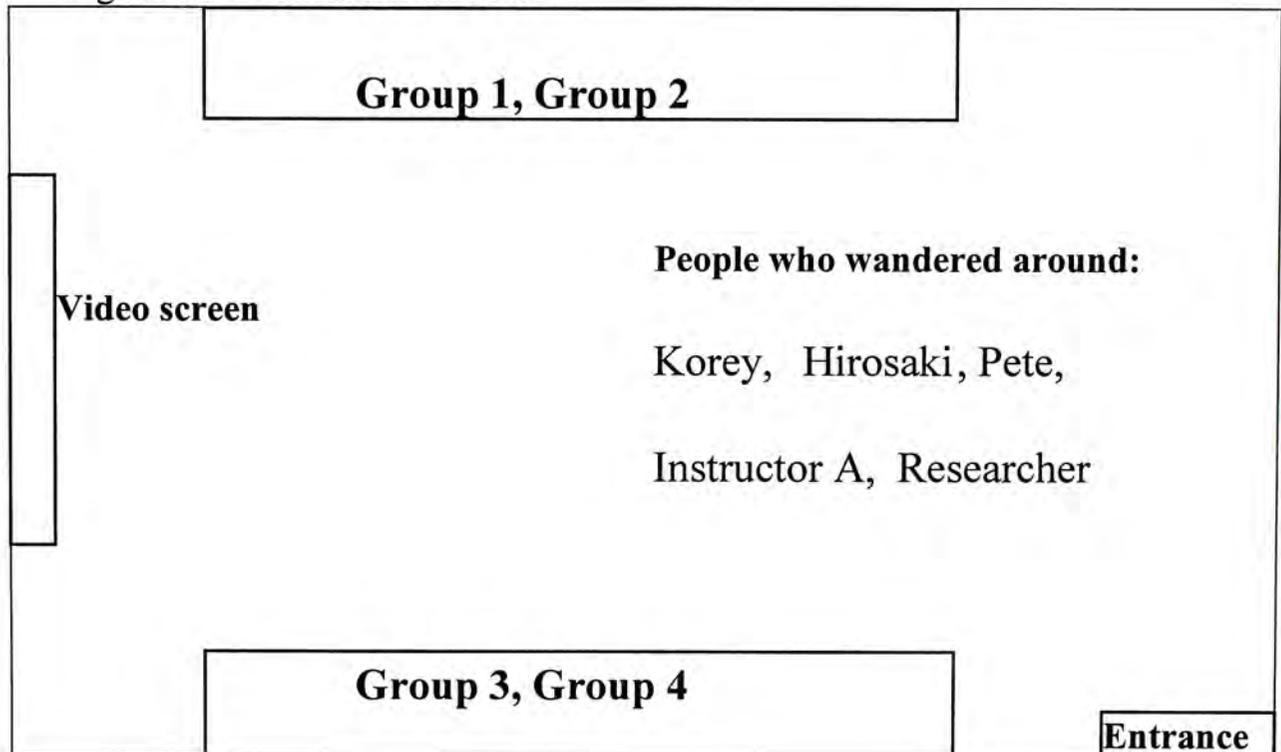
Group	Students	Major / Year	Remarks
1	Cora, Yukie	BBA , Yr 3	From same high school, both had advanced English skills and were good friends
2	Evelyn, Jessy, Nicole, Sue	BBA , Yr 2	Due to N's English fluency, she often acted as the spokesman. E & S had low Eng. Proficiency
3	Gilbert, Liz, Timothy	Geography, Yr 3	L spoke fluent Eng; G & T's Eng. was relatively worse
4	Isable, Verona	LED (Chinese), Yr 4	Both had low Eng. Proficiency
	Hirosaki (from Japan)	Exchange program, Yr 4	Low Eng. proficiency compensated by body gestures, relaxed & comfortable personality, and interesting comments
	Korey	BBA, Yr 2	Spoke fluent Eng, but was often absent
	Pete	LED (English), Yr 1	English was okay; but sometimes lacked enthusiasm

* Group numbers are temporarily assigned for analysis and discussion purposes.

Due to the arrangement of the seats in the classroom, students were prone to sitting in more or less the same place. The classroom, situated in LDS, was rectangular-shaped, and the chairs (attached with writing panels) were neatly aligned on both sides of it.

Usually, students of group 1 and 2 would sit on the window side, while group 3 and 4 the other side. Hirosaki and Korey usually sat on the side of group 3 and 4, while Pete seemed to be the only one who wandered around. This behavior was very different from the summer class. This could be attributed to two reasons: first, the arrangement of the classroom, and second, students in the fall term came with their own groups of friends.

Figure 5.1 Distribution of seats



First of all, the venue for the summer class was a rather small classroom situated within the Independent Learning Center (ILC), the place where students were supposed to borrow films from and watch films in. The classroom had a carpet, and chairs were randomly arranged. Since the classroom was rather small, no distinct “grouping” of the seats was possible. Comparatively speaking, this classroom had a more intimate and cozy feeling than the one in LDS. Secondly, the students in the summer class did not know each other at first, and their majors ranged widely, from Chinese, Journalism & Communication, BBA, Chemistry, to Psychology. They warmed up quickly, and got along very well. The summer course was meant to be

intensive, and so students usually only took one course, for it already occupied a lot of their time. Moreover, the lesson time was 9:30am to 12:15pm, every weekday except Wednesday, and students often managed to go to lunch together afterwards. For the fall class, the lesson time was Tuesday 2:30pm to 4:15pm, and Thursday 5:30pm to 6:15pm. Therefore, students saw each other less than in the summer class, and that might have contributed to a less-intimate and warm relationship among the students.

When discussing this problem with the students in the interviews, they agreed that this phenomenon had somewhat hindered their learning. Yukie, in particular, felt that they should sit with different people every time. As she and Cora were such good friends, Yukie commented that a lot of the times during discussion, even when Cora had not made her comments yet, she would already *know* what she was going to say. This rendered the discussion less stimulating and rewarding. Yukie claimed, "I think talking with different people is better, like I talked with [Hirosaki], or [Nicole], and I got different people's points of view. And also, female students' view might be different from male students' view." Other students also realized this, and attempted to "break up" the groups. For instance, the presenters of "*Cartoon films*" (Evelyn, Jessy, Nicole, Sue) assigned students into random groups hoping that students get to talk with more "other" people outside their usual "groups." However, Nicole commented that this could only be done by force (on the part of the instructor or presenters): "[I]t's hard for us not to sit with our friends when we came into the classroom, I think it has to be done by force, like the random assignment we did." Other students viewed the issue as less problematic. Liz noticed that at the beginning it was very non-interactive, but claimed that the situation improved towards the end of the term.

From the classroom observation, it was seen that during the first two months (September to October), students did not interact much with other students “outside” their own groups of friends. The situation improved by early November, and students started chatting across the room with each other. However, on November 5 (Week 10), when I asked for Isabel and Verona’s names (as the two LED girls had similar names starting with the same letter), Hirosaki and Korey both did not know; they had mixed up the two girls’ names. Nevertheless, from Week 11 onwards until the end of the course, students clearly had “warmed up,” and the classroom atmosphere got exciting and friendly. They exchanged email addresses and ICQ numbers for future contacts, and they have been holding occasional gatherings ever since. This demonstrated that a class with students sticking to their own friends may need some time and effort, on the part of the instructor, to facilitate whole class discussion and interaction. However, Instructor A, upholding his *laissez-faire* principle, did not interfere. The instructor’s hands-off approach slowed down the warming up process. However, given enough time for students to develop their relations with each other, the situation would improve.

5.3.2.5 Motivation

Overall, the students’ self motivation in learning English was quite strong. Among the class of 14 students, 8 had been on exchange programs abroad (57%), which was a very high rate, when compared to the two summer classes [Instructor A’s class—1 out of 7(17%); Instructor B’s class—1 out of 9 (13%)]. Moreover, Yukie had lived with an exchange student for one year, and she would also be going on a one-term exchange trip to Santa Barbara in the coming term. Meanwhile, Timothy was living with a black exchange student from USA, and Hirosaki himself was an

exchange student living with a Hong Kong local student. This all demonstrated their strong motivation in learning English.

Motivation also has an intimate relation with all of the factors discussed above (cinematic sophistication, English proficiency, personal interest, and grouping). As indicated from observation results, students' average cinematic sophistication narrowed the choice of film to be worked with in class. For instance, many students commented that "black-and-white" films were slow-paced and boring, and they did not understand why Instructor A used them to explain film techniques. This sophistication gap had a negative effect on students' motivation in the course. In his first interview, Pete commented, "I don't like having clips cut out from different films to elaborate points, and also, showing those 1930s black-and-white films just makes people fall asleep." The most disastrous example was the case with the illustration of the cross-cutting technique by showing scenes (around 20 minutes) from *The Decalogue*. (Please refer to Appendix E, p.159) It was a 1987 black-and-white Polish film, slow-paced, thoughtful, with little dialogue, but lots of psychological indications, and rather difficult to comprehend. Even Hirosaki, a sophisticated viewer, commented that due to limited lesson time, it was too difficult to comprehend anything about the scenes shown. Other students got annoyed at having to read the small English subtitles and drag through the slow-paced film. In the end, Instructor A admitted that the film did not work and he would instead use another film, *Godfather*, to illustrate cross-cutting in the future.

Meanwhile, English proficiency also had a direct relationship with students' motivation. As mentioned earlier, when low-proficient students were grouped with proficient students, they showed signs of uneasiness and incompatibility. This might be fixed by the passing of time and building up of friendship between the students, but

some students might be affected by the uneasiness for a longer period of time, such as Isabel's case. On the other hand, both Gilbert and Hirosaki indicated that the lack of vocabulary had rendered them incapable of expressing their ideas. Thus, low English proficiency tended to diminish students' motivation during class discussions and activities for at least a short period of time. Unfortunately, the effects that English proficiency has on long term motivation is beyond the scope of this study.

On the other hand, the lack of English proficiency may be compensated for by personal interest. Having strong personal interest in something could have a positive effect on one's motivation. Cora cited in her interview an example of her friend and herself. Their interest in the American situation comedy *Friends* had motivated them to go searching on the web for its scripts of the latest seasons, and they had learnt a lot of American slang and expressions from those scripts. Pete, whose interest lay in musicals, suggested including *The Sound of Music* in the course: "I would again emphasize 'interesting,' that's the most important part, it's not effective to show 'heavy' films. This course should be more relaxing, but watching films that are so 'heavy' turns people off." While when the discussion topics such as romance and relationships were of immediate concern and interest to the students, even low-proficient and quiet students could be driven to increase conversation output a lot more, and vice versa. Believing that interest and motivation are important to language learning, Instructor A commented, "I think if a teacher can motivate students to pursue a subject, the content of a course... you're really on the road to helping them learn English" and "choosing topics that people are interested in is very important."

Last but not least, the grouping format also closely affected students' motivation. Low-proficiency students felt uneasy when grouped with proficient students, which had a negative effect on their self-image, confidence, and motivation.

Students also expressed that being in their own groups of friends for discussion was not good. It would be better if students were assigned (maybe randomly) to different groups each time when doing group discussion, in order to expose students to a larger scope of views and to stimulate discussion.

5.3.3 Student-centered approach

Being an ELT course, this course was designed to be student-centered. However, students discovered that this course was more “student-centered” than other ELT courses. All students welcomed this student-centered lesson structure as it gave them more freedom and space to speak and interact in English as well as to hold discussions and presentations. For student-led discussions on assigned films, there was a basic format including film summaries, games, activities, scene viewing, group discussions, and so on. The specific details were to be decided by the presenting groups themselves. For presentations on student-chosen topics, students were basically free to do whatever they wished, which meant that they did not even have to follow the strict presentation format. One creative group in the summer class presented a video of mock role-play scenes directed, shot, and acted by the group members themselves. This demonstrated the freedom, flexibility, and autonomy Instructor A granted to the students.

In question 7 of the post-course questionnaire, students were asked what they liked best about the class; most of them indicated it was the “relaxing and unpressurized learning atmosphere” and the small-class format. Pete commented, “Good for me to have a course like this in a stressful week.” Indeed, a typical Tuesday class (student-led discussion/presentation) would include games and activities during which students could participate and move around. The rewards to the winning

students of the games and questions were usually candies, chocolates, and occasionally small gifts such as the origami roses in the *American Beauty* presentation. Towards the end of the term, as students got along better, the Tuesday classes were usually full of fun and laughter. Cora commented that she has “never taken any ELT courses that [the students] can play games every lesson” and that each lesson she just looked forward to “what kinds of films that [the class]’s going to watch, and what kinds of games [the class] was going to play!”

The strengths to this student-centered approach were the interactive and relaxing environment which students could participate in, and speak English in a pressure-free environment. Meanwhile the weaknesses of this approach lay in the “loose structure” that resulted, leading to superficial discussions and silent periods, as in the presentations of *Cinema Paradiso* and “*Cartoon Films*.” One of the key determining factors was the presenters’ management of time. With each presentation, Instructor A would retreat to the back of the classroom and join the audience. He would exert minimal interference, listen, and smile. Letting students “run the show” sometimes caused inevitable misses.

Instructor A wanted students to be the active participator of the lessons while he himself acted only as the facilitator. Students, on the other hand, wanted something more or, different. Many of the students commented they would like to learn more knowledge related to film. This is discussed later in the section, “Film knowledge covered.” Other students would like to learn more about presentation skills. Liz complained about the lack of guidelines prior to her presentation, while Cora complained about the lack of feedback from Instructor A after her presentation. Pete expressed that the free choice of the content for the student-presentations resulted in boring presentations and wasted time. Other students complained that there were too

many presentations, while discussions on films were not thorough enough. Still, others hoped the lesson to focus more on “English skills” rather than “filmic devices.” Sue was a little disappointed as she initially thought that this course was going to be focusing on how the English language was used in film, instead of how the film was shot.

Furthermore, as the approach encouraged autonomy and self-discipline, students could easily get away with not watching the films. Isabel expressed her explanation to why there was a lack of response in the *Trainspotting* presentation: “[I]t’s the problem with the students, they didn’t watch it (the film), I guess the teacher has to think of some ways to *make* the students participate... when some students didn’t see the film, the atmosphere would be like, dead.” This was true, as one student revealed to me that his group member had not even watched the films they presented (student-chosen topics)! Later, I realized this “group member” actually did not watch half the assigned films as well!

The student-centered approach had its natural strengths and weaknesses. However, the instructor’s role did also play an important influence upon the implementation of the lesson structure. His free style and flexible nature encouraged students to participate, but this lesson approach of his also caused problems such as loose lesson structure, bad time management, and students getting away with not watching the films/doing the work. Timothy commented, “he can exert more demand and requirement, to a certain extent.” However, in this case, Instructor A, being a firm believer in the student-centered approach and being generally lenient, would probably stick to his usual ways.

5.3.4 Choice of film

As this course uses film as the content for English language activities, the choice of film is especially vital in motivating students. The films used in this course can be classified into three groups according to their purposes. First, the six assigned films presented by six groups of students; second, self-chosen films involved in the student presentations; and third, all other film clips used by Instructor A over the term to illustrate film techniques or concepts. The list of films used were as follows:

Table 5.2 Films discussed in class

Assigned films:	Films from student presentations:	Clips shown in classes from:
<i>Cinema Paradiso</i> (1988) <i>Life is Beautiful</i> (1997) <i>Trainspotting</i> (1996)* <i>Alien</i> (1979) <i>Pulp Fiction</i> (1994)* <i>American Beauty</i> (1999)*	<i>Leon</i> (1994) <i>The Fifth Element</i> (1997) <i>Dim Sum</i> (1984) <i>Joy Luck Club</i> (1993) <i>Sleepless in Seattle</i> (1993) <i>You've Got Mail</i> (1998) <i>Mulan</i> (1998) <i>Toy Story 2</i> (1999) <i>Wallace & Grommit</i> (1992, 93, 95) <i>Casper</i> (1995)	<i>The 39 Steps</i> (1935) <i>Blackmail</i> (1929) <i>Goodfellas</i> (1990) <i>The Badlanders</i> (1958) <i>Notorious</i> (1946) <i>Young and Innocent</i> (1937) <i>Metropolis</i> (1926) <i>The Decalogue</i> (1987) <i>Psycho</i> (1960) <i>Deliverance</i> (1972) <i>Shoot the Piano Player</i> (1960) <i>High Anxiety</i> (1983) <i>Airplane!</i> (1980)

*These films were released as Category III movies in Hong Kong for their sex, violence, and bad language.

According to the post-course questionnaire results, 71% of the students thought that the general choice of film in this course was “quite interesting,” while 21% thought it was “okay,” and only 7% thought it was “very interesting.” In the summer class, 57% of its students thought the films used were “quite interesting,” and 43% “very interesting.” It seemed that students from the summer class enjoyed Instructor A’s selection of film more than the fall class. Except *Alien*, all other films in the fall class were also used in the summer, plus three more: *Billy Elliot* (2000), *2001: Space Odyssey* (1968), and *Dancer in the Dark* (2000). Because there were fewer students in the summer class (9 students), there were fewer student final presentations, leaving time for more assigned films to be included. (Please see

Appendix G9, course outline for ELT 3104, summer 2001) Since these three additional films used in the summer class were very different in terms of style, genre, and theme, it is not predictable whether if given the same selection of films (including the three), students of the fall class would generate a better response.

When asked about their comments in the interviews on the assigned films, about half of the students responded they were quite satisfied with Instructor A's choice, while other students responded averagely. Hirosaki, in particular, expressed that he was "very satisfied," even though he had watched all the films except *Alien* in Japan already. Gilbert commented: "[Instructor A] did a good job in introducing us to different kinds of film... such as *Trainspotting*... now I have more exposure to other 'alternative' films; I don't object to them." Both Yukie (on *Trainspotting*) and Gilbert (on *American Beauty*) thought that watching films with "deeper meanings" gave them the pleasure of exploration. Sue, who never watched any English films at all, turned out to be quite satisfied with and receptive to Instructor A's choice of film. Among all presentations of the assigned films, the presentations on *Pulp Fiction* and *American Beauty* generated the best responses from the students. That was probably due to the fact that students had got more acquainted with each other towards the end of the term, and they gradually understood what Instructor A's expectations for the presentations were and what they should be doing in class.

Concerning the two Italian films at the beginning, students generally thought it was not appropriate to put non-English films in an ELT course, and should be dropped. After all, they did not expect to have to listen to European dialogue and read English subtitles. Other students suggested including other films. Cora and Korey thought that Instructor A's choice for this course was biased towards those genres that he liked, while students might prefer some other types, such as Hollywood films and

romantic comedies. Despite Timothy's hatred for Hollywood films, he still thought that "putting just one Hollywood film alongside non-mainstream films provides a chance for the students to compare and contrast the difference." Meanwhile, Jessy commented that instead of including Hollywood films, the course could include "some low-budget movies or movies without famous actors and actresses" (from Question 9, post-course questionnaire). Following up on this response, in the interview she gave the example *Dancer in the Dark*. (This film was actually included in the summer course). She commented, "[F]or people who don't normally watch any foreign films, they'd be really shocked if you give them something like *Trainspotting*. But if you're used to watching them, you could learn to like them and widen your selection choices." This demonstrated that alternative and culturally diverse films could still be introduced to mainstream Hollywood filmgoers, provided there is adequate preparation, guidance, and time for the students to digest.

Looking closely at the presentations on students' self-chosen topics/films, it was clear that students aimed for topics/films not included in the assigned films and lesson content. The first presentation, "*Gary Oldman: Good at Bad*," focused on the talented actor Gary Oldman, and his two roles as the evil characters in *Leon* and *The Fifth Element*. The second presentation, "*A Chinese Director in Hollywood—Wayne Wang*," explored the issues of mother-daughter relationship, generation/culture gap, identity, love and marriage in two of his famous films, *Dim Sum* and *Joy Luck Club*. The third presentation, "*Hollywood romantic comedy couples: Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan*," presented a comparison and contrast of *Sleepless in Seattle* and *You've Got Mail*. The fourth, which was also the last student presentation, focused on "*Cartoon films*"—*Mulan*, *Toy Story 2*, *Wallace and Gromit*, and *Casper*. The first three presentations went quite smoothly, although the discussions and analysis in the

presentation of the romantic comedies was lacking in depth. However, the classroom atmosphere was very good and students showed fervent interest in the topic. For the last presentation on *Cartoon Films*, the lukewarm response from the audience was due partly to the somewhat confusing organization and guidelines of the presentation (one of their group members admitted to me in the interview that they did not rehearse before the presentation), and partly to the choice of cartoon films. Most of the audience, especially the male students, did not seem interested at all. Questions from the presenters did not spark lively discussion but only long periods of silence. Therefore, the choice of film played a significant role contributing to the success or failure of the presentation in regard. In order to fix this problem, Timothy suggested giving students a list of films to choose from for their presentations, so that things would not go out of control so easily.

On the other hand, students' main response to the third category of film clips, which were shown in lessons to illustrate certain film techniques or concepts, was not so positive. Out of the 14 films included, 9 of them were black-and-white, and the oldest film was *Metropolis*, made in 1926. The interviews showed that students generally associated dated, black-and-white films with boredom and slow pace. Jessy commented that she got bored with the clips shown in class not due to the film itself, but due to the fact that students did not know the context of the film. It was difficult for students to appreciate and comprehend the films if they were only shown in bits and pieces. Pete, emphasized repeatedly in his post-course questionnaire as well as the two interviews, that "it's not a good idea to chop up the film into bits and pieces." However, he was the only student who gave the explicit analysis; no other student went so far as to offer explanation and analysis to the lukewarm response in watching the film clips. Lastly, there was one common view that everybody agreed on, that

was, the “*Killing*” series from *The Decalogue* (consisted of 10 series) was too difficult to understand, too boring, too slow-paced, not in English (Polish), and should be dropped. Instructor A, after seeing the negative response of the students, claimed in the last interview that he will drop this film and use *Godfather I* instead to illustrate cross-cutting techniques.

5.3.5 Cultural difference

The biggest problem that students of the fall class encountered when watching these films were the issues of cultural difference. Many students, because of their low cinematic sophistication and lack of access to relatively alternative films, found the cultures presented in some of the films “very shocking.” Therefore, not all of them were able to fully comprehend, appreciate, and enjoy the films. In this fall class, most students were average-viewers used to watching mainstream Hollywood films, except for Timothy, whose preference was documentary, alternative, and cult, and Sue, who never watched western films at all.

Although the first two films were Italian, they were not difficult to understand, provided students followed the story from the English subtitles. *Alien*, on the other hand, is a totally different genre—Sci-Fi. Provided that you have watched Sci-Fi films before, no matter what language they are in, this film should not be a problem. The “problematic” films of this course were *Trainspotting* and *Pulp Fiction*. Although *American Beauty* was not “your usual Hollywood film”, as it portrayed the shattering of the American dream and the destructive dark psyche of human beings, it was nevertheless more widely-known in Hong Kong when compared to the two mentioned above. Also, the themes in this film—love, sex, relationships, work, school, teenage angst, and mid-age crisis—are themes that people around the world can relate to in

their lives. In contrast, the theme(s) presented in *Trainspotting* and *Pulp Fiction* were not experiences that normal Hong Kong people would have in their immediate surroundings, and so might present as “cultural shock” to first-time viewers. However, as alternative as they might be, they can still be used as an effective tool for language learning, provided that there were adequate pre-viewing explanation, good presentation management, and a cordial classroom atmosphere. I will now discuss how the culture presented in these two films affected students’ motivation and interest in the classroom, and what Instructor A did to overcome these problems.

Trainspotting (1996) was, simply, a drug film. Loaded with heavily-accented Scottish English, speedy dialogue, and local slang, its lines are definitely challenging to the ear—even for advanced English speakers. Besides, its hectic MTV style, unconventional editing, and kinky visual images are something that a “*Titanic*” viewer would not be too happy about. It was the third film to be viewed, following *Cinema Paradiso* and *Life is Beautiful*. After seeing two Italian films in an ELT course as a start, students generally did not know what to expect from the next film. Prior to the viewing, Instructor A did not inform students anything about the film. As this film had usually received pretty good response from the students in previous terms, Instructor A did not expect it to be problematic. However, he did introduce one scene from *Trainspotting*, which was accompanied by the song “Perfect Day.” Students were asked to fill in the lyrics for the song as they watched the scene. Other than that, he did not give any warnings or guidelines to the students. Thus, students ended up getting a big “cultural” surprise.

Yukie, one of the presenters of this film, admitted she was shocked when watching it for the first time. She commented that due to the large amount of swear words and slang throughout the film, it was very hard for people who do not have

enough contact with foreign cultures to understand it. However, she did overcome the problem. Here was her feelings after watching the film:

Actually I was very shocked the first time I watched it, but gradually, during the second time, and also reading the chapter titles as well (on DVD), I ended up from totally clueless to eventually understanding more about what the movie's talking about. And this makes the movies more attractive, as you need to give it some time and thought, which makes your impression deeper as well.

When she was asked about the same film again in her second interview, she had come to a insightful realization. “[A]fter viewing films like *Trainspotting*, I feel it’s true that some other Hollywood films are really shallow.” Once she was given the two types of film to compare and contrast with, she immediately spotted the difference.

The presentation, as we have seen earlier, was not successful at all. Despite the presenters’ (Cora and Yukie) fluent English and good presentation skills, the response from the audience was lukewarm. The discussion questions were straightforward and did not involve any kind of critical analysis and deep thought. Students later (in their interviews) expressed that it would have been much better if Instructor A had provided some sort of explanation or preparation on the film beforehand.

Fortunately, the presentation on *Pulp Fiction* was a totally different case. Being aware of the students’ “cultural shock” they might face on “alternative” films, Instructor A prepared two handouts and devoted a whole single lesson (prior to the presentation date) in explaining and preparing students for the upcoming presentation on *Pulp Fiction*. (Appendix E, p.166) The narrative of *Pulp Fiction* is non-linear and involves three inter-locking stories. This film includes many swear words, slang, bad language, and speedy dialogue. The film also touches on drugs, sex, piercing, violence, gangsters, fast food, and religious references. It is also highly allusive, and meant to pay homage to the 50s and 60s’ American culture, film noir, the “Macho code” honored in gangster films, and French New Wave director Jean Luc Goddard.

Instructor A briefly talked about all of these in the lesson. He also showed clips from films which *Pulp Fiction* made references to: *Deliverance*, *Psycho*, and *Shoot the Piano Player*. The themes and motifs presented in this film are American's culture (50s and 60s' pop icons and music, fast food, gangster, film noir, violence) and subculture (drugs, piercing), which Hong Kong people would find unfamiliar and unrelated. So, the explanation beforehand was necessary and useful in preparing students for the film.

The presenters for this film were Isabel, Verona, and Pete. Isabel and Verona were the Language Education majors who also took part in the "romantic comedies" presentation alongside Cora and Yukie. Knowing that their "romantic comedies" was not liked by Instructor A, and probably did not get a very good grade, Isabel and Verona were determined to "save their GPA" by doing a presentation on *Pulp Fiction* as best as they could. Since they knew this was one of Instructor A's favorite films, and that he had big expectations on the presentation, they worked very hard to prepare for the presentation. They watched the film 2-3 times, and searched the Internet and library for references. They also met with Instructor A and got help and notes of references from him. They even came to talk to me beforehand, as I had written a paper on *Pulp Fiction* in my undergraduate film class. These efforts, however, were not shared by Pete, their other group member. Isabel and Verona expressed to me later in the second interviews that actually Pete had not put in any effort at all. However, not wanting anything bad to happen to their presentation grade, they decided not to let Instructor A know about Pete's non-participation.

The presentation itself went very well. (Appendix E, p.167) In terms of content, it was loaded with rich information; in fact, some parts were omitted due to the lack of time. The games were nicely designed and generated much enthusiasm

among the students. Of course, Isabel, Verona, and Pete's English was not fluent, and included quite a lot of grammatical errors. However, the fun atmosphere created compensated for that. Although students did not necessarily become more familiar with the American drug, fast food, and gang culture presented in this film than in *Trainspotting*, they were at least more prepared for it; Instructor A's pre-viewing preparation had helped them understand more, if not all, of what was going on in the film. In the end, Instructor A was quite pleased with the presentation and students' general response.

The two contrasting presentations of *Trainspotting* and *Pulp Fiction* demonstrated how unfamiliar foreign culture presented in films could be confusing to students, thus generating negative response and affecting the learning atmosphere. Nevertheless, with prior guidance and explanation, the instructor could prepare students for such films. In this way, students knew what to expect in the film and would thus be less shocked. Liz, when talking about her surprise at seeing nudity and sex scenes in *Trainspotting*, commented:

I didn't expect Trainspotting to be like that, I think it would be better if [Instructor A] could give us some explanation or preparation on the film beforehand. Because I watched this film with some male classmates of mine, it was kinda embarrassing... (laughs)

Instructor A, in his last interview, admitted that students seemed to like what he gave them, "these sheets which kinda introduce and give them a bit of background to help with the film." He also added that he could do one for *Trainspotting* if he uses it again in the future.

5.3.6 Film knowledge covered

The amount of film knowledge covered directly determines how strong a technical base the students have for the expression of their ideas and insights in film.

The first two weeks and all the Thursday lessons thereafter were devoted to introducing and discussing film techniques and concepts. The post-course questionnaire survey indicated that 50% of the class found the film knowledge covered “quite adequate,” while only 7% (one student) thought it was “very adequate,” and all others (43%) thought it was just “okay.” When asked to explain their views in the interviews, students’ comments on the topic in regard basically fell under two groups. Some students thought that too many lessons were devoted to student-led discussion and presentations, while lectures on film terms, techniques, and concepts became inadequate. Another group of students felt that the course focused on the analysis of film too much; they would have preferred more lectures on the improvement of English skills, as this was an ELT course.

Timothy, Pete, and Liz expressed that due to too many presentations, little room and time was left for the lecturing of film techniques and analysis. They basically wanted Instructor A to talk more. Timothy commented,

Err... but I want to um, listen to more of, well, in the beginning, [Instructor A] taught us a little bit of film techniques, I don't know whether it's because he thought they're too difficult or unnecessary or what, but I expected him to teach us more of the stuff in that area. I mean skills related to watching films. For example, all we know is POV, always POV, I got tired of POV, so I decided not to talk about it in our presentation, it's too boring.

At the beginning, as Timothy mentioned, Instructor A did talk about some film terms and concepts, but they were just very basic, such as narrative patterns, camera angles, different kinds of shots, montage, mise-en-scene, filmic devices, etc. However, the “lectures” were usually given during the Thursday classes, which were single-period lessons of 45 minutes. The short lesson time could not accommodate much. Liz commented, “If you ask me what I’ve learned, I might not even remember.” Jessy, meanwhile, also attributed the inadequate film skills taught to the lack of time: “[G]iven the time span of the lesson format now, all [Instructor A] could do was

introduce some basic filmic techniques, he didn't have any time left for other stuff such as vocabulary, critical and analytical thinking, etc. So, I think he's already done his best." The lack of film knowledge, techniques, and vocabulary had hindered students' expression in designing presentation discussion questions and activities. For instance, in the presentation on *Trainspotting*, the only questions related to film techniques were asking students to identify filmic devices. The same question, "Name the filmic devices used in this scene" occurred in three of the sub-questions. The "technical" questions in other group presentations were mainly on POV shots, music, narrative, and filmic devices as well. Obviously, how much film knowledge was learnt on the part of the students was reflected in their design of the presentation questions, and these in turn reflected whether the instructor's lecture on film techniques was enough or not.

Meanwhile, some students felt that Instructor A did not explain clearly the few film terms taught. From the classroom observation, it seemed that the students understood what the terms meant, as there were no particular incidents of students asking for the clarification or explanation of terms. However, below the surface, things seemed to be different. Isabel confessed that,

We didn't even really understand the terms in the notes, and occasionally he threw out some French terms, we got very confused! ... And then I tried to ask other classmates, but they also didn't know what that term meant! I remember one time, [Instructor A] looked very surprised when he discovered that we didn't even understand the difference between a shot and a scene!

However, only Isabel and Verona confessed having this problem; maybe it was due to their adding the course in the last add/drop phase (Week 3), which meant they missed the first two weeks' four lessons, and so they had some difficulty catching up.

Other students would have liked the course to focus more on English language skills rather than film knowledge. Compared to the other four ELT courses she had

taken before, Cora claimed she “didn’t learn a lot of English language skills in this course.” She also felt that Instructor A did not give her group enough feedback on their presentations. Hirosaki, on the other hand, confessed that the lack of vocabulary rendered him unable to express his thoughts and feelings. He claimed, “the teacher never taught us to like, you know, expression. Express our feelings or vocabulary, except the movies terms.” A lot of the times during class, he had some ideas in mind but could not find the right vocabulary or phrases to express them. Meanwhile, Sue thought that since this was an ELT course and not a film course, the focus should have been on English instead of film. Prior to taking the course, she expected something totally different, that the focus would be on “English texts used in film”: analyzing native speech—daily conversations, slang, colloquial expressions, etc., and familiarizing students with them.

Concluding this part, as this was a course focusing on the discussion of film in English, knowing and using related technical terms and concepts were important. However, many students felt they did not have adequate film knowledge and vocabulary to put their thoughts and feelings towards the films into words. Students attributed this negative result to the lack of time for Instructor A to lecture. As there are always two sides to a coin, allocating more time for student discussions and presentations tended to lessen the time for the teacher to talk. Since Instructor A’s approach has always been student-centered, he would very probably not change the present course structure.

5.3.7 Workload & other classroom factors

5.3.7.1 Workload and assignments

This course's main emphasis was on student-led discussions and presentations. The workload mainly fell on three parts: student-led discussion, student-presentation, and a short paper. All of the discussions on assigned films and presentations of self-chosen topics were done as groups, and the number of student-led discussions each student had to join depended on the class size. For example, during the summer class, there were altogether 8 assigned films, but only 9 students. Therefore, spreading out the work, each student was responsible for 2 led discussions. In contrast, the fall class, there were only 6 assigned films but 14 students, and so each student was responsible for only one led-discussion. In addition, students in both classes also had to do a presentation on topics/films chosen by the group themselves. Since the summer course was meant to be intensive, and one day's lesson was equivalent to one week's lesson in the normal term, the workload in the summer was much heavier than in the fall, as the summer students each had to do 3 presentations while the fall students only needed to do 2.

When asked about the workload of the course, 79% of the students in the fall class thought it was "fair," while 14% "quite little," and only 7% (one student) thought it was "quite heavy." In fact, the light workload of the course was one of the reasons contributing to the relaxing environment of the class. The assessment put the heavy weight on "participation in class," which comprised 30% of the total grade, while "film presentation," "leading discussion of assigned movie," and "written papers" counted 20% each.

While students generally preferred less to more work, some students thought that the course focused too much on the oral aspect while the written side was almost

totally neglected. The only written assignment required was a short scene analysis (2-3 pages) on any one scene discussed in class or from the students' self-chosen presentation films. (Appendix G3) Liz expressed the view that she would like the course to put a bit more focus on the writing component, as she "did expect year 3 courses to be more comprehensive." Other students, such as Gilbert and Evelyn, agreed that adding one more assignment—asking students to write a commentary or summary of the assigned film in class might be more effective as "some of [their] fellow classmates haven't watch [sic] the movie before they attend [sic] the class." (Evelyn's comment on post-course questionnaire) So, in a nutshell, the workload was light, the instructor was lenient; most students did their viewing and preparation work, but still some others did not.

5.3.7.2 Classroom atmosphere

As mentioned in the Student-centered approach section, when asked what they liked best about this course, 9 out of the 14 students mentioned it was the relaxing and friendly classroom atmosphere. Korey commented in the questionnaire, "The atmosphere is friendly and relaxing. Also, there're interaction among instructor and students. All of these are so important to facilitate the learning of both oral and listening skill [sic]." In fact, many students joined this course because of the good "word of mouth" from friends or other students who had taken this course before. However, the course did not turn out totally as these students had expected, as the class warmed up very slowly, and students only got along with each other well towards the end of the class. Gilbert commented, "[I]t seemed they [the students] were kinda slow in mixing with each other, for a friend of mine who had also taken this course said that the students in his class got very well with each other very

soon... but I guess that had to do with different personalities.” He continued, “I think if we can get along better with each other sooner, it might contribute to an even better learning environment.” (from second interview) Hirosaki expressed that sometimes, he wanted to make comments on the scenes shown in class, but refrained from doing so partly due to the lack of the right vocabulary and partly due to the dull atmosphere of the class: “[O]ther students never spoke, speak in the class [sic].” “Just quiet and sit tight.” (from second interview) In other words, if the class warmed up earlier, there would be a more positive impact upon the learning atmosphere, as students would be more motivated to talk in a friendly classroom atmosphere than a strict, tense, and dull one.

5.3.7.3 Lesson time

Concerning the arrangement of the lesson structure, most students held the same opinion. The lesson structure of the fall term consisted of a double-period lesson on Tuesdays (2:30pm- 4:15pm), and a single-period lesson on Thursdays (5:30pm- 6:15pm). The Tuesday lessons were used for student-led discussions and presentations, while the Thursday lessons for lecturing and discussion of film techniques were led by the instructor. Most of the students disliked the Thursday lessons because of several reasons: the short lesson was not very effective for lecturing, the lesson was the last in the whole school day (10th lesson), the time was odd, and students were tired after attending their whole day’s lessons. As the 45-minute-lesson was too short for any student-led discussions or presentations, the Thursday lessons were devoted to explaining film techniques and concepts. However, as Cora indicated, the Thursday lessons were not effective at all: “honestly, the lesson starts at 5:30pm, and usually ends early, so there isn’t much time. You can’t do much

in this short amount of time, right? It has already taken up time to fast forward/rewind/locate the scenes in the video.” (from second interview) In fact, Cora did accurately sum up what was usually done in the Thursday lessons. Moreover, students indicated that the Tuesday lessons, despite the longer length, did not provide them with enough time to fully present what they had prepared. On many Tuesdays, the presenting groups (such as on *Pulp Fiction*, *American Beauty*) were forced to omit some part(s) of their presentation due to the lack of time. In some other cases, the lack of time resulted in the activities being conducted too quickly, and discussions completed somewhat superficially. Jessy commented in the second interview, “We expected students to come up with ideas, and then we would sort of guide them to the correct direction, but it turned out that there wasn’t enough time and we gave the answers away too easily. Each part was done too quickly.” When asked what could be improved about the course in the questionnaire, Isabel, Timothy, Nicole, Pete, and Gilbert suggested combining the Tuesday lessons with the Thursday lessons to form a 3-period-lesson. Only Yukie held a different opinion: “I don’t agree. Personally, I think it’s a torture to go through three consecutive periods! It’s gonna be too boring. I think the structure now is okay. Two periods for student presentation, and then one period for conceptual stuff. Like, [Instructor A] can talk about the film concepts.”

We have seen, in this part, that the course workload, classroom atmosphere, and lesson time could have detrimental effects on the overall effectiveness of the course. Since this was an ELT course, students generally expected the workload to be less heavy, as least compared to their major courses. The light workload/requirement and friendly atmosphere contributed to a pressure-free and relaxed attitude on the part of the students, which encouraged free speaking and interactions; but it also caused some logistic problems such as loose lesson structure and students not fulfilling their

work. Meanwhile, students generally preferred a 3-period-lesson to a split one (one 2-period-lesson and one 1-period-lesson), as it gave them more time and flexibility in managing the presentations.

This section has provided thorough answers to the second research question—what were and how did these uncontrollable factors influence the learning process in the L2 classroom. The interference of variables could not be avoided in any language learning situation. These factors vary from situation to situation; the findings of this study are not necessarily generalizable to all other learning situations. From this study, it was found that the following factors had both positive and negative impact upon the learning process: the instructor (personality, interests, philosophies and teaching method), the students (cinematic sophistication, English proficiency, personal interests, grouping, motivation), the student-centered approach, choice of film, cultural difference, film knowledge covered, workload and other classroom factors. Teachers and educators could both benefit by learning from these results and take necessary preparation and precaution in designing and conducting future courses.

5.4 The effectiveness of the course

The effectiveness of the course in improving students' English abilities can be measured by examining three different perspectives: the students' own assessment, the instructor's comments, and the students' term papers. By means of data triangulation, insights are drawn on how the use of film helped students improve their English skills in this course.

5.4.1 Students' self-assessment

Students were asked to make a self-assessment of their English abilities (confidence in using English, writing, listening, speaking, discussion & interaction, presentation skills, knowledge & use of vocabulary, analytical & critical thinking skills, and foreign cultural issues) based on a scale of 1 to 4 (1= not very good, 2= okay/average, 3= good, 4= very good) at the beginning of the term. Then, when the term ended, students were asked to rate their improvements in those English abilities again on a scale of 1 to 4 (1= no effect/remained the same, 2= improved only a little, 3= improved quite a bit, 4= improved a great deal) at the end of the term.

The results of question 12 (self-assessment of English abilities) in the pre-questionnaire survey indicated that the categories “confidence in using English” and “Oral skills” both scored the highest mean (3.71), while “writing” and “discussion & interaction” the second (3.43 respectively). Students considered themselves to be weakest in “knowledge and use of vocabulary” and “foreign cultural issues” (3 respectively), and “analytical and critical thinking skills” (3.07). At the end of the term, students were asked to rate their improvements in all of the above English abilities again. The results (Appendix D, Table D1) showed that “foreign cultural issues” received the highest mean (2.93), followed by “presentation skills” (2.79), and then “analytical and critical thinking skills” (2.64). The least improved category was “writing” (1.57). This result, however, was different in the two classes (Instructor A & Instructor B) in the summer session. For Instructor A’s summer class, the questionnaire result indicated that “analytical & critical thinking skills” received the highest mean (2.57), followed by “discussion & interaction” (2.29), and listening (2.14). For Instructor B’s summer class, again, “analytical & critical thinking skills” received the highest mean (2), followed by “foreign cultural issues” (1.89), and

presentation skills (1.78). However, both summer classes indicated that “writing” had improved the least, and the means were 0.71 for Instructor A’s class, and 0.78 for Instructor B’s class.

Table 5.3 Areas of improvements

Order	Instructor A’s class (Fall)	Instructor A’s class (Summer)	Instructor B’s class (Summer)
1	Foreign cultural issues (2.93)	Analytical & critical thinking (2.57)	Analytical & critical thinking (2)
2	Presentation skills (2.79)	Discussion & interaction (2.29)	Foreign cultural issues (1.89)
3	Analytical & critical thinking (2.64)	Listening (2.14)	Presentation skills (1.78)

The discrepancy of the results between students’ self perceived improvements in the fall class and students of both summer classes could be explained by the following. First, it was not surprising that students from Instructor B’s summer class perceived they had a rather significant improvement in “analytical and critical thinking skills.” In fact, training students’ critical thinking skills was one of the main aims of Instructor B’s course. Instructor B’s course outline (Appendix G2) mentioned that the course was designed for students “who want to improve their analytical, discussion, speaking, and writing skills” and “specifically, it will be focusing on the analysis of linguistic, cultural, thematic, and intellectual aspects of films.” The course objectives included “analyze and think critically about the message of a film” and “analyze and think critically about the elements of a film.” Part of lesson two was devoted to specifically explaining the concept “critical thinking” by Instructor B. As this “critical thinking” concept was explicitly introduced and taught in the course, students were very aware of the concept as well as the need to achieve this “aim of the course.” At the end of the summer term, therefore, it was predictable that students of this class would perceive themselves as having improved in the critical thinking skills.

Meanwhile, in Instructor A’s course outline (please refer to Appendix G1), neither “analytical” nor “critical” thinking skills were mentioned. Instead, the course

was designed for “students who have an interest in film and want to learn to better understand and appreciate films, while at the same time improving their English, especially their vocabulary, understanding of idioms and oral fluency.” The course objectives included: 1) develop the ability to extract ideas from films, articles, and discussions; 2) share your insights with others in both oral and written forms; and 3) understand and appreciate films as a source of cultural insights and intellectual stimulation. And in a conversation with Instructor A some time during the summer, he claimed that although he did expect students to develop critical thinking skills alongside other language skills during the course, he never introduced or talked about the concept explicitly in class. In fact, during the fall term, Instructor A did not mention anything related to critical thinking. Therefore, students of the summer class must have come to this realization themselves, after studying the course. However, the results of the fall class were different. As mentioned earlier, the mean score for “foreign cultural issues” was the highest, followed by “presentation skills” and “analytical & critical thinking skills.” As discussed in the previous sections, students from this fall class had a relatively lower cinematic sophistication and weaker technical knowledge of film. Most of the students were only familiar with mainstream Hollywood films, and so, many of them had access to more alternative films for the first time in this course. The course widened their horizons in foreign cultural issues (e.g., drugs, violence, the dark side of American society, etc.). Therefore, 64% of the students considered themselves to have “improved quite a bit” in this category, and 21% “improved only a little,” and 14% “improved a great deal.”

Meanwhile, the same question asked in the second student interviews of the fall class generated a different answer. When asked about what English abilities students thought they improved the most in this course, many students (Pete, Yukie,

Hirosaki, Gilbert, Verona, Isabel) stated it was their listening skills. Some other students cited that the course increased their knowledge of foreign culture (Gilbert, Jessy); others thought they acquired more film knowledge and vocabulary. Advanced speakers such as Cora and Korey did not really consider themselves to have improved, in terms of English language skills, through this course. Rather, they both said this course has helped to “keep up their English level,” which was their original aim of joining the course. Liz, who was trained to be critical of watching films in secondary school already, thought that the course “gave [her] more information, knowledge, and consolidation on what [she] was doing already.

As we can see, the students’ answers to the same question were somewhat different in the post-course questionnaire survey than in the second interviews. The results of the questionnaire indicated that foreign culture, presentation skills, and critical and analytical thinking skills were the top three aspects that students considered they have improved the most in. Whereas in the interviews, most students cited listening, while some others film knowledge and foreign culture. The discrepancy could be explained by the following. In the interviews, when asked “which English aspect do you consider to have improved the most in this course?”, a lot of the students cited listening. This course, as mentioned before, focused on training students’ English listening and oral skills. However, not all students had equal chance in speaking up, as demonstrated in the case of Verona, Isabel, Jessy, and Gilbert earlier. Therefore, students generally considered their listening skills to have improved more than oral skills. But when they were given more options to consider, such as the various categories in the questionnaire, their perceptions varied. This was probably due to the fact that most students might not consider the items-- presentation skills, critical and analytical thinking skills, and foreign cultural issues to be strictly

“English language skills,” thus contributing to the discrepancy. Anyhow, when asked to assess their improvements on these skills, the post-questionnaire survey proved that students did consider themselves to have made improvements in them.

In a nutshell, since many students were average Hollywood moviegoers in this class, the course served as an introduction for them to other alternative films. Besides widening their horizons, the course also trained their presentation skills as well as critical and analytical thinking skills. And of course, being almost the only “English speaking” course among the students’ whole week’s classes, it more or less provided them with opportunities of listening to English, even if it was just spoken by their fellow classmates.

5.4.2 Instructor’s comments

In the third interview, Instructor A commented on the students’ performance in the course as well as their responses to the choice of film. Among the presentations, Instructor A thought that presentations on the assigned films *Life is Beautiful*, *Alien*, *Pulp Fiction*, *American Beauty* and the student presentations on Gary Oldman and Wayne Wang were well done, while misses included the presentations on *Cinema Paradiso*, *Trainspotting*, romantic comedies, and cartoon films.

The first presentation, which was on the assigned film *Cinema Paradiso*, failed mainly because it was the first presentation. The presenters, Hirosaki and Evelyn, did not consult with Instructor A before working on the presentation, even though Instructor A emailed them in advance to offer help and guidance. The two presenters did not know how to handle a presentation; and their English abilities were weak. Due to the lack of handouts as the printer broke down, the students mainly relied on the two presenters themselves to lead the presentation. However, the two

presenters were often speechless and long silent periods prevailed. The discussion basically went nowhere that day. (Appendix E, p.150) Reviewing his two presentations (on *Cinema Paradiso* and Gary Oldman) in the third interview, Hirosaki explained their situation in the first presentation: “we didn’t know how to, you know, discuss about movie, what is the problem, what should we you know, present.” Fortunately, Hirosaki’s second presentation, which was on Gary Oldman, was much better, as it was the fifth presentation; by that time, both the presenters and students knew what Instructor A’s expectations were and what should be done in the lesson. In fact, in his self-assessment, Hirosaki checked the item “presentation skills” as having “improved a great deal,” and this was the only category which he considered to have improved the most on.

As we have seen in the last Chapter, the presentation on *Trainspotting* was a failure due to the lack of pre-viewing preparation on the film and cultural shock on the part of the students. The presentation on *Pulp Fiction* demonstrated that with prior guidance and the supply of background information from the instructor, a difficult film as such could still be presented and handled nicely and effectively.

The presentation on romantic comedies was a big disappointment to Instructor A. Given that the presenters included proficient speakers Cora and Yukie, Instructor A thought they should have done a better job in film and topic selection. Doing a presentation on simple, shallow, commercial mainstream Hollywood happy-ending romantic comedies was something Instructor A did not encourage. Contradictorily, however, student responses to this presentation was exceptionally fervent. It was true that the discussion topics and questions lacked depth and no critical thinking skills were needed; but it was also true that students had great interests in topics such as

love and romance, which was what contributed to the active participation and discussion as a result.

The presentation on cartoon films was “mixed” according to Instructor A, as some of the parts (on *Toy Story*, *Wallace and Gromit*) were good, but some were not. The lack of response from the students in this presentation was due to the presenters’ lack of coherence among themselves (they did not rehearse), and the choice of cartoon films—as not all students, particularly male students, were interested in cartoons.

One reason contributing to the students’ successful presentations was Instructor A’s help. After going through the first few presentations which did not go so well, Instructor A made more effort to help students prepare for their subsequent presentations. He supplied a lot of reference materials for the groups presenting on *Alien*, *Pulp Fiction*, and *American Beauty*. In fact, his resources were so abundant that Pete, one of the presenters for *American Beauty*, felt it was an “over support”: “He gave us too much information and references from last two years, it’s like what I was thinking was pretty much the same as the references, it made me feel like copying them... I don’t feel too comfortable...” (from second interview) The other reason for the success of these presentations, especially the last two (*Pulp Fiction*, *American Beauty*), was that students gradually got along with each other and understood what Instructor A’s expectations were on their performance. That was probably why Liz’s group’s presentations (on *Life is Beautiful* and *Wayne Wang*) were well-prepared and conducted as well, for Liz had taken the other two courses taught by Instructor A in the previous terms, and so she was already familiar with Instructor A’s style and expectations.

Despite being an ELT course, this course was different from other ELT courses. Instructor A’s handling of the course was particularly student-centered, and

he exerted as little interference as possible. He gave students a high degree of freedom in deciding what they liked to do in their presentations. Yukie commented, “[U]sually in other classes, the professors would add their ideas or opinions into the presentation, when preparing with the students. But Instructor A just let us hold the presentations ourselves, there’s no time limit, we had more space for creativity” (from second interview). Instructor A’s hands-off policy provided an opportunity for students to design their own presentations and helped develop their autonomy in presentations and running the class.

We can see that from the presentation activities, students got more and more familiar with Instructor A’s lesson approach, and the presentations (both on assigned films and student topics) got better as the term progressed. Even for difficult films such as *Pulp Fiction*, students were able to do a good job on the presentation as well as the discussion. Thus, by letting students take charge of the presentation and discussion, students became more aware of their learning process as well.

5.4.3 Students’ term papers

The only written assignment required in this course was a short scene analysis of about 500 to 800 words, comprising 20% of the total grade. The assignment was due in mid-November; extensions were allowed by negotiation. In this assignment, students were required to choose a scene for analysis among the films discussed in class, whether teacher-introduced or student-introduced. Content-wise, students were to analyze why the scene chosen was effective, concentrating on the cinematic elements of pictures and sound. (Please refer to Appendix G3 for the assignment sheet).

The students' choice of scene all came from the six assigned films as well as the films included in student presentations. No student chose any scenes used to illustrate film techniques in class, which was probably because students considered these mostly "black-and-white" films to be too boring. The most "popular" choices were scenes from *Trainspotting* and *Alien*, both chosen by three students respectively. Other choices included scenes from *Pulp Fiction*, *Life is Beautiful*, *Leon*, *Joy Luck Club*, *The Fifth Element*, *Toy Story 2*, and *You've Got Mail*. (And one important thing to note was, Hirosaki, for some unknown reasons, did not hand in his assignment.)

Instructor A, worrying at the beginning that this class might not do well, ended up quite pleased with the students' performance in the last few presentations and their papers. "I was very pleased with their papers, I thought they're much better than I thought they'd be. The papers, and um, often, they've shown an awareness anyway of um, lots of features there." (from third interview) In fact, most students received an "A" or "A-" grade, with a few "B+s." The lowest grade was "B+/B," and only one student received it. As Cora commented in the second interview, "the only feedback we got from [Instructor A] is in the scene analysis assignment." The feedback written on the students' assignment papers was almost the only form of feedback Instructor A gave out, aside from the brief conversation (5 minutes or so) with the student presenters right after their presentation.

Among students who got "A" or "A/A-," Yukie's paper was the only one picked out by Instructor A, photocopied, and distributed to the whole class for reference. Her paper demonstrated a thorough understanding of the film techniques (camera angle, shots, sound, music) used in the scene (from *Alien*) as well as a high level of English proficiency. (Please refer to Appendix G8 for her paper). Students were generally able to discuss the scenes in terms of their visual and audio elements.

Besides the pictures and sound, a few students (Evelyn, Nicole, Cora, Liz) gave deeper analysis focusing on the lighting, setting, costume, script, and the acting as well. Only two students, Sue and Isabel, had obvious problems of expression. Sue's ideas were good, but her English could not quite express what she meant. Instructor A recommended her to "take an ELT grammar course and/or visit the ILC for help + advice." (from written feedback on paper) Isabel's paper echoed with what she said during the second interview—that she really had serious confusions over the film terms. According to her paper, she mixed up "set" with "plot," and "scene" with "screenplay."

It is not possible to detect whether there have been any improvements in the students' English writing ability just by analyzing the term papers, as this was the only one written assignment in the course, and no measure was taken at the start of the term to gauge the students' original writing ability. So, a comparison was not possible. However, the term papers themselves were still able to reveal to what extent students had absorbed and digested the lesson materials and how effective they were in regurgitating their ideas back into written words. The "technical" film terms which students understood and were able to reiterate were mainly "POV" shot and sounds (diegetic vs. non-diegetic). Occasionally, some students mentioned different shots (top, bottom, medium, close-up), and one student mentioned "linear" narrative. These were, however, the more basic and easy-to-understand concepts. Other more-technical terms and difficult concepts such as montage, mise-en-scene, long take, deep focus, narration (restricted vs. omniscient), and cross-cutting were not explored. (Evelyn *did* use the concept of montage—but wrongly, and she was the only student who mentioned this term, among all papers.) This reflected the fact that students did not

have a solid and deep knowledge of the film terms, which they attributed to the instructor's lack of lectures on film knowledge and explanation.

The term papers demonstrated that most of the students did have a basic though limited knowledge of film techniques and concepts taught in this course. They were able to reiterate part, if not all, of the film skills covered in this course, and to express their feelings and thoughts on the film through their own words. Since this course' focus was not on improving students' English writing skills, and that the only written assignment involved just this short scene analysis, students' writing skills probably remained unaffected, just like as the students themselves indicated in the self-assessment question of the post-course questionnaire. Meanwhile, the papers did show students' awareness of film features, and many students reported in the post-course questionnaire and second interviews that they have become more aware of the technical aspects of the film, i.e., the camera angles used, the lighting, color, etc., instead of just treating it as a piece of entertainment.

Although it was not possible to show students' improvements in the course by concrete figures, it was evident that students did make various degrees of improvements in various language areas. The results of the students' self-assessment report showed that students had made improvements in the areas of foreign cultural issues, presentation skills, critical and analytical thinking, and listening. The interviews with Instructor A and classroom observations also showed that students made improvements in classroom interaction, leading presentations, and confidence in speaking. Last but not least, the term papers demonstrated that students were able to grasp the basic film concepts taught in the course, and re-iterate them in their own words.

5.5 Conclusion

This Chapter has provided thorough and detailed answers to the three research questions. The first research question aimed to investigate the role of film in helping L2 students improve their English language skills according to their own past experience. Results showed that students had benefited from the authentic and natural language, the English captions, and foreign cultural issues presented in films. Watching film also helped them develop analytical and critical abilities and improve their listening and conversation skills. The second research question aimed to take a deep look at the various unpredictable and uncontrollable factors which influenced L2 students' learning process. Findings showed that these factors included the role of the instructor, the students' own background, language proficiency, and personal interests, the student-centered approach, the choice of film and the foreign culture presented, the lecture material, the workload of the course, and other miscellaneous classroom factors. The last research question aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the course as a whole in improving students' English skills. Results indicated improvements in the students' familiarity with foreign culture, presentation skills, critical and analytical thinking skills, group interaction, listening, and understanding of basic film techniques and concepts.

CHAPTER 6: IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION

In this Chapter, a summary of the research questions and findings are presented, followed by the pedagogical implications arising from the study. The limitations of the study are also discussed. Lastly, suggestions for further studies are offered.

6.1 Summary of research questions and findings

The previous Chapter offered an extensive and intensive analysis and discussion on the findings of this study. The first research question aimed to investigate the role of film in helping L2 students improve their English language skills with reference to their past experiences, prior to the course. Results showed that students had benefited from the authentic and natural language, the English captions, and the foreign cultural issues presented in films. Watching films also helped them develop analytical and critical abilities and improve their listening and conversation skills. Apart from that, the results also identified some problematic areas which might dampen students' motivation in watching films. These areas included the lack of captions in films with complicated plots and lengthy dialogues, unfamiliar cultural issues, and the huge amount of slang, idioms, and vulgar language.

The second research question aimed to take a deep look at the various unpredictable and uncontrollable factors which influenced L2 students' learning process. Findings showed that these factors included the role of the instructor, the students' own background, personal interests, and language proficiency, the student-centered approach, the choice of film and the foreign culture presented, the lecture material, the workload of the course, and other miscellaneous classroom factors. These factors had both positive and negative impacts on the students' learning

process. The instructor's gentle personality and student-centered approach encouraged students to participate and take responsibility for their own learning, but this policy of minimal interference also caused problems such as loosely planned presentations, difficulty on the part of the students in understanding films with unfamiliar culture, and confusion over some film techniques and concepts taught in class.

The last research question aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the course as a whole in improving students' English skills. Results indicated that students perceived themselves to have improved most in the areas of familiarity with foreign culture, presentation skills, critical and analytical thinking skills, and listening. Instructor A's comments showed that students made improvements in group interaction, listening, and leading and participating in presentations and discussions. Lastly, the term papers demonstrated students' understanding of basic film techniques and concepts taught in the course.

6.2 Pedagogical implications

This was the first attempt on a full scale, in-depth research study on the relationship of film and ESL acquisition. It was also the first study employing the "triangulation" concept in the data collection method. The methodology (questionnaire survey, naturalistic classroom observation, in-depth personal interviews with instructor and students, analysis of students' term papers) aimed to explore the relationship between film and ESL from three different perspectives—the instructor, the students, and the outsider (researcher). Since there exists a clear research gap in this topic, I do hope that this study will trigger more future studies to be done in the field of film and ESL learning.

This study demonstrated that the students' background played a crucial role in enhancing or hampering their own learning progress. Therefore, teachers should be aware of the differences in the students' cinematic sophistication, language proficiency, cultural orientation, and points of view—and make necessary adaptations and adjustments on the choice of film, supporting lecture material, guidance offered to students, and lesson format accordingly.

In this study, students expressed many different opinions and feedback towards the course. It is true that every student *did* have a valid point of view; however, no instructor is able to please *all* students, and attempting to please all students is not necessarily a good and beneficial approach. Teachers must on the one hand be sensitive to and aware of students' different aspirations and needs, but on the other hand still be able to carry out their lesson plans and deliver what they think would be best and most beneficial to the students' learning. And in between, they must also be flexible enough to allow changes and adjustments to occur.

Film is a rich and valuable resource for ESL learning, but it must be handled with caution. Teachers must take into consideration all aspects of the students' background (as mentioned earlier) when selecting suitable film materials. Appropriate guidance and support, such as reference notes and pre-viewing activities, could be offered to help students understand difficult films and thus increase their receptiveness towards these films. Therefore, difficult, underrated, and alternative films could still be used effectively for language learning in the ESL classroom, provided they are handled with care.

Sometimes, it might be good for teachers to take the initiative to enhance student interaction. For instance, if students were a bit slow in warming up, which might have a negative impact on the classroom atmosphere and student interaction

(just like the case in this study), the teacher could exert some interference (such as breaking up the “fixed” groupings in Instructor A’s class) to encourage interaction. Assigning students to different groups each lesson for discussion could expose them to a wider range of diverse opinions and to facilitate whole-class interaction.

This study also demonstrated how teachers’ overt preference for better students could damage the confidence and motivation of other more “average” students. Teachers could remind themselves of such natural human inclination and be conscious of their own behaviors towards the students. It is very important for teachers to pay fair attention to all students, so that no particular student would feel being left out or abandoned.

Since this course placed strong emphasis on student-led discussions and presentations, students felt there was not enough room for the discussion and explanation of film techniques and concepts taught. In other words, the limited lecture time resulted in limited film knowledge taught. This had a direct effect upon the students’ technical knowledge and vocabulary of films, which in turn affected the expressions of their ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Thus, teachers must take effort to make sure that students understand clearly the meanings of the film terms and concepts, by offering more explanation and clarification.

6.3 Limitations

Using the case study approach, this study’s first limitation lies in its generalizability, or, external validity. The findings of this study are not necessarily fully generalizable to other studies on English language courses using film as the teaching material. As we have seen, even the findings of this formal study conducted during the fall were much different from the findings of the pilot study conducted

during the summer. The findings vary according to different uncontrolled factors, such as the instructor's approach, the students' background and language proficiency, the lesson time, just to name a few. Therefore, given there are different variables, different findings would be generated.

This qualitative data collection method relied heavily on the students' own perception of language improvements. Likewise, personal observations and comments made by the instructor and researcher were necessarily subjective. Because of the constraints of the course, there was no objective testing treatment administered, which might show concrete and measurable improvements. The only written assignment—final term paper—could only reveal the students' English proficiency and the film knowledge they gained from the course. Therefore, the papers could not form the basis for any analysis of language improvements. Thus, there might be a discrepancy between “perceived” improvements according to the students' self-report and the “real” improvements they have made.

The students of the fall class did not come from a wide variety of academic disciplines. There were 14 students in the fall class, and their majors included Language Education, BBA, Geography, and English linguistics (only the Japanese student). Whereas in the summer class, both Instructor A and Instructor B's sections contained only 9 students respectively, but their majors ranged widely: Chinese, Journalism & Communication, Chemistry, BBA, Psychology (for Instructor A's class), and Language Education, Translation, Sociology, Architecture, and Geography (for Instructor B's class). Thus, in this study, student opinions from other disciplines such as Science, Engineering, or Medicine are lacking.

The amount of data collected also relied heavily on the willingness and cooperation of the instructors and students. For instance, Instructor A's summer class welcomed videotaping of their lesson. I talked with the students during break time in one lesson during my pilot study, and they all thought "it was okay" if I were to bring in a video camcorder, as long as I do not "zoom in to their face while they're talking." However, for the fall class, both Instructor A and the students did not welcome videotaping of their lessons. And since I sometimes joined in the class activities, and only took notes after the lesson had ended and by recall, the observation of the student behaviors might not have been as accurate as if they had been video-taped.

Due to the time span and scope of this study, only one course could be investigated. Instructor B's class, whose teaching methodology, choice of film, and workload was different from Instructor A's class, was not examined. It would have been better if both classes were investigated; I am sure there would be tremendous interesting findings and insights generated.

More diverse opinions from the point of view of the "teachers" could have been gathered. For instance, Instructor B or other ELT course instructors could have been interviewed. As this study focused a lot on the students' points of view, there might be an imbalance of neutral and objective opinions.

Lastly, due to the course structure which focused on oral and listening skills rather than writing skills, there was only one written assignment (a short paper of 2-3 pages) to be submitted at the end of the term. Therefore, it was not possible to investigate students' improvements in writing, if any, during the course of the term. Thus, no concrete evidence was gathered to support whether the use of film in ELT courses could improve students' writing ability.

6.4 Suggestions for further studies & conclusion

Despite the limitations, this study has given a realistic and in-depth account of using film in the L2 classroom and its implications. As formal research in this area is heavily lacking, more effort and studies are needed to explore the benefits of using film in the ESL/EFL classroom.

In this study, students' past experience of film and ESL learning was investigated and interesting insights were generated. However, the number of students (14) under investigation was still limited. More research to be conducted on a larger number of L2 learners in Hong Kong is needed.

As we have seen from this study, different unforeseeable factors could have tremendous impact upon the learning process. The factors and consequent results generated vary from situation to situation. Thus, a more longitudinal and wider-scoped study would give more insights on the different kinds of unpredictable factors that would occur during the learning process. For instance, long-term studies, spanning through several terms, could be conducted on a course using film as content material. Examination could also be made on sections of the same course taught by different instructors; for example, both Instructor A and Instructor B's class (ELT 3104A and ELT 3104B) could be examined. This would provide the possibility for comparison and contrast. As discussed in Chapter 5, the teachers' teaching methodology tends to be one of the most determining factors in facilitating or hindering students' learning process. Thus, it would be good to investigate teachers with different lesson approaches.

This course has investigated the effectiveness of the course ELT 3104 in enhancing students' English abilities. However, the results might just be short-term. Due to the time limit and scope of this study, the exploration of the long-term effects

that this course has on students could not be conducted. Therefore, we cannot know whether the improvements that the students showed during the course could be sustained in the future. A follow-up investigation and further analysis would be useful to assess the long-term effects and inspirations on students who had attended this course.

This study has shown that film, being one of the most popular cultural items today, is also a valuable resource for English language learning. Ever since the birth of the motion picture in the 1890s, people have become fascinated with this medium. However, film was not brought into the second/foreign language classroom until the 1970s. I do believe film will continue to flourish, and more people will come to realize the benefits of using film as teaching material in the language classroom.

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APPENDIX A1 Sample Questionnaire (Pilot study)

Improving English through film: Questionnaire for ELT 3104, Summer 2001

Aim: I am Stacey Ng, an M.Phil student majoring in Applied English Linguistics, CUHK. I am currently working on my thesis, namely, to investigate the effectiveness of using film in the second language classroom to improve students' English abilities. This questionnaire survey aims at finding out students' opinions on learning/improving English through watching films as well as comments towards the course ELT 3104: Thinking through the culture of film. The information collected will be used for my research purposes only, and will not be released to a third party (including your instructor) without your consent. The survey will definitely NOT affect your grade in any way. Your honest response and cooperation are highly appreciated. Thank you.

**Please answer all questions.

Background

Name: _____ Sex: F / M Age: _____
Major: _____ Minor: _____ Yr: _____
HKCE English grade: _____ HKCE English Literature grade: _____
HKAL Use of English grade: _____ HKAL English Literature grade: _____

General Questions

- 1) What were your reason(s) for taking this course?
(graduation requirement, elective, personal interest, recommendation from friends, others)

- 2) What were your expectations for this course?

- 3) What kinds of skills did you hope to learn/improve in this course?

- 4) Have you ever taken any other ELT courses before? Please list.

- 5) Have you ever taken any course (in your secondary school as well as university) that included the discussion and analysis of film? (English Literature subject, or other courses using film as teaching tool) Please list.

- 6) What genres/style of films are you interested in? (you can choose more than one)
Romance / Sci-Fi / Comedy / Action / Drama / Horror / Historical epics / Documentary / Western / Crime-detective / Cult / Others: _____

- 7) What, in your personal experience, were the most difficult problem(s) you have encountered in watching foreign English films? Please tick: (you can choose more than one)

Speaking speed _____
 Accent _____
 Slangs, idioms, colloquials _____
 Difficult vocabularies _____
 Story / story _____
 "Weird" film practices/styles _____
 Unfamiliar cultural, social, or ethnic issues _____
 Others: _____
 Please list: _____

- 8) Have you ever written any kinds of film critique before? (formal & non-formal) Please list.

- 9) What aspect(s) in films are you usually attracted to? Please tick: (can choose more than one)

Story / plot (exciting, insightful, meaningful, entertaining, etc) _____
 The director (e.g. you're a "Steven Spielberg fan") _____
 Cast (casting your favorite film stars) _____
 Genre (you tend to stick to Sci-Fi, romance, horror, adventure) _____
 Aesthetic techniques (lighting, camera, artistic considerations) _____
 Music _____
 Special topics (social, political, sexual, religious) _____
 Others: _____

- 10) What kind(s) of English media are you exposed to on a frequent basis? (Please tick and list.)

___ 1. Magazines: _____
 ___ 2. Newspapers: _____
 ___ 3. TV shows on local English channels: _____
 ___ 4. TV shows on cable / satellite channels: _____
 ___ 5. Films: _____
 ___ 6. Popular music: _____
 ___ 7. Internet (email, chatroom, ICQ): _____
 ___ 8. Others (talking to foreign teachers, Filipino maids, foreign friends) _____

- 11) Have you ever been abroad for studying/ exchange programs? Please list:

Opinions on the course

- 1) In general, you found this course: (Please circle)
 Very interesting / somewhat interesting / just okay / average / failed to meet your expectation / Others: Please list. _____
- 2) In general, you found the atmosphere of the lesson structure:
 Cordial, comfortable / not much different from other ELT courses / too laid-back / tense, strict / Others: Please list. _____

3) What were the areas that you wanted to learn before coming to this course, but weren't fulfilled? (If any)

4) Do you think this course is different from other ELT / ESL courses you've taken? How?

5) Please comment on:

The workload of the course: Too heavy / quite heavy / fair / quite little / not enough

Why? _____

The films used: Very interesting / quite interesting / okay / boring / trash

Why? _____

The instructor's role: Very resourceful & helpful / Somewhat helpful / Not really helpful

why? _____

6) What is the difference of your viewing habits before and after taking this course? Will you look at films in a different way than before? Please explain:

7) Any other comments towards this course:

8) Please make an assessment on the course's effectiveness in improving your English ability:

Skill	Improved a great deal	Improved quite a bit	Improved only a little	No effect/ remained the same	Slightly declined	Declined	Others:
Confidence in using English							
Writing							
Listening							
Oral							
Discussion & interaction							
Leading presentation							
Knowledge & use of English vocabularies							
Analytical & critical thinking Skills							
Familiarity with foreign cultural issues							
Others:							

☺ Thank you very much! ☺

APPENDIX A2 Sample Questionnaire (Pre-course)

Improving English through film: Pre-course Questionnaire for ELT 3104, Fall 2001

Aim: I am Stacey Ng, an M.Phil student majoring in Applied English Linguistics, CUHK. I am currently working on my thesis to investigate the effectiveness of using film in the second language classroom to improve students' English abilities. This questionnaire survey aims at finding out students' opinions on learning/improving English through watching films before taking the course ELT 3104: Thinking through the culture of film. The information collected will be used for my research purposes only, and will not be released to a third party (including your instructor) without your consent. The survey will definitely NOT affect your grade in any way. Your honest response and cooperation are highly appreciated. Thank you.

**Please answer all questions.

Background

Name: _____ Sex: F / M Age: _____
Major: _____ Minor: _____ Year: _____
Nationality: _____
HKCE English grade: _____ HKCE English Literature grade: _____
HKAL Use of English grade: _____ HKAL English Literature grade: _____

General Questions:

- 1) What is your reason(s) for taking this course? (graduation requirement, elective, personal interest, recommendation from others, any other reasons)

- 2) What are your expectations for this course?

- 3) What kinds of skills do you hope to learn/improve in this course? (listening, oral, writing, critical thinking, presentation, discussion, film knowledge etc)

- 4) Have you ever taken any other ELT courses at CUHK before? Please list.

- 5) Have you ever taken any course (in your secondary school as well as university) that included the discussion and analysis of film? (English Literature subject, or other courses using film as teaching tool) Please list.

6) What genres/style of films are you interested in? Please tick. (you can choose more than one)

- Drama (劇情片)
- Romance
- Comedy
- Action / Martial Arts
- Sci-Fi
- Crime-Detective
- Thriller / Adventure
- Western (西部牛仔片)
- Horror
- Historical Epics (大型史詩式)
- Documentary (紀錄片)
- Musical (歌舞劇)
- Animation (動畫)
- Art films (純文藝片)
- Independent / Cult (獨立 / 另類)
- Others: _____

7) What, in your personal experience, is the most difficult problem(s) you have encountered in watching films? Please tick:

- Speaking speed _____
- Accent _____
- Slang, idioms, colloquials _____
- Difficult vocabularies _____
- Story / plot _____
- "Weird" film practices _____
- Unfamiliar cultural & ethnic issues _____
- Others: _____
- Please list: _____

8) Have you ever written any kind of film critiques before? (formal & non-formal)

9) What aspect(s) in films are you usually attracted to? Please tick:

- Story / plot (exciting, insightful, meaningful, entertaining, etc)
- The director (e.g. you're a "Steven Spielberg / Quentin Tarantino fan")
- Cast (casting your favorite film stars)
- Genre (you tend to stick to Sci-Fi, romance, horror, adventure)
- Aesthetic techniques (lighting, camera, set design, costume, atmosphere)
- Special effects / Computer graphics
- Music
- Special topics (social, political, sexual, religious)
- Others: _____

10) What kind(s) of English media are you exposed to on a frequent basis? (Please **tick** and **list**.)

- Magazines: _____
- Newspapers: _____
- Books / novels: _____
- TV shows on local English channels: _____
- TV shows on cable / satellite channels: _____

___ Films: _____
 ___ Popular music: _____
 ___ Internet (net surf, chat, email, ICQ etc) : _____
 ___ Others (talking to foreign teachers, Filipino maids, foreign friends) _____

9) Have you ever lived / studied / joined exchange programs abroad? Please give place and duration of stay:

10) Please make an assessment of your present general English ability:

Scale: 5= Very Good 4= Good 3= Okay/Average 2 =Not Very Good 1= Poor

Skills	5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Confidence in using English						
Writing						
Listening						
Oral						
Discussion & interaction						
Leading presentations						
Knowledge & use of English vocabularies.						
Analytical & critical thinking skills						
Familiarity with foreign cultural issues						
Others:						

Thank you very much! ☺

APPENDIX A3 Sample questionnaire (Post-course)

Improving English through film: Post-course questionnaire for ELT 3104, Fall 2001

Aim: I am Stacey Ng, an M.Phil student majoring in Applied English Linguistics, CUHK. I am currently working on my thesis, namely, to investigate the effectiveness of using film in the second language classroom to improve students' English abilities. This questionnaire survey aims at finding out students' opinions on learning/improving English through watching films as well as comments towards the course ELT 3104: Thinking through the culture of film. The information collected will be used for my research purposes only, and will not be released to a third party (including your instructor) without your consent. The survey will definitely NOT affect your grade in any way. Your honest response and cooperation are highly appreciated. Thank you.

****Please answer all questions.**

Name: _____ (please include your English name used in class)

Opinions on the course

- 1) In general, you found this course: (Please circle)
Very interesting / somewhat interesting / just okay / average / failed to meet your expectation
Others: Please comment: _____

- 2) In general, you found the atmosphere of the lesson structure:
Cordial, comfortable / not much different from other ELT courses / too laid-back / tense, strict / Others: Please comment: _____

- 3) What were the areas that you wanted to learn before coming to this course, but weren't fulfilled? (If any)

- 4) Please comment on:

The workload of the course:
Too heavy / quite heavy / fair / quite little / not enough
Why? _____

The films used:
Very interesting / quite interesting / okay / not interesting / others
Why? _____

Film techniques/knowledge covered:
Very adequate / quite adequate / okay / not very adequate / very inadequate
Why? _____

The instructor's role:
very resourceful & helpful / somewhat helpful / fair / not very helpful / not helpful at all
Why? _____

- 5) What is the difference of your viewing habits before and after taking this course? Will you look at films in a different way than before? Please explain:

6) Will you be more motivated to watch films after this course? Are you inspired by any new culture / film knowledge learned? (e.g. widen your horizons on drugs, knowledge of camera angles, lighting etc.)

7) What do you like best about this course?

8) What do you NOT like about this course?

9) What do you think, can be improved about this course?

10) Any other comments /suggestions towards this course:

11) Please make an assessment on the course's effectiveness in improving your English ability:

Skill	Improved a great deal	Improved quite a bit	Improved only a little	No effect/ remained the same	Other comments:
Confidence in using English					
Writing					
Listening					
Oral					
Discussion & interaction					
Leading presentation					
Knowledge & use of English vocabularies					
Analytical & critical thinking Skills					
Familiarity with foreign cultural issues					
Others:					

😊 Thank you very much! 😊

APPENDIX B Selected results of the questionnaire survey on ELT 3104 students-- Pilot study (summer 2001)

Table B1 Students' background and perceived improvements after completing the course

Student	Sex	Year	Age	Major	CE Eng. Grade	AL UE grade	Q7 results	Confidence in using English	Writing	Listening	Speaking	Discussion & Interaction	Presentation skills	Knowledge & use of vocab	Analytical & Critical thinking	Foreign cultural issues
Ins. A's																
1	M	1	19	Chinese	C	C		2	1	2	2	3	2	2	3	1
2	M	1	19	Jour & Comm.	A	B		1	1	3	2	3	2	1	3	2
3	M	2	21	Chemistry	D	D		3	1	3	3	2	1	2	3	2
4	M			BBA												
5	F	1	20	Chinese	C	D		2	0	2	1	1	1	1	2	2
6	F	2	20	BBA	A	B		2	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	1
7	F	2	21	Psychology	A	B		2	1	3	2	3	3	2	3	3
8	F	1	19	BBA	C	C		0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2
9	F															
							Mean: 1.71	0.71	2.14	1.86	2.29	1.9	1.57	2.57	1.86	1.89
Ins. B's																
1	M	2	20	LED	C	B		0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
2	F	2	21	LED	A	A		2	0	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
3	F	1	20	LED	A	C		3	2	2	3	3	3	1	2	2
4	F	1	19	LED	A	B		2	1	1	1	3	3	1	2	3
5	F	1	19	LED	B	B		1	0	2	1	1	2	1	2	2
6	F	1	19	Translation	B	C		2	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	1
7	F	1	20	Sociology	B	C		2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2
8*	F	2	25	Architecture	A	B		0	0	1	2	1	1	2	2	2
9#	F	1	/	Geography	/	/		2	1	2	2	/	2	2	3	2
							Mean: 1.56	0.78	1.56	1.22	1.67	1.78	1.22	1.22	2	1.89

* This is a Master's student
This is a Ph.D. student

Key: 3 – Improved a great deal
2 – Improved quite a bit
1 – Improved only a little
0 – Remained the same / no effect

Table B2 Students' film interest

Class	A		B	
Genres	No. of students (7)	%	No. of students (9)	%
Romance	3	43%	6	67%
Sci-Fi	1	14%	1	11%
Comedy	3	43%	6	67%
Action	3	43%	0	0%
Drama	7	100%	5	56%
Horror	3	43%	0	0%
Historical epics	1	14%	2	22%
Documentary	0	0%	0	0%
Western	2	29%	1	11%
Crime/detective	4	57%	0	0%
Cult	1	14%	0	0%
Others	1	14%	2	22%

Table B3 Difficulties in watching English films

Class	A		B	
Difficulties	No. of students (7)	%	No. of students (9)	%
Speaking speed	4	57%	7	77%
Accent	1	14%	7	77%
Slangs, idioms, colloquials	6	86%	8	88%
Difficult vocabularies	6	86%	8	88%
Story / plot	0	0%	0	0%
Film practices / styles	0	0%	1	11%
Unfamiliar cultural issues	4	57%	2	22%

Table B4 Students' considerations in choosing films to watch

Class	A		B	
Aspects	No. of students (7)	%	No. of students (9)	%
Story / plot	7	100%	8	88%
Director	0	0%	1	11%
Cast	5	71%	4	44%
Genre	7	100%	3	33%
Art direction	1	14%	0	0%
Music	1	14%	4	44%
Special topics	5	71%	5	55%

Table B5 Students' exposure to English media

Class	A		B	
Media	No. of students (7)	%	No. of students (9)	%
Magazines	1	14%	4	44%
Newspapers	1	14%	3	33%
Local English TV channels	2	29%	4	44%
Cable/satellite channels	1	14%	1	11%
Films	4	57%	8	88%
Popular music	5	71%	7	77%
Internet	5	71%	9	100%
Others	2	29%	5	55%

Table B6 Students' comments on the choice of film

Level	Instructor A	%	Instructor B	%
Very interesting	3	43%	2	22%
Quite interesting	4	57%	6	67%
Okay	0		1	11%
Boring	0		0	
Trash	0		0	

APPENDIX C
Selected results of Pre-course questionnaire survey on ELT 3104B students-- Fall term, 2001

Table C1 Students' background and self-Assessment of English abilities

#	Name	Sex	Yr	Age	Major	CE Eng. Grade	AL UE grade	Q. 12 Results	Confidence in using English	Writing	Listening	Speaking	Discussion & Interaction	Prese-ntation skills	Knowledge & use of vocabulary	Analytical & Critical thinking	Foreign cultural issues
1	Cora	F	3	21	BBA	A	B		5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	5
2	Evelyn	F	2	20	BBA	C	D		2	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	2
3	Isabel	F	4	22	LED (Chin)	C	D		3	2	4	4	3	4	3	3	3
4	Jess	F	2	19	BBA	B	B		3	4	2	2	2	2	3	3	3
5	Liz	F	3	20	Geography	B	B		4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3
6	Nicole	F	2	20	BBA	A	B		5	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4
7	Sue	F	2	20	BBA	D	D		3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2
8	Verona	F	4	22	LED (Chin)	D	D		3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
9	Yukie	F	3	20	BBA	A	B		5	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
								Mean:	3.67	3.56	3.44	3.56	3.22	3.33	3.11	3.22	3.22
10	Gilbert	M	3	21	Geography	D	C		3		4	3	3	2	3	3	2
11	Hirosaki	M	4	21	Eng. Linguistics	/	/		3	3	2	4	3	4	2	2	3
12	Korey	M	2	21	BBA	D/B	B		5	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	3
13	Pete	M	1	19	LED (Eng)	C/A	B		4	3	4	4	4	4	3	2	3
14	Timothy	M	3	21	Geography	D	D		4	4	4	4	4	3	2	3	2
								Mean:	3.8	3.2	3.2	4	3.8	3.4	2.8	2.8	2.6
								Total Mean:	3.71	3.43	3.36	3.71	3.43	3.36	3	3.07	3

Key: 5—Very Good
4—Good
3—Okay / Average
2—Not very good
1—Poor

Table C2 Distribution of assessment categories

Self-assessment Skills	<i>Very good</i>		<i>Good</i>		<i>Okay/Average</i>		<i>Not very good</i>		<i>Poor</i>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Confidence in using English	4	29%	3	21%	6	43%	1	7%	0	0
Writing	2	14%	3	21%	8	57%	1	7%	0	0
Listening	1	7%	8	57%	2	14%	3	21%	0	0
Oral	3	21%	6	43%	3	21%	2	14%	0	0
Discussion & interaction	1	7%	6	43%	5	36%	2	14%	0	0
Leading presentations	0	0	7	50%	5	36%	2	14%	0	0
Knowledge & use of vocabulary	0	0	3	21%	8	57%	3	21%	0	0
Analytical & critical thinking	0	0	3	21%	9	64%	2	14%	0	0
Familiarity with foreign cultural issues	1	7%	2	14%	7	50%	4	29%	0	0

Table C3 Skills students hoped to improve

Skills	No. of students (14)	%
Listening	11	79%
Oral: discussion, presentation	11	79%
Writing	2	14%
Film knowledge	7	50%
Critical & analytical thinking	3	21%
Vocabulary	4	29%

Table C4 Students' film interests

Genres	No. of students (14)	%
Drama	11	79%
Romance	12	86%
Comedy	11	79%
Action/Martial Arts	7	50%
Sci-Fi	3	21%
Crime-Detective	3	21%
Thriller/Adventure	1	7%
Western	1	7%
Horror	6	43%
Historical Epics	2	14%
Documentary	2	14%
Musical	7	50%
Animation	6	43%
Art Films	0	0
Independent/Cult	1	7%
Others	0	0

Table C5 Difficulties in watching English films

Difficulties	No. of students (14)	%
Speaking speed	10	71%
Accent	5	36%
Slang, idioms, colloquials	11	79%
Difficult vocabulary	7	50%
Story / plot	0	0%
Film practices / styles	2	14%
Unfamiliar cultural & ethnic issues	2	14%

Table C6 Students' considerations in choosing films to watch

Aspects	No. of students (14)	%
Story / plot	11	79%
Director	0	0%
Cast	10	71%
Genre	7	50%
Aesthetic techniques	2	14%
Special effects	3	21%
Music	6	43%
Special topics	2	14%

Table C7 Students' exposure to English media

Media	No. of students (14)	%
Magazines	4	29%
Newspapers	7	50%
Books / Novels	2	14%
TV shows on local English channels	7	50%
TV shows on cable/satellite channels	3	21%
Films	9	64%
Popular Music	4	29%
Internet	11	79%
Foreign teachers, friends, maids etc.	4	29%

APPENDIX D

Selected results of Post-course questionnaire survey on ELT 3104B students-- Fall term, 2001

Table D1 Students' self-perceived improvements in various English abilities

#	Name	Sex	Yr	Age	Major	Q. 11 Results	Confidence in using English	Writing	Listening	Speaking	Discussion & Interaction	Prese-ntation skills	Knowledge & use of vocabulary	Analytical & Critical thinking	Foreign cultural issues	Others
1	Cora	F	3	21	BBA	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	
2	Evelyn	F	2	20	BBA	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	3
3	Isabel	F	4	22	LED (Chin)	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	3	
4	Jess	F	2	19	BBA	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	3	
5	Liz	F	3	20	Geography	3	1	1	2	3	3	1	1	3	3	
6	Nicole	F	2	20	BBA	2	1	1	3	3	3	4	2	3	2	
7	Sue	F	2	20	BBA	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	4	
8	Verona	F	4	22	LED (Chin)	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	
9	Yukie	F	3	20	BBA	3	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
						Mean:	2.33	1.56	2.44	2.56	2.44	2.78	2.11	2.56	3	
10	Gilbert	M	3	21	Geography	2		1	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	
11	Hirosaki	M	4	21	Eng. Linguistics	2	3	3	3	2	2	4	3	3	3	
12	Korey	M	2	21	BBA	3	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	
13	Pete	M	1	19	LED (Eng)	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	
14	Timothy	M	3	21	Geography	3	2	2	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	
						Mean:	2.6	1.6	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.8	2.4	2.8	2.8	
						Total Mean:	2.43	1.57	2.57	2.57	2.43	2.79	2.21	2.64	2.93	

Key: 4—Improved a great deal

3—Improved quite a bit

2—Improved only a little

1-- No effect / remained the same

Table D2 Distribution of self-assessment categories

Self-assessment Skills	<i>Improved a great deal</i>		<i>Improved quite a bit</i>		<i>Improved only a little</i>		<i>No effect/ Remained the same</i>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Confidence in using English	0	0	8	57%	4	29%	2	14%
Writing	0	0	2	14%	4	29%	8	57%
Listening	1	7%	7	50%	5	36%	1	7%
Oral	0	0	10	71%	2	14%	2	14%
Discussion & interaction	0	0	8	57%	4	29%	2	14%
Leading presentations	2	14%	7	50%	5	36%	0	0
Knowledge & use of vocabulary	1	7%	3	21%	8	57%	2	14%
Analytical & critical thinking	1	7%	8	57%	4	29%	1	7%
Familiarity with foreign cultural issues	2	14%	9	64%	3	21%	0	0

Table D3 Students' comments on the course

	No. of students (14)	%
Very interesting	7	50%
Somewhat interesting	6	43%
Just okay	1	7%
Average	0	0
Fail to meet your expectation	0	0

Table D4 Students' comments on the classroom atmosphere

	No. of students (14)	%
Cordial, comfortable	14	100%
Not much difference from other ELT courses	0	0
Too laid-back	0	0
Tense, strict	0	0

Table D5 Students' comments on the workload

	No. of students (14)	%
Very heavy	0	0
Quite heavy	1	7%
Fair	11	79%
Quite little	2	14%
Not enough	0	0

Table D6 Students' comments on the choice of film

	No. of students (14)	%
Very interesting	1	7%
Quite interesting	10	71%
Okay	3	21%
Not interesting	0	0
Others	0	0

Table D7 Students' comments on lectures on film

	No. of students (14)	%
Very adequate	1	7%
Quite adequate	7	50%
Okay	6	43%
Not very adequate	0	0
Very inadequate	0	0

Table D8 Students' comments towards Instructor A

	No. of students (14)	%
Very resourceful & helpful	8	57%
Somewhat helpful	6	43%
Fair	0	0
Not very helpful	0	0
Not helpful at all	0	0

D9 Student response to Question 7: "What do you like best about this course?"

C: "Relaxed and fun filled atmosphere in class."

E: "The atmosphere! I think the whole course is relaxing & every of our classmate are friendly and easy to co-operate with."

I: "Chance for students presenting a film. A friendly atmosphere."

J: "The relaxing and unpressurized learning atmosphere, interesting presentations, assigned films which are all well-known."

L: "I like best format of the class. Small class with presentation and discussion gave me a lot of opportunities to express myself freely."

N: "I like the lively, comfortable and active participation of the class. The atmosphere is best for learning, indeed I found that this small group class is better for learning English."

S: "I like the films which are interesting."

V: "The learning environment is very free, more time for students' interactions."

Y: "Lots of discussions & film viewing."

G: "The atmosphere of the lesson; of course watching films."

K: "The atmosphere is friendly and relaxing. Also, there're interaction among instructor and students. All of these are so important to facilitate the learning of both oral & listening skill."

P: "Relaxing. Good for me to have a course like this in a stressful week."

T: "The atmosphere in the class."

D10 Student responses to Question 8: "What do you NOT like about this course?"

C: "Quite heavy workload, lots of preparation apart from attending class."

E: "For some movies, it's rather boring, like Killings. And I don't know whether I can count it in this part or not but I was really frustrated by the presentation (cartoon) coz there is not much response from the class."

I: "Not enough note explaining some terms, like scene, shot..."

J: "Most of the films have been watched already because they are all very well-known. Some other films that are worth watching are just shown on class briefly."

N: "Discussion always done with same group of classmates, also, whole class discussion may be conducted too."

S: "I don't like there is not enough space for us to learn English."

- H: "There was no opportunity to discuss about movies in English. (HK students') pronunciation (is too hard to understand)."
- K: "The movies shown in the class are somewhat boring, especially we need to listen to the foreign language (eg. Italian, French) and then read the English subtitle at the same time, I don't think watching this kind of non-English movies can help us to improve Eng. (except reading faster)"
- P: "Film is not a thing that can be separated/divided/cut into pieces of scenes. This arrangement really bored me during watching the scenes."
- T: "Not enough discussion."

D11 Student responses to Question 9: "What do you think, can be improved about this course?"

- C: "Use more popular movies such as those from Hollywood at the beginning to arouse interest."
- E: "I do agree with what G has raised in the class that students may be asked to write a brief comment or summary after watching the movies coz I find that some of our fellow classmates haven't watch the movie before they attend the class."
- I: "Offer tutorial; no single lesson; provide note."
- J: "Not just show or assign us those famous movies, but also some low-budget movies or movies without famous actors and actresses. Usage of English in movies should be discussed more."
- N: "I think the idea of having three lesson together is better."
- S: "More English learning part."
- Y: "A particular aspect of certain culture can be introduced and a film related can be shown."
- G: "3 consecutive lessons is more suitable, flexible and easy to manage. The genre of film can be widen, like introduce action film & romantic film etc."
- H: "Maybe take much time is better."
- K: "It should have a balance between the European and Hollywood movies. Personally, I think it should increase the proportion of Hollywood movies because I'm sure students would enjoy much more in the class."
- P: "Presentation from students. Sometimes students' presentation is quite boring, it makes the 1 hr 45 mins course has no energetic atmosphere at all."
- T: "Add more discussion part."

D12 Student responses to Question 10: "Other suggestions/comments"

- J: "Richard can invite more individual opinion rather than group discussion all the time, so I think the format of the lessons can be changed into a whole-class discussion, i.e. we may all sit in a circle and take turn to express opinion, rather than dividing us into several groups and everytime just the spokesperson for the group talk, other members keep silent most of the time."
- G: "It is a very good course and can really learn something. Should be in the recommendation list for all students."
- K: "It's quite interesting to have both instructor and a M.Phil student in the class at the same time because it makes me feel that you are as a tutor in the class."
- P: "Make it become a 3 hour course so the film need not be cut into pieces. Easy and efficient appreciation and analysis."
- T: "Combine the single lesson with the double lesson to be 3 lessons together."

APPENDIX E Classroom observation results

Date: September 4, 2001

Lesson: Week 1 (Tue)

Number of students present: 15

Lesson structure: Teacher-led introduction to course

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- Brief introduction to the course: syllabus, assessment criteria, assignments & presentations.
- Ice-breaking activities: students got into groups, moved around and got to know each other
- Discussed handouts with shots from different films & explained “genres”
- Showed scenes from *The 39 steps* to explain filmic devices
- Asked student to read out notes on handouts, pronunciation problems corrected
- Each group was assigned different questions to discuss
- Explained the choice of film: no Hollywood films, but difficult, underrated European films
- Film schedule and lesson outline not arranged yet, but will approximately include 8 films

Comments on instructor:

- Easy-going, friendly, nice, relaxed, laid-back
- His lesson approach was clearly student-centered
- Introduced technical terms in casual, easy-to-understand manner, nothing too deep
- Walked around and joined in student discussions
- Flexible, allowed students a high degree of freedom
- Acted more as a facilitator of student-discussions instead of lecturer
- Has successfully created a cordial relationship with students

Comments on the students:

- Seems that students' English proficiency is generally pretty advanced, everybody seemed active and enthusiastic, no one was too shy to speak up (maybe b/c it is stated clearly in the undergraduate handbook that this course is meant for advanced speakers of English, who are comfortable with speaking already)
- They were also very quick in forming groups, and headed on to discussion efficiently
- Even before the lesson started, some students talked in English already, seems that everybody is very motivated to speak/learn English
- Comments from the students: they took this course b/c they heard that it's relaxing, fun, interesting, and with less workload
- Some students were just sitting in to see whether they like this course
- There was an exchange student from Japan, male
- Cora's English is definitely on the level of a native speaker (I'm interested in her background, will try to talk to her next time)

Comments on the classroom:

- The classroom is LDS 7, a relatively big, rectangular-sized room, with carpet and chairs (attached with writing panels) arranged neatly on both sides of the room. It's less intimate than the room in ILC, where the summer course was held in. However, students were able to move the chairs around when forming groups to discuss.

Observer's comments:

- Seems to be a pretty interesting and fun class, students seem to welcome the student-centered approach very much
- Clearly, students taking this course are interested in watching films. Talking about topics related to their interest can certainly provide strong motivation and reason for the students to communicate, not just communicating for the sake of practicing English

Date: September 6, 2001

Lesson: Week 1 (Thur)

Number of students present: 13

Lesson structure: Teacher-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- 1) Film structure: narrative & narration, brief explanation on technical terms
- 2) Cause & effect
- 3) Narrative patterns: state of equilibrium
an event that disrupt equilibrium
a successful attempt to restore equilibrium (illustrated by *39 Steps*)
- 4) Linear & non-linear narratives
- 5) Restricted & omniscient narration
- 6) Scenes from *39 Steps* were shown, students were asked to identify special filmic devices. Students were divided into groups (3 in each) to discuss questions on worksheet related to the scenes shown.

Comments on instructor:

- informal, casual
- accepted students' negative feedback (boring, out-dated, slow-paced) neutrally didn't even attempt to argue. Just smiling.

Comments on the students:

- Students seemed less enthusiastic (was it b/c of the bad weather, and/or that H10 was the last lesson, so students were already tired and thus less-concentrated?)
- One female student commented to me after the lesson that the excerpts shown were too boring, and she didn't understand why we had to watch out-dated, black-and-white films from the 1930s. She's also never heard of Alfred Hitchcock.

Observer's comments:

- as I talked with Instructor A, I got to know that basically these two weeks (before the add-drop deadline) are just for initial warm-up, as people would drop/add out of our expectation

Date: September 10, 2001

Lesson: Week 2 (Tue)

Number of students present: 16

Lesson structure: Teacher-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- Lecture on film shots / sounds
- Frame, shot, scene, sequence
- Shots: ECU, CU, medium, long
- Camera angle: high, low
- Last scene of *Notorious* shown: students were asked to count the number of shots. Why using 67 shots in 2 minutes instead of one long shot?
- Syllabus setting up: Arranged student presentation for *Cinema Paradiso* next Tue. Hirosaki and Evelyn were to do the first student-led discussion. Gave out guidelines on how to lead a student-led discussion
- At 3:30pm → trip to ILC: explained how to use the DVD remote control, how to rent films, and how to book rooms
- Watched *Alien*, talked about the use of subtitles
- Class dismissed at 4pm sharp

Comments on instructor:

Comments on the students:

- I realized the girl who didn't know Hitchcock has disappeared
- Some students have apparently dropped the course, and some added
- The "new" students seemed somewhat uncomfortable in group discussions

Observer's comments:

- I finally got a chance to talk with Cora and her friend, Yukie. I realized they had studied in a prestigious all girls' primary & high school with an excellent English learning environment, which contributed to their very advanced level of English proficiency. Cora's English was particularly native-like.

Date: September 18, 2001
Lesson: Week 3 (Tue)
Number of students present:

Lesson structure: Student-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- Presentation of *Cinema Paradiso* by Hirosaki & Evelyn
- The presenters came at 2:40pm. Printer in lab wasn't working, so they were unable to print handouts with questions. Instead they just wrote them on the board
- Presentation included Q & A games, and group discussions
- Before lesson ended, Instructor A talked about the film schedule, fixed the presentation of *Life is Beautiful* for next Tue, explained something about ILC booking. Lesson ended at 4pm sharp.

Comments on instructor:

- Even though the presentation was not well-paced and lots of dead-air existed, Instructor A didn't intervene at all. He just sat at the back and listened, with a smile.
- Joined in group discussions, added his comments, clarified messages behind the film, and laughed heartily when listening to students' opinions.
- The only "intervention" was his directing the presenters to go around, and to explain the questions and join in the discussions of the groups
- Met with the presenters after lesson and gave feedbacks

Comments on the students:

- Two new students majoring in Language Education have just added the course
- Students (particularly the girls) still chatted among themselves in English, Instructor A got irritated, and warned them again.
- On the presentation: maybe b/c it's the first student-led discussion, and that Hirosaki & Evelyn did not consult Instructor A prior to their presentation, the format of the presentation wasn't that well-organized, and actually it's pretty loose. The whole presentation was very slow-paced, and often Hirosaki and Evelyn just didn't have much to say. It could be attributed to their lower ability in English, in expression of ideas.
- Hirosaki was pretty confident and at ease, body language helped, but still, it was difficult to understand what he's getting at. Lots of dead-air. (e.g. assigning 20 minutes for group discussion on 4 questions was too much time)
- On other students: the newly added students (i.e., Verona, Isabel) seemed uncomfortable being grouped with advanced-students (such as Cora & Yukie) during discussion. Didn't contribute much.
- Yukie ended up talking a lot today, seemed to enjoy very much too.

Observer's comments:

- Instructor A's hands-off and non-intervention policy encouraged students to just speak their minds, not having to worry whether their answers are right or wrong, as there is no right or wrong answers in analyzing film... just better or worse answers.

- It seems that there was more than enough time for students to discuss. Since the instructor just generally let things be, sometimes things seemed to be going nowhere.

Date: September 20, 2001

Lesson: Week 3 (Thur)

Number of students present: 15

Lesson structure:

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- Settled time schedule for student-led discussions & final presentations
- Pre-course questionnaire survey conducted (without the presence of instructor)

Comments on instructor:

- Generally cordial, the only thing that irritated him was the students talking in Cantonese, and he emphasized again: "excuse me, this is an English class, please speak in English."

Comments on the students:

- Students still talk to each other in Cantonese, except Hirosaki and Cora's group
- Students were very co-operative in doing the questionnaire, although one girl commented that "it's too long."

Observer's comments:

- Seems that Evelyn and her BBA friends were more inclined to talking in Cantonese, perhaps they're not as confident in speaking in English as some other advanced students.
- Other students around Hirosaki were forced to speak in English, as Hirosaki cannot understand Cantonese
- I realized one more exchange student from Japan was also here. However, his English was very poor, and he's asking for permission to just sit in this course. It turned out that Instructor A told him that he could not do so, and that this course is not suitable for him, as his English is too poor. He also did the questionnaire though.

Date: September 25, 2001

Lesson: Week 4 (Tue)

Number of students present: 13

Lesson structure: Student-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- Presentation of *Life is Beautiful* by Liz and Gilbert
- Liz read out summary & character introduction of the film.
- Short quiz (with candies as the prize) and group discussion.

Comments on instructor:

- Again just minimal intervention
- Did not have a lot of comments → preferred to let students do most, if not all, of the talking. Joined in group discussions and talked about World War II.

Comments on the students:

- Students still (!) talked in Cantonese, Instructor A reminded them once again
- On presentation: Liz's English quite fluent, soft-spoken, vocab. quite rich. Gilbert struggled with his English, though. Had some pronunciation problems, stammered a lot when talking. They were quite co-operative, maybe b/c they're friends from the same major (Geography), and the presentation this time seemed much better than last one in terms of organization and time-management.
- On the whole, Timothy (same major as G and L), Cora and Yukie were the most active in participating in discussions. The BBA girls (Student Evelyn, Jessy, Nicole, Sue) were less active today. When S, C, and Y were grouped together, C and Y did most of the talking, while S just listened. It seems that she's a bit uncomfortable
- Hirosaki's body language helped communication and compensated his lack in English vocab., when trying to get his ideas across

Observer's comments:

- Even though Cora's English is the most native-like, in terms of critical thinking and interesting insights, Yukie did a better job.

Date: September 27, 2001

Lesson: Week 4 (Thur)

Number of students present:

Lesson structure: Teacher-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- Reviewed filmic devices as some students weren't too clear about the concept
- Showed scenes from *The 39 Steps* to illustrate filmic devices
- Introduced "sounds"—diagetic vs. non-diagetic (external/internal)
- Showed scenes from *Blackmail* (the 1st sound movie) to demonstrate the creative uses of sound—conveying psychological states of the characters

Comments on instructor:

- Asked Cora to read out the notes on handout

Comments on the students:

- They seemed less enthusiastic than during the first or second lesson of the course

Observer's comments:

- I fixed time with Gilbert and Liz for personal interviews

Date: October 4, 2001
Lesson: Week 5 (Thur)
Number of students present:

Lesson structure: Teacher-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- Discussion of free will, necessity, and pure chance. Used example of lunch and choice of major
- Showed scene of "Perfect Day" from *Trainspotting*
- Students asked to fill in the lyrics (on the fill-in-the-blank sheet)
- Discussed the meaning behind the song "Perfect Day."
- Introduced the concept of cross-cutting /parallel action using "the killing" from *The Decalogue* by Kieslowski

Comments on instructor:

- Today was the first time ever since this course has started that he talked over time.

Comments on the students:

Observer's comments:

- It seems that the students have settled down into being with more or less the same group of people for group discussions:
 - Cora, Yukie
 - Sue, Nicole, Evelyn, Jessy
 - Verona, Isabel
 - Liz, Timothy, Gilbert
 - Korey, Hirosaki, Pete...
- This phenomenon is very different from the summer course, in which students didn't know each other at first, but ended up getting along with each other in the whole class very well. In this class, people just stuck with their own friends. Not much interaction with "other" students outside their group of friends.

Date: October 9, 2001
Lesson: Week 6 (Tue)
Number of students present:

Lesson structure: Student-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- Presentation of *Trainspotting* by Cora & Yukie

Comments on instructor:

Comments on the students:

- On presentation: C and Y's English were very good, and they also have good presentation skills. However, it wasn't too successful in terms of leading discussions though, partly b/c students didn't really appreciate the film, and also b/c the structure of the lesson was just too loose. Did not force students to think enough.
- C and Y didn't object to the film, but both expressed that it is "very weird."
- It seems that students' response was just lukewarm. Some students didn't even watch the whole film. Students in this class did not seem to enjoy this film as much as the summer class did.
- Their feelings towards the film was also divergent. Liz was always particularly appalled at the "horrible" scenes, such as "The worse toilet in Scotland."
- Discussion wasn't enthusiastic.

Observer's comments:

- The analysis of the film was not in-depth enough. Partly b/c the lesson structure was too freely determined by the presenters, and partly b/c students' knowledge of film was very limited. Due to the lack of lecture on professional film techniques (?), discussion didn't go anywhere too far. Usually discussion answers were just superficial, no deep critical-thinking skills were demonstrated. No interesting insights generated.
- This film is different from the last two, which were just straight narratives. It requires more filmic knowledge, international outlook, and a broader mindset to be able to understand this film.
- The loose structure of the lessons also rendered the students unable to get on to deep analysis. Some force on the part of the instructor might have helped.
- I guess this demonstrated one negative point of this hands-off approach.

Date: October 11, 2001
Lesson: Week 6 (Thur)
Number of students present:

Lesson structure: Teacher-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- In preparation for the next presentation on *Alien*, this lesson was devoted to discussing elements of Sci-Fi films.
- Scenes from *Metropolis* (A German Expressionist film) were shown, and students were to discuss the scenes in terms of the structure of society, industrialism, technology, transport, architecture, costume, and human emotions.
- Homework assignment—"scene analysis" announced. Students are to choose a scene from those watched in class and discuss. 500-800 words. Submission date: November 15.

Comments on instructor:

- This is his favorite topic! He was so enthusiastic on it that he ran over time (lesson dismissed at almost 6:30pm!), which is definitely rare.
- Maybe he could've made a similar "introduction to drug culture" before the students watched *Trainspotting*.

Comments on the students:

- Their response was quite okay this time. Showed more interest than in the last lesson (*Trainspotting*).
- As usual, students dreaded the written assignments.

Observer's comments:

- Since students are not always familiar with the topics presented in the films, pre-viewing guidance is important. For instance, drug culture is popular among people in foreign countries, but not so much in Hong Kong. Students did not have the knowledge of it. It would be better to prepare the students for the new "cultural shock," I guess this could at least help them to try to understand the film more.

Date: October 16, 2001
Lesson: Week 7 (Tue)
Number of students present:

Lesson structure: Student-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- Presentation of *Alien* by Jessy, Sue, and Nicole.
- Q & A game on the characters of the films / introduction of the director (who also directed *Gladiator*);
- Comparing scenes—how to build up tension / layers of sets;
- Group discussions

Comments on instructor:

- Walked around, joined in students' group discussions as usual

Comments on the students:

- On presentation: presenters very co-operative (coz they're friends), N's English was the strongest and most fluent among the 3. She's also very confident. J did not stand out in the class anyhow. She introduced the summary and genre by just reading straight from her prepared-handouts.
- Evelyn was particularly talkative today, probably to support her friends.
- Yukie maintained her active level of participation, while Cora seemed not too concentrated, less active than previous lessons
- Verona & Isabel talked more, and seemed to show more confidence as compared with previous lessons.

Observer's comments:

- It seems that the presentation went a bit too fast, not enough chances for each student to really speak up. The presentation itself was pretty good, contained lots of information, and was also well-prepared. However, it left too little room for discussion. Couldn't talk about the film in depth too much.
- In terms of interaction, it seems like the students in the summer class got along better w/ each other—from not knowing each other to getting along very well. But for this class, students just stuck to their own group & friends.
- If Evelyn can be so actively participating today, she could've done so too in the previous lessons. **This demonstrated that enough motivation can drive a student to increase conversation output.**

Date: October 18, 2001

Lesson: Week 7 (Thur)

Number of students present: 13 (Hirosaki came in late at 5:50pm)

Lesson structure: Teacher-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- Refreshed students' memory on "free will, necessity, and pure chance."
- Showed the 2 killing scenes from *Decalogue*: discussed questions on handout
- Message of the film: anti-capital punishment

Comments on instructor:

Comments on the students:

- Divergent ideas on the effectiveness of the scenes: Timothy thought it was very realistic and believable, while Nicole had a totally different opinion, that the scene was unrealistic, and made her uncomfortable & sick

Observer's comments:

- Students (the BBA girls) who objected to the "appalling" scenes were probably average-viewers. However, their group conducted the best presentation among the 4 so far.

Date: October 23, 2001
Lesson: Week 8 (Tue)
Number of students present:

Lesson structure: Student presentation #1

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- "Gary Oldman: Good at Bad" by Korey, Hirosaki, & Pete
- This presentation mainly focused on *The Fifth Element* and *Leon*.
- 1) Role play: scene prediction. Watch a scene, predict the next. Lots of fun and laughter this time.
- 2) Q&A (refer to handout)
- 3) Group discussion

Comments on instructor:

- Talked about conditions for buying DVDs (which the ILC or school library doesn't have). Condition: there must be no fixed Cantonese subtitles.
- While waiting for Sue to show up, he confirmed with Liz & Gilbert about next week's presentation: Wayne Wang's *Joy Luck Club* and *Dim Sum*.

Comments on the students:

- On presentation: introduction talk on Gary Oldman's personal profile and filmography by Korey. He then retreated to the back of the classroom and was responsible for the lighting.
- Pete gave an introduction on *Leon*. He seemed quite enthusiastic today, maybe the topic is more of his interest.
- Hirosaki gave an introduction on *The Fifth Element*. His way of talking: natural, at ease, comfortable. Although pronunciation still not good, his message went across by the good use of his body languages and hand gestures. His presentation this time is a lot better than his first (on *Cinema Paradiso*).
- Overall, the presentation was well-managed, in terms of format and time. K, H, and P were also very co-operative.
- Other students seemed pretty relaxed today, and got along with each other pretty well (at least with those sitting beside them)
- Today Evelyn was grouped with Yukie and Cora. It seemed that by this day, they've got along very well. Evelyn was more comfortable and easy while speaking up, and she's quite enthusiastic and active in discussion and participation as well.

Observer's comments:

- Presentation format tends to be interactive rather than presentational. No deep analysis was involved (except maybe the analysis of the POV shot of Leon falling dead), but simple, straight forward questions which students could participate and have fun.
- Obviously, it took time for students of different English proficiency to warm up and interact with each other. Once they got along, they had fun.

Date: October 30, 2001

Lesson: Week 9 (Tue)

Number of students present:

Lesson structure: Student presentation #2

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- “*Dim Sum & Joy Luck Club*: Wayne Wang” by Liz, Gilbert, Timothy

Comments on instructor:

Comments on the students:

- The presenters dressed very formally for presentation today.
- On presentation: format well-designed and well-prepared. Used Powerpoint for presentation.
- Balloon game, prizes, & “The Weakest Link” showed that the presenters have really spent time thinking about and designing the presentation. Group discussion sections were concluded by giving model answers (using Powerpoint)
- The 3 of them were very co-operative.
- However, scenes showing section was too long. Not enough time to show all of them, the last story of *Joy Luck Club* was not shown. Time management problem.
- As the 2 films are relatively straight forward and simple narrative, students’ discussion went pretty well.
- Yukie’s group’s analysis was very thorough (for question #3)
- Introduction & Conclusion done by L. The presentation was concluded by a quote of Wayne Wang.

Observer’s comments:

- Presentation well-organized
- Good cooperation between presenters

Date: November 1, 2001

Lesson: Week 9 (Thur)

Number of students present:

Lesson structure: Teacher-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- Mise-en-scene, montage, long take, deep focus, realism
- Scene from *Smoke* (by Wayne Wang) shown to illustrate long take & deep focus
- Shower scene of *Psycho* shown to illustrate montage, use of music, shape of objects (round). The effectiveness of the montage technique: why put 70+ shots in this one scene, which is only 2 minutes)?

Comments on instructor:

- He has forgotten his appointment (to talk about the presentation) tomorrow with Cora's group! Arranged another time.
- He asked students to read out notes on handouts (usually Evelyn, Cora, Yukie, or Nicole...)
- He called on students to answer questions on scenes shown rather than wait for students to volunteer.

Comments on the students:

Observer's comments:

- Sometimes, when no students seemed to be volunteering to answer questions, Instructor A just resorted to calling names.

Date: November 5, 2001

Lesson: Week 10 (Tue)

Number of students present: 13

Lesson structure: student presentation #3

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- “Hollywood romantic comedy couples: Tom Hanks & Meg Ryan” by Verona, Isabel, Cora, & Yukie
- Game introduction: “大風吹” to bring out information on the setting places of the 2 films
- Yukie: brief introduction on the director, Nora Ephron
- Cora: introduction on *Sleepless in Seattle*
- Verona: introduction on *You’ve got mail*
- Opening scene in both films compared
- Games played based on scenes shown: *Sleepless in Seattle* led by Y; *You’ve got mail* led by V
- Debate—Motion: “One can find real love through email/electronic media”; class divided into two groups: for and against the motion
- Conclusion: the defense of romantic comedy

Comments on instructor:

- He didn’t like these films (straight forward, commercial, mainstream Hollywood romantic comedies)
- He did not show his dislike; kept a gentle smile throughout the class
- But was revealed by the presenting students that he did’t like them.

Comments on the students:

- By now, the students have known each other better, and started chatting across the room before the lesson.
- However, when I asked for Verona’s name, Hirosaki & Korey both did’t know. Seems like they mixed up the two students (as they had similar names starting with the same alphabets).
- The atmosphere was pretty good, as the questions were fairly easy
- During debate, Sue (For) was particularly active and talkative; she won the “Best Debater” Award
- Nicole (Against) also very talkative and confident
- Pete expressed that romantic comedies are good for entertainment b/c they’re relaxing, funny—seems like he dislike “heavy” stuff as he’s mentioned in interview

Observer’s comments:

- Games and questions conducted are very easy, as these are just simple love stories.
- Questions very straight forward, no deep analysis involved
- No real discussions involved anyway, just straight forward Q & A on facts in the film
- Could’ve done better/deeper analysis/presentation, given C & Y’s high-level English proficiency

Date: November 8, 2001
Lesson: Week 10 (Thur)
Number of students present: 11

Lesson structure: teacher-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- Handout on “romantic comedy” (as a follow-up on the last group presentation)
- Discussed elements of romantic comedy; asked students for more film examples
- Identified the strengths & weaknesses of romantic comedies:
Strengths: good time-killer, relaxing, entertaining, profitable, commercially successful, can satisfy audiences’ fantasy
Weaknesses: illogical, too simple, shallow, no deep thinking involved, characters often stereotyped
- Male vs. female spectator’s point of view on the genre

Comments on instructor:

- Tried to involve students in deeper thinking & critical evaluation of romantic comedy
- However, it did not seem too successful, as students generally welcomed the genre. (perhaps except Timothy)

Comments on the students:

- Students seemed to enjoy chatting about romantic comedy much. Generated lots of laughs, esp. Timothy’s interesting insight
- Students grouped with different people today:
e.g. Pete w/ Cora, Yukie
Verona, Isabel w/ Hirosaki
- Yukie showed more opinions

Observer’s comments:

- This topic clearly generated interests among the students.
- HK students seem to be more susceptible to topics that are immediately related to them, such as romance & internet, while feeling estranged by “distant” and unfamiliar topics such as the drug culture in *Trainspotting*

Date: November 13, 2001
Lesson: Week 11 (Tue)
Number of students present:

Lesson structure: student presentation #4

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- "Cartoon films" by Student Jessy, Sue, Nicole, and Evelyn
- Demonstration of the workings of animation (by self-made paper flipping)
- Introduction of 4 cartoon films by the presenters: games & activities
- Discussion questions

Comments on instructor:

- Gave a brief introduction to next week's topic: *Pulp Fiction*. He warned that it's "not an easy film."

Comments on the students:

- By this time, students seemed to have moved beyond their immediate friends a little bit. But just a little bit... e.g. Gilbert started chatting with Verona
- On presentation:
 - Mulan by Evelyn: her English was rather poor, seriously lacking vocabulary, unable to explain things clearly. The discussion led by her basically went nowhere. Other students looked "dazed & confused." Often long periods of silence followed her questions, as the students did not know what she's talking about, and what they're supposed to do.
 - Toy Story 2 by Jessy: her English was okay, led role play game of the scenes (having students read/act out the lines); counted POV shots; song scene
 - Wallace and Gromit by Nicole: her English was very confident and fluent
 - Casper by Sue: again lacking vocabulary, couldn't express what she wanted to express. She also couldn't understand Instructor A's response
- Problems: year of the films were not listed (!); using VCDs take too long to locate the correct scene/shot.
- Students' response: despite the presenters' general enthusiasm, students' response was just lukewarm, probably due to unclear explanation, somewhat confusing guidelines, and lack of interest towards cartoons.
- Pete expressed, "I don't like Disney cartoons."
- Generally, students looked really bored. (esp. Timothy)
- Yukie's attitude very good though: even the topic was not very interesting, she could still make use of every opportunity to have fun (like drawing the grasshopper and making animation flip book), and could really enjoy.

Observer's comments:

- Interest & motivation are clearly closely related.
- If the topic is interesting and relevant to the students, they would be more motivated to participate in lesson activities and discussions. Vice versa.
- Timothy and Verona expressed to me later that "the cartoons they showed were boring."

Date: November 15, 2001

Lesson: Week 11 (Thur)

Number of students present:

Lesson structure: teacher-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- Background information handout on *Pulp Fiction*
- Briefly talked about the narrative structure, storyline, terrific dialogue, and allusions (of other films) used in the film
- Played scenes from *Psycho*, *Deliverance*, and *Shoot the Piano Player*
- Talked very briefly about French new wave and Godard & Traffault
- Camera angle of *Psycho* murder scene (top shot)

Comments on instructor:

- Enthusiastic about *Pulp Fiction*, prepared the students for the film

Comments on the students:

- Some were very shocked at the rape scene in *Deliverance* (e.g. the BBA girls)
- Korey expressed that he didn't know rape could happen to the male sex

Observer's comments:

- I have a feeling that the students may not like *Pulp Fiction*
- However, Instructor A seemed to be putting a lot of expectation on next week's presentation
- Verona expressed to me that she felt some pressure, as Instructor A is clearly a big fan of the film

Date: November 20, 2001
Lesson: Week 12 (Tue)
Number of students present:

Lesson structure: student-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- *Pulp Fiction* by Student Timothy, Verona, Isabel
- Presentation outline:
 - 1) Character matching game
 - 2) Brief introduction of the 3 stories & Quentin Tarantino's background information by T.
 - 3) Re-sequencing chronological order of the storyline
 - 4) Talked about allusions in the film by Isabel
 - 5) Drug-injection scene comparison: *Pulp Fiction* vs. *Trainspotting*
 - 6) Group discussion on favorite character
 - 7) Game: scene showing, Q&A (newspaper game); punishment: dancing scene role play
 - 8) Group discussion questions: explanation on fast food culture, drugs, cars, consumerism
- Conclusion: Isabel read out a nice reference summing up QT's PF
- At the end of the lesson, I asked them to pass around a sheet of paper and write down their name & contact # so that I can arrange the final interviews with them.

Comments on instructor:

- Came in 15 minutes prior to the lesson starting time: was it b/c this is one of his favorite films?
- Went away again, came back when lesson started
- Discussed with Hirosaki about the "religious reference" in PF prior to start of lesson
- Gave feedback to them after the lesson ended

Comments on the students:

- Generally, the presenters' English wasn't too fluent, in fact sometimes it's difficult to listen, and full of grammatical errors.
- However, the presentation was very nicely done.
- Students were generally enthusiastic, esp. during the newspaper game
- Pete's group (including Cora & Evelyn) were punished; they had to perform "the dance." However, the performance could've been more fun if they really blend themselves into the dance. Pete didn't seem to be enjoying too much... why? (in the end, the dance sequence was cut in the middle for the 3 students seemed quite embarrassed to really dance)
- Some students (such as Cora & her friends) expressed that this kind of film was "not her type."
- Korey always didn't do the watching assignment! He did not watch *Pulp Fiction*. (I also remember he didn't see some previous films listed in the schedule)
- Hirosaki expressed that he loves this film, the terrific foul language used & Jules' dialogue

Observer's comments:

- The presenters have clearly done a lot of research and put in a lot of effort on this film, as this is a rather difficult film, heavily loaded with references. As first-time viewers of this film, Verona & Isabel did a very good job. The games and activities in the presentation were carefully thought out, and showed their creativity. Information on allusions very rich
- However, some problems: despite that the discussion questions were well thought out and aims to trigger critical & analytical thinking in students, the discussion actually did not go very well/deep. Discussion of the answers could've been more thorough.
- Well-prepared. So much information to convey, so little time! (the presenters expressed that they actually omitted some parts, for there's not enough time)
- Timothy & Verona came to talk to me about the film last Thursday, to get more information. They also did a lot of searching on the web.
- Verona expressed to me her enthusiasm when she realized "how much sources and references on the film there are out on the internet"
- Seemed like they enjoyed presenting this film

Date: November 22, 2001
Lesson: Week 12 (Thur)
Number of students present: 14

Lesson structure: teacher-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- Introduced spoofs
- Asked students to give comments and suggestions on the course

Comments on instructor:

- Wrote down students' comments and suggestions, no feedback or rebuttal were given to the student comments
- Remained a neutral standpoint

Comments on the students:

- Before lesson started, students exchanged phone # and icq # for future contacts
- Everybody got along very well with each other, even Gilbert chatted across the room with Nicole.
- Lots of laugh on spoofs, clearly the students enjoyed them a lot, and found them very funny and entertaining
- Comments on the course:
 - N: The *Killing* film (*The Decalogue*) was too difficult to understand; workload was actually quite heavy IF students have other stuffs to attend to in their own major courses or extra-curricular activities; need more time for discussion, and to clarify complicated points in films
 - H: Lack of film vocabulary hindered expression of thoughts and opinions
 - Y: Providing notes on the background of the film prior to the *Trainspotting* presentation would've clarified the plot, for some students had difficulty when watching it; maybe assign a lesson on slang (using examples in *Pulp Fiction* & *Trainspotting*) would be interesting too
 - S: As this is an ELT course, there should be more English films instead of European films
 - P: Some presentations were boring, which would discourage students from any learning mood
 - G: Including the requirement of writing short report on each film seen could've trained students' writing skills

Observer's comments:

- Yukie seemed really interested in getting to know more about slang and foreign culture issues
- Given more time to warm up, students gradually did get along with each other more
- As usual, Instructor A did not give comments/feedback to students' suggestions, as his teaching approach was student-centered.
- Today's topic (spoofs) wasn't included in the summer course

Date: November 27, 2001
Lesson: Week 13 (Tue)
Number of students present:

Lesson structure: student-led discussion

Content / Topic of the lesson:

- *American Beauty* by Pete and Korey
- Presentation outline:
 - Introduction of film: synopsis & characters by Korey
 - Game played to introduce different characters and some of their lines uttered
 - Scene playing & discussions
 - General discussion questions on the whole film
- Lastly, Instructor A invited students to a gathering in his house, and sort of discussed it with the students

Comments on instructor:

- As usual, he rarely gave comments. However, when asked by Korey why he preferred *American Beauty* and not Tom Hank's films, he expressed that he didn't find any of Tom Hank's films good

Comments on the students:

- The prizes for the game activity was nicely thought out (tiny origami roses in different colors)—matches the motif of the film, ie., red roses
- K's student was pretty fluent, could almost speak as spontaneously as he wanted
- While waiting to search for the scenes, K filled in the dead air by asking Instructor A why he liked *American Beauty* but not Tom Hank's films
- Students were generally enthusiastic, and generated a lot of discussion among whether Colonel Fitts was gay or not.
- As the presenter, Pete didn't notice that this character was portrayed to be a closet homosexual
- I joined in their discussion and finally convinced them (with Instructor A's confirmation) that Colonel Fitts IS gay
- The discussion questions were well thought-out and triggered interests among students, as the film is related to life and things in their lives.

Observer's comments:

- This was the last lesson, and went quite well.

APPENDIX E Transcripts of interviews (Instructor A)

Interview with Instructor A (1)

Date: 20/9/2001

R: Researcher I: Instructor A

- R: Hi, Instructor A, thanks for being here for the interview. Let me first start by asking you, so I know you're from England, um, how long have you been living in Hong Kong, and how long have you been teaching in this school, CUHK?
- A: Okay, I've been in Hong Kong for about 15 years, and in CUHK for, I think, 11 years.
- R: So, how long have you been teaching this course, "English Through Film"?
- A: Yeah, okay, um, for about 8 years I think, I started teaching it almost, I think as soon as it was first run, I thought it was Herbert Pierson, and actually Herbert, Dr. Herbert Pierson, he was the former head of the ILC, and he's the guy who actually set up the course in the first place and designed it...
- R: I see, um, as far as I know, his course had a different name, it's like something called... visual...
- A: It was originally called "English through the visual media." That's right.
- R: So, um, so actually this concept was proposed by him, or was it collaborated by...
- A: No, he proposed... um, I think he proposed it, and I think we've been thinking for time about a course which used film, and um, it was Herbert who actually came up with the main idea, and he based it on a course that he did, called "Great Books," which was a... I think it was called "Thinking through great books," or something like that... that students had to read part of, or extracts from great books each week, and then come to class and discuss them. That basic format was, carried over to the film course.
- R: At that time, was film popular in the language classroom?
- A: No, not so much as it is now. And I think that's just because now that um, the media, like DVDs, are so teacher and student-friendly, whereas tapes, just weren't very friendly.
- R: I see. Um, just something more about personal background, what is your academic and personal interests?
- A: Okay, um, I think they kinda ... I'm interested in... film, I have been for a long time, and also um, I'm a very keen birdwatcher, and that's just got me into areas of research I'd never thought I'd get into. And so, um, at the moment, I'm interested in historical records of China, I'm into 19th century writings about birds in China... distribution of birds. So, major interest...
- R: I see. Um, can I also ask you what you studied before?
- A: Oh yeah, well um, I actually started studying law, this was a university in England, I changed that after a year, my parents were very upset, coz their son who's actually going to become a lawyer, and I actually changed it into English, and English Lits, and um, then I just did some teachings and publications after that.
- R: I see. So besides Hong Kong, have you ever taught in other countries?
- A: Yes, I taught in Spain for 2 years in the late 1970s, and then I taught in Australia in the early 80s for a year or so...
- R: Uh-huh... And also you told me you taught Italian-...?
- A: Oh no, that was in England, er... yeah, I also taught for a long time in England, I taught a large variety of students, but at a one particular school, that the classes were, kinda like, most fun with Italian students... I also taught Vietnamese for quite some time, I worked in a refugee camp anyway and taught Vietnamese refugees English...
- R: Um, I also want to know how are the students, like, generally... Spanish students, Italian students, Australian students...
- A: Well, I had a whole range of students. Generally I liked best the Mediterranean students, Spanish and Italians... they were just friendly and fun. And Germans, we have quite a few German and Swiss students, they were very serious, and they're a little boring, I also had some um, an Icelandic student, once, and he's one of the wildest character I've ever had, he'd always had this terrible hangover, every morning, and (laughs) over-indulged himself... And then again, another group I had was Arab students, and um, this was just a time when Jimmy Carter was president, and I remember doing kinda basic grammar games, like "if I were so-and-so, I'll do such-and-such" and I put in names, Jimmy Carter, like say something like "if I were Jimmy Carter, I'd work for world peace"... if I said Jimmy Carter, the Arabs would stand up and say, "Death to Carter"! (laughs)
- R: (laughs) Wow, so did you take Jimmy Carter's name off?

- A: Well, actually I learnt that fairly, pretty quickly, stay away from troublesome I'd say, so um, the Arab students were like, culturally very different from European students. I also taught South American students, they were really good as well, they were very politicized, and I remember if I introduced a country, we'd just talk generally about a country, students would stand up and denounce the Fascist dictatorship in that country...
- R: Wow, that wouldn't happen in Hong Kong... at least for a while.
- A: (murmured something)
- R: Okay, okay um, I want to know more about the course, can you briefly tell us the history and some related changes of this course over the years?
- A: Yeap, okay, well as I said earlier, Herbert Pierson set up the course, and it was then called, something like "English through the visual media," it had 3 name changes, it then changed to "Thinking through the culture of film," and finally it's now called "English through film," and they reflect the changes in it. But initially it was very biased towards writing, there was a heavy workload, 4 big writing assignments, but now we found that the students, they just don't come to courses, they just walk away. The workload was too heavy, so we more or less eliminated the writing element, now it's very much an oral class, discussion-based class. I think that's the biggest change... the lost of the writing part...
- R: And the students liked it?
- A: Yeah, students seemed to like it, um, they generally responded pretty positively I'd say.
- R: Okay, um, how about the choice of film? How do you choose your films?
- A: Well, I tend to choose the films that excites and have interests in them, and actually, um, I like some straight forward Hollywood films, and I also like obscure, difficult European type films as well, but, I'm a teacher, I've got philosophy, you can ask this later, that do things that work, I'm very pragmatic, if I use a film that I love, but the students don't like it, I won't use that film again, I'd use films that get a successfully response from students... so that determines my choice. Well, um, I don't try to use very simple, accessible films, I do try to use films that take a bit more thought, and um, a bit more difficult to approach.
- R: Okay, so, um, imagine your students are all brilliant students, their English is very good, and you can show them anything, and u know, they have really mature cinematic skills, and what would be your ideal list of films?
- A: Well, okay, this changes from year to year, my ideal list, but at the moment, um, I've just been reading about a book about *Blade Runner*, I think *Blade Runner's* an excellent film but it's hard to appreciate it, so it's a film that you've to see at least 3 times before you start to understand it... so I hope to have films like *Blade Runner*, I like Sci-Fi films, I'd probably like to do a whole course around Sci-Fi films, maybe starting with *Metropolis*, and then going through some Sci-Fi classics, 2001, Kubrick's 2001, *Alien*, *Blade Runner*, *The 5th Element*, films like that, I think that would be very interesting.
- R: Um, so, um, it seems that you like Sci-Fi films a lot, um, um, concerning this course, do you have any insights or comments throughout the years? Or did you um, were there any surprising elements that you didn't expect before? Or...
- A: Well, ooh, um, I get fantastically surprised sometimes by really high quality presentations, well, I don't always get really high quality, but from time to time, one group or even two groups, just put in a fantastic presentation that I really learnt from, that's always a pleasant surprise, because you get used to students who kinda getting, u know, just going by what they're doing, just doing "enough to pass" kinda mentality. So I'm always really pleased and happy when some students with lower ability doing something really good...
- R: Hm.
- A: Other surprises are sometimes films that, I think are quite easy to understand it, but students just miss the points, that's more of a cultural reason.
- R: Hm, okay. Let's talk about teaching ESL/EFL in Hong Kong. What's your general impression of HK students, and HK's education system?
- A: Right, okay. Well, as I said, from my earlier experience of teaching Italians were lively classes, when I first to Hong Kong when I was teaching here, I was amazed by how quiet and passive the students were, how much work it was to get students excited or talking about something. But actually that was 15 years ago, I find now it's quite a big change, students now are much more, they're much happier, generally, and they're more, they don't think of work so much, they rather think of enjoyment rather than work, that's quite a big change in their mindsets I think, but I think it's a welcomed change. And actually I like modern day students more than the older students, I'm happier teaching students that are more active than students who're passive... And then, other people would ask about the English levels, but well, generally, these kinds of courses are for

people who're happy with their level of English, and are comfortable and confident in their English proficiency. So I get good students, and I find it, the quality of good students was pretty much the same now as it was before, and I think, the average students is less good in 15 years ago in terms of English proficiency.

R: Hm-hm. I see. So this is an ELT course, what, in your opinion, is the best way to learn English effectively, for L2 learners, Hong Kong students/Asian students?

A: (laughs) Well, in here is, well I kinda generalize from my own experience, when I went to live in Spain, um, how I learnt Spanish, I never learnt it at school, my Spanish got okay, it's reasonably alright, that was through having Chinese huh Chinese? ... Spanish friends that I was interested in talking to and getting to know, and then football, I was crazy about football, (football's my other interest), I was crazy about football, playing it, watching it, talking about it, so I used to listen to the radio, the Spanish radio, there's big games on the radio, it didn't come through on the TV, and um, so I came to a whole language through my interest, so I always believe that, if you can be, if you can motivate yourself to be interested in the topic, then you kinda go straight through the barriers of languages, so if you're sufficiently interested in a topic, you can be motivated to learn a language. So it matches the 2 courses I do, I do the film course, and I also do another course on nature and environment.

R: Well yeah, actually there's a whole bunch of theories on interest/motivation and English learning. Back to this course, you said that the students in this course are pretty much advanced-level speakers of English, so what are your expectations for them, what do you hope them to improve or learn?

A: Yeah, well, the... the main theme is fluency, like when you come in and talk 30 or 40 minutes about a movie in a class, in small groups, that's really gonna give you good opportunity to improve your fluency, and your vocabulary can increase a lot from films, idiom, cultural knowledge of other countries, other places, and other people. And um, critical thinking, I think films can be challenging and can really develop students' critical thinking, and I also got this theory as well that students often have a lot of passive English, they kinda have 10 or 12 years of learning English, and it's kinda in there somewhere that they can't kinda find it, and if they really want to talk about, express difficult ideas, or something that's kinda on the edge of their consciousness, they're able to pull out these language resources they didn't know they had.

R: Okay. So, um, so you said 15, uh 11, uh 8 years ago your students were er... more passive than right now, so were your expectations a little bit different, maybe u can, u just expected them to u know, talk out what their minds were thinking, but right now you demanded more, like critical or analytical analysis...

A: Yeah, well, actually before they, they, um I didn't teach this course 15 years ago, but what I've tried to do, they just would've struggled, they wouldn't be able to, to deal either the cultural differences, I had to have very simply cowboy films or detective films, something where the genre was really clear, whereas Sci-Fi films were a bit... um, something that came within their experience, which were not too far away from their experience. Yeap.

R: Okay. (coughs) So um, what do you think of teacher-oriented and student-oriented lectures? You seem to prefer student-oriented lectures...

A: Yeah, well, it just goes back to the training course I did about 20 years ago that the key thing that came out is not to be teacher-oriented but uh, to get quickly away from the teacher and make the students active, give the students things to do, just to be student-oriented. And I think a course like this has a big opportunity for so much a course like this. There's a certain bit that the teacher's gotta feed, there's a bit of feeding at the beginning, and after it's much more student-oriented.

R: Hm. So do you agree that the teacher is only the "facilitator"?

A: Well, very much so, yes. (laughs)

R: Um, as I have sat in your lesson, I realized you're pretty much student-oriented and pretty "hands off" or relaxing, um, what would be your bottom line, like, what would you not allow students to do?

A: Oh I see. Well I get very irritated when students talk Cantonese in class. Um, have you noticed that? I'm quite strict on this.

R: I... yeah, I noticed that...

A: And I'd say something, er... in some classes I have a system of fine, I don't know if you know this, about one dollar alright, speaking Cantonese, and they get fined one dollar, and the money goes, at the end of the term, I'd collect it and spend it on snacks for everybody... so um, that's what most irritates me when people just lapse into Cantonese, I think it just shows that they're not interested in following what's going on and uh... and you know, they're not interested in the course. That irritates me.

- R: Hm. What I realized is that the students with better English they tend to speak in English, while those with no-so-good English, they tend to speak in Cantonese. Maybe they're, I don't know, afraid to speak in English...
- A: Yeap. Do you have any tips on that, on how to solve that one?
- R: Um, I think the fine thing is good. (laughs)
- A: But I'd do that as a last resort, when I realize it's getting bad... but um, I don't know, I'd repeat that this is an English language course, you should improve your English by practicing, not by speaking Cantonese. And it's also something about group dynamics, it can work in all kinds of different ways, sometimes, having a good student and a weaker student really helps pull up the weaker student, can rapidly improve their English, but other times no, they just get dispirited and give up. It's just about the dynamics of a group...
- R: Hm, I see. Your lecture mainly consists of student presentations, I mean the course, uh, how would you grade the students' presentations?
- A: Oh yeah, I've got a kind of 3-standard categories. Um, which is um, preparation, so I give them a score for preparation, interest value, and class response. Um, and then on top of that, I give each one an own individual score for their own particular performance. That's it, really, I think. Other teachers, um, evaluate performance and presentations in a different way, and actually I should give the students peer group assessments, I think that I should do that, but I'm a bit too lazy to do that...
- R: Hm. I see. Um, I realized the courses you're teaching are, u know, um, this course, "English through film," and also, "English through the nature and environment." So it seems that you really prefer somewhat "non-academic" approaches to learning English, is that your personal interest or does it have anything to do with your own philosophy or...
- A: Well, like as I said before, I think if a teacher can motivate students to pursue a subject, the content of a course, then that's um, you're really on the road to helping them learn English, you can do that to, choosing topics that people are interested in is very important, so um I think generally people are interested in film and I think, in the modern age, they're interested in nature. But I think, I think... they're both capable of being academic subjects, as nature is another way of saying ecology, and um, Chinese U doesn't have an ecology department, but HKU does, HKU's got a department of ecology and bird diversity... which is quite a strong department I would say... And film, I think, does any universities in Hong Kong have film, major or minor...
- R: Well no, um, yeah, in the Baptist U they have a production major, but not like critical studies, I think er... Poly U or City U is having a new program on film production, yeah, but just film production, not cultural or critical studies...
- A: Yeah, not film studies, but anyway, in the UK and the US, a lot of universities have Film studies as a major or minor.
- R: Hmm...
- A: So certainly, they're both academic subjects.
- R: Uh-huh. Okay, um... Do you think that the Hong Kong students' English level is... um... how would you classify, is it very poor, average...
- A: Compared to what?
- R: Compared to the other students you'd taught in other countries...
- A: Ah... it's so different, because in, in Europe, say, German/Swiss, their language is quite similar to English, okay, and um, same also with Italian and Spanish and French, they're a lot of vocab. that shared... like you said, you said "facilitator," any Spanish, any Italian, any Portuguese would have a very similar word in their language, they'd recognize ... So their problem is much less than the problems that Chinese/Cantonese speakers have in learning English, so it's very hard to compare... I guess you can compare Hong Kong Cantonese speakers with people from mainland China who learn English. And I guess the difference there is they're so much hungrier and they're more motivated to do well.
- R: You mean the Chinese mainlanders?
- A: Yeah. They're really hungry to succeed... whereas in Hong Kong they had 20 years of easy living, and they're not so motivated.
- R: Yeah, that is true... yeah, I think so too. Is there any other comments or opinions you would like to make? Oh yeah, how, er what do you think of the class you're teaching? I mean, the Fall, this one...
- A: Well, it's too early to tell, but it's interesting we're having Japanese students, Hirosaki, that gives another perspective, you can always ask him Japanese questions, which is good. But it's too early to tell... Well, what was I gonna say, it's that, generally, with these courses, the Nature & Environment and the film course, they nearly died, they're nearly cut, in the mid-1990s when the ELT Unit was rationalizing its courses. And very luckily one student, an Arts student, from

Philosophy Department, um, who took the Nature & Environment course and loved it, she went to see the dean, the dean of the Arts Faculty, and told him what a wonderful course it was, and then that got back to our program this year, and fortunately the courses were saved.

R: Really? Wow...

A: Thanks to students who enjoyed the courses, these courses have survived.

R: Hm. So do you hope that there will be more of these kinda courses?

A: Oh yeah. Actually, [XXX], my colleague next door, she does um, cultural affairs, simply, "English through cultural affairs & issues"...

R: Hm-hm.

A: And an old colleague, Jay, he's left, did "English through songs," English through pop songs, which is interesting, very interesting idea... Yeah, I really believe in these content-based courses. They're fun to write and fun to teach... and fun to learn.

R: Yeah, and students loved the courses. Well lastly, maybe I can just ask you how long will you intend to stay in CUHK?

A: Well, uh I don't... um...

R: If you're leaving, no one's gonna take over your courses...

A: No, lots of people would take them over, but um, Perdee(?)... do you know Perdee? He'd love to teach...

R: The film course?

A: Yeah...

R: Um... so, anymore comments?

A: Um, no, I think that's it...

R: Well, thank you very much.

Interview with Instructor A (2)

Date: October 18, 2001

R: Hi, Instructor A, thanks for being in the interview. Um, so uh, your class has progressed for one and a half month already, so uh, could me give me some general comments on the students' performance so far, such as their presentations, their group discussions, something like that?

A: Right, okay. Well, I think um, as we've been talking, they're not such a strong, or such a warm, motivated class as the one in the summer, they, I think that their English level, I think some of them are quite weak. And also they're not... they don't really have that much experience of the films compared to the summer class, so, so they've not made as much progress as I've hoped, but I've seen some hopeful signs, I thought the discussion we had recently, with *Alien*, I thought that went quite well and they started to notice things. I think it's getting better, I'm hoping that there'd be uh, gradual improvements and then some big jumps later on towards the end. I'm looking forward to the first student presentation coming up, and they might, uh they might be okay, we'll see how that goes, it's also quite important to get a good first one. Um, and we'll see how that goes, but they're gonna do "Bad guys," which is quite interesting...

R: Bad guys?

A: Bad guys in movies, they're gonna look at several movies, and the bad guys in the movies, and maybe give some kinda cultural differences between bad guys in Japanese films, European films, and North American films, maybe some of the conflicts...

R: Oh. And they choose their own films?

A: Yeah. Yeap.

R: Okay, interesting. Um, you were talking about that the students weren't up to your expectations, is it because, that's what I've noticed, is it because the size of the classroom or the size of the class, because in, in the ILC classroom, I noticed it was more intimate, it feels closer there...

A: Yeah, it is, it's a much nicer room, and it's also convenient in getting materials... I tried to book it, but I can't. It's used to, frequently...

R: And also because I realized in summer, people they don't know each other first, and they got along with each other very well, but for this class, it seems that they have their own friends already, they stick with the, you know, same people all the time.

A: Right, yeah, they do. It's often with the courses, the 2:30s and the 12 o'clock ones, they managed to go for lunch afterwards. And those are morning classes.

R: Hmm. Actually towards the end of the term, I heard them, you know, going to karaoke together...

- A: Alright. That's good, yeah. So um, yeah, I'm a bit worried, I thought I'd had a flat lesson, and I don't think they always understood what's going on, what would the special interest in it, um, yeah.
- R: What about comparing with the classes you had before? How the response?
- A: Um, no, I think I normally get a better response. And um, better motivated, more interested.
- R: Okay, what would you like them to do more, besides more motivated?
- A: I think I just like them to be a bit kinda easier, and happier in class, enjoying each others' company more and, laughing at each other maybe and, making jokes.
- R: Yeah, I realized in the summer class the guys liked to crack jokes... but, I don't know, not in this one... (laughs)
- A: No, that's right. There's a lot of quiet students, I guess it's personalities.
- R: Hm. Maybe because it's too big, the class size...
- A: Um, I think you could be right about the room, that particularly room, maybe it's too spacious, maybe it's too big, you got people jammed in at one end...
- R: I don't know, because um for my impression, I remembered during the summer it was like each of the students would say a lot, they generally tend to say a lot of things, um, even though their English wasn't very, you know, fluent. But for this class, it's like, they just answer one sentence for a question, and that's it, nothing else.
- A: Yeah, that's right.
- R: So, were there anything surprising or out of your expectations? Were there any specific students who caught your attention?
- A: Oh, um. I think there're some very fluent, we've talked about them before, I think Yukie, and Cora, they're very strong. And Liz, she's been with me for several months, it's the third course with me, and she's also very good, interested. Also Timothy, as you've mentioned, he's interested in film... And um, the group of students that did the presentation, I was very pleased with them, they seemed just average before but, actually after we talked about the film and they did the presentation, I was very impressed by them than I thought I would be. I was worried that they'd do a poor presentation, I thought they're quite good.
- R: So do you think it's the best student presentation so far?
- A: I think so, yeah. Do you think so? Do you agree with it?
- R: Yeah, I do.
- A: I think they had a clear... maybe the movie's quite simple, relatively simple, and they had a clear understanding of what to look at...
- R: Maybe because they're also friends. I don't know, because, I think for the first one, um, the first one was Hirosaki and Evelyn... it seemed that they didn't know what's going on... (laughs)
- A: They didn't talk to me... they're supposed to come and talk to me and have a discussion about it, but they didn't, it was just a language breakdown. I sent them emails as well, it was Friday, I starting getting worried that they wouldn't see me, I don't know, they didn't use the email with the student number, they got their own Yahoo! accounts... um, what was the second group, do you remember?
- R: Uh, Cora and Yukie, and then... Liz, Gilbert... they did *Beautiful Life*, uh, *Life is Beautiful*...
- A: Yeah, that's right. They're okay. Well I think they're quite simple films... and (flipping through notes and stuff) We missed a week because of the holiday...
- R: What are you looking for?
- A: Can you turn this off?
- R: Yeah, sure. (turns off recorder)
- (continues)
- A: Yeah, okay. The first two that was Evelyn and Hirosaki, they didn't consult with me, and that discussion went nowhere really, and then next one was a lot better, they wrote about *Life is Beautiful*, they focused on technical things, the lighting, the genres, and we noticed some progress there, um, then the third one, I thought C and Y, they handled it quite well but, probably lots of the students didn't really like the movie and so...
- R: Yeah. Um, maybe I'm wrong, but I have a feeling that they're doing a presentation more than a student-led discussion, maybe the students weren't very enthusiastic, I don't know why, for some reason. It's like, when I talked to Timothy, he said, well, for me it's okay, *Trainspotting*, but for Liz, he said, when he was watching it with them, she was like covering up her face, yeah, during the "toilet" scene, and in the middle, the sex scene, she was like, (expressing shock)...
- A: Oh, right. I need to talk about that, about bad language, sex, and violence. I have to do that.
- R: So, you have two more films to go, *Pulp Fiction* and *American Beauty*...
- A: Yeah, they're both dark movies.

- R: Are you somewhat worried? They're heavy...
- A: No, I think *Pulp Fiction* is interesting, if they like it. For *American Beauty*, if the group likes it, K and P, they'd get very interesting things, if they like it.
- R: Hm. Actually Pete expressed to me that the films are kinda heavy. Korey was okay, he um, he was like, well I've never have any access to these films before, it's a new change and it's good.
- A: That's good. I find Pete quite negative, actually.
- R: Yeah, maybe he's young.
- A: Because his language level is, isn't that strong. Anyway, now, four successive weeks of presentations, so the first one, I hope that goes well, and there's a strong group the second week, Liz, Timothy, and Gilbert. The third week very strong, we got Cora, Yukie, with um, Verona and Isabel. And the fourth week is also quite strong, so uh, let's see...
- R: And they get to choose their own topics?
- A: Yeah, they're more or less free to do what they want, they can choose a topic, yeah, choose a topic, or choose a film, an actor, or genre... whatever they want. I also told them if they get some materials, they can buy it, they'd get the money back from me. And so, H's group, I think they're trying to buy uh, I forgot what he's called now, you know the director of *Fifth Element*? Uh...
- R: Oh, um, Luc Besson!
- A: Yeah, Luc Besson. He's got another film, *Taxi Two*.
- R: *Taxi Two*?
- A: They tried to buy that anyway.
- R: New film?
- A: I don't know. I just know there's the *Taxi One*, now there's *Taxi Two*...
- R: I just know *Leon*.
- A: Yeah, he did *Leon*, which was quite a good film. They're gonna talk about the bad guys, because the um, the Gary Oldman character was, quite effective, yeah.
- R: Oh yeah, he's cool.
- A: He's also the bad guy in *Fifth Element* as well.
- R: Do you have any other comments or opinions? Like, um, what would you like them to improve? What would you expect them to improve?
- A: Well like what I've said earlier, I'd like them to talk a bit more together, to laugh a bit more, to kinda enjoy the company of the students. Just be a bit more relaxed and easy, yeah, it's still a bit frigid. I think it's getting better.
- R: Okay. Yeah. Any other comments?
- A: Uh, can't think of any other thing.
- R: (laughs) Okay, thank you very much.
- A: Alright, thank you.

Interview with Instructor A (3)

Date: December 3, 2001

- R: Hi, Instructor A. Thanks for coming to the interview again. Let me first ask you, this term is over finally, so what are your general comments on this course, on the students, and their presentations?
- A: Okay, um, hi [Researcher], yeah. So um, the first time we talked, I remember I was quite worried about it, I didn't think they were going anywhere, I didn't think they were a particularly good class, but actually since then they've come on I thought quite well, and certainly some of the presentations had interesting parts and were good. And then some of film, it's clear from talking to the students that they're getting the idea of what we're trying to do in the course. Um, so... just looking at the films that we did, um... we had some, we didn't start very well, we had two Italian ones, and they're a bit surprised that in this course we had Italian films. And then we had *Trainspotting*, and some of the... the two girls who took that didn't, couldn't really handle it, they didn't like it, it's too violent, and the drug culture... sorry, the language is too bad and there's the drug culture. Then *Alien*, I thought that went okay, that was a good technical analysis by that group, then we had four successive presentations, and they, they were okay, we had um, one on bad guys, looking at Gary Oldman, yeah, I thought they did that quite well. Then we had Wayne Wang, *Dim Sum* and *Joy Luck Club*, and that, again I thought that was quite well done, looking at the way, it was well-prepared, looking at the way how Wayne Wang does things. Then we had one I thought we missed very badly, *Sleepless in Seattle*, romantic comedies. And I was rather disappointed with that one, um, and then we had one on cartoons, and that, that was very mixed, I

thought some of them, the *Toy Story* and the *Wallace and Gromit* sections worked quite well but not *Casper*, and not particularly (inaudible...), they didn't work so well, so that was kinda mixed. And after we had *Pulp Fiction*, which they seemed to generally like, and I think that's an index really of how well the class is doing, if they like *Pulp Fiction* or not. And we finished on *American Beauty*, we actually ran out of time in the discussion, and we couldn't really see how they liked that, but I know the students who led the discussion responded to it. So it's a bit mixed, I'd say, that's my overall reaction to it. Yeap.

R: Um, were there anything that you wanted to do but didn't do in the class? Like for example, when compared your previous... the same course, how is the standard. Are they up to your expectation?

A: Um, no, I think the students in the summer were much better actually, and I had students who're familiar with films and had home-made films, they knew about editing, and so we got kind of a stronger technical basis, and also they seem in the summer I think they'd generally, or some of them had seen more films, and I'd got more of the background to work with. Whereas this particular class weren't really so strong. Anyway, all the same, I think it was okay in the end, it was reasonably successful in the end. Um, about the things that I won't do, I don't think I'll use *Decalogue* again, I think they found that very slow and very boring, and if I want to use, to talk about cross-cutting, and narrative and stuff, I'll use other films, I've actually been watching *The Godfather* recently, and I loved the scene near the end of *Godfather I*, when the Al Pacino character was in church, where all these holy stuff going on, and then meanwhile—

R: You mean the baby and the baptism?

A: Yeah, the baptism and the baby, and meanwhile he arranged for all these guys to be executed, this cross-cut of this piety in church combined with violent deaths, which I think is a good example of cross-cutting, so I'll probably use a scene like that to illustrate that. And I'm still always looking for good and interesting movies to use, so...

R: Um, how about the choice of film, since you only had 6 films this time, um, if given more time, what films are you gonna include? I think you had *The Third Man* initially, but then you cut it out...

A: Oh right, yeah, yes I'd like to use that, I'd like to use, definitely like to use an old black-and-white 1940s movie. I'd like to give them a bit of depth in terms of time really, and put in it an 1948 film, whenever it was, and that does that. And I've developed some more materials as well for the course this term, and I thought, I'm quite pleased with the way most of those went. One idea that they seemed to like was I had these sheets which kinda introduce and give them a bit of background to help with the film, and they all said the one on *Pulp Fiction* was a help. I could do one if I do *Trainspotting* again, I could do one for that. Um—

R: Yeah, because it's like, they didn't expect what kinda film that is...

A: Yeah, that's right. So the help worked well. I did the sheet on sound, and they're all very much into diagetic and non-diagetic sounds, I was very pleased with their papers, I thought they're much better than I thought they'd be. The papers, and um, often, they've shown an awareness anyway of um, lots of features there. Um, as usual, I did the thing on montage and mise-en-scene, and they haven't really understood it, and that normally happens.

R: Also I got some comments from the students saying that they want to hear you talk more, your comments, um, yeah, they like to hear you talk more, but I think that's your approach... student-centered—

A: Oh, I see. Well, that's right, my approach's student-centered, and I'm not gonna talk too much. It's not a lecture, it's like, it's meant to be an ELT course, and they're meant to be the ones who're doing all the talking.

R: But actually you have something to say, right? I mean, you have a whole lot to say, but, yeah, I think they're—

A: Yeah, well. I get plenty of chances to say what I want to say anyway, I get plenty of that yeah. I did oh uh, I did a little sheet on spoofs, I thought that went well, they all laughed, I used *Airplane!* and *High Anxiety*, and...

R: Actually that's a pretty pleasant surprise for me actually, and they also liked it, and they say, "Why don't you put it like at the beginning because it's so funny!"

A: Right.

R: And then I said, "But at the beginning you haven't watched *Psycho* yet so you wouldn't be able to catch the joke."

A: Yeah, that's right. Yeah. Um, and I thought we had a very interesting talk after the discussion, after the presentation on romantic comedies, I thought we had a really good discussion in class in single lesson about romantic comedies, I was amazed they came up with statements like, "You don't

need to think when you watch a romantic comedy” and “The plots are predictable,” and they said things like that but still thought it was a good genre! (laughs)

R: (laughs) So next term you’re still gonna be teaching this course, right?

A: Yeah.

R: Are you gonna put in like more or less the same films? Are you gonna add in some more?

A: Um, I hope so. I get bored doing the same films all the time. I’d probably drop one or both of *Cinema Paradiso* and *Life is Beautiful*. And I’ll try to find maybe a, um, I used *Life is Beautiful* just because it’s a film with two genres, and I’ll just find another film, maybe a romantic comedy, maybe uh... I don’t know what... I’ll... I’ve to think about it. And *Cinema Paradiso* is a film about film, and I’d like to find a film to replace that, I don’t know what. I’ve gotta be careful I don’t have too many dark, violent, depressing films, and I’ve gotta have some light ones in it. So, yeah... I’ll change it again next term. Yeap.

R: Do you have any more comments?

A: Actually, as I said when you came in, I haven’t been giving the course any thought recently, I’m just mindlessly really, going through papers and doing grades at the moment, and I’m not really thinking about the course itself. Um, I’m always looking for new materials, it’s just the question of acquiring things for the ILC and trying to use them. Um... yeap.

R: Do you think each student gets enough chance to discuss? Coz there’re like so many people, and the class size is so big.

A: Um, well actually 14 isn’t big, sometimes we get 18 or 20 in it, so—

R: Oh... but in the summer there’re only 8.

A: Yes it’s a small class, it nearly didn’t run. It’s nearly too small... yeah, 8 is very nice. Um, 12 is good, 14 is okay, but sometimes I get 18, um and it’s just a question of putting them in groups of 3, 2 or 3, and keeping them busy.

R: Um also I, initially I remember you said this class is for um, advanced students, and you would not take students whose English level is not up to some certain standard, but it seems that in this course, some BBA girls, you said their English wasn’t like up to the standard, but you still let them take this course, actually what is the standard?

A: Well there isn’t a standard, really, I mean, we just say that in the course handout information, that it’s um, we recommend it really to students who’re comfortable with their English but, I can’t stop students who join it, and I always want the course to run, and I always want to get a quota, I have to get at least 10...

R: So have you ever refused or rejected some students who’re not up to standard before?

A: Um, not on this course but I have in other courses, I reject them either because they’re too good or because they’re too weak.

R: Too good?

A: Yeah, too good. Not for this course, I’ve got another course, *Listening and Response*, and occasionally I get very good students trying to take that, and it’s like they think it’s a passport to getting an A grade and they wouldn’t have to do much work and so on. I’ve also got an American native speaker, I think, wants to take my *Nature and Environment* course next term, and I’m not sure um, I want him to come.

R: Oh he’s an exchange student, just you know, give him the chance, he only has like one term, right? Or two terms here.

A: But it’s an English course and it’s not gonna improve his English. (laughs)

R: (laughs)

A: Well, I guess that’s all I have to say.

R: Thank you very much.

A: Thank you.

APPENDIX F Transcripts of interviews (ELT 3104 students)

Interview with Cora (1)

Date: September 27, 2001

R: Researcher C: Cora

R: Hi, Cora. Thanks for being in my interview, let me first start by asking you, I realized you have a very native-like North American accent, how did you acquire this accent, when and how? Like when was the turning point?

C: Um, I guess I acquired my North American accent ever since I was very little, my dad had business clients in the states, and I get to meet them when I was very little, and also I enjoy watching TV programs like *ER*, *Friends*, and I guess I've picked up a little of the accent from those TV contents, and also from movies as well, coz I love movies...

R: But you've never been abroad, you're born in HK, right?

C: Yes. But my aunt moved to California 10 years ago, and actually I've been going to the United States for 3 consecutive summers, to visit my aunt, and also I've got a bunch of friends over there, so for 3 consecutive summers I'd been to California, and Illinois to visit my friends and family, and this year I spent 6 weeks in Pennsylvania studying, on an international studying program.

R: I see. So when was the time you started with this accent, I mean, when did you start to be aware of your North American accent, and not a British one?

C: I know that, it's so strange! Coz in HK we got, I mean, um, we learn in British English, and writing, and also the teachers that teach us, they speak in British accent, when I was in high school. But I don't know, it... it just came naturally that I started speaking with North American accent, I can't quite recall when I started to do that... but I'm pretty sure that I picked it up from movies, and also TV programs. I never thought I was good in English until P.6, coz my English wasn't too good when I was little... there was this one time that I got a test paper from um, school, an English test paper, and I got like 97 out of 100, and that's the time when I started to realize that this is not that hard after all! (laughs)

R: Where your parents born elsewhere?

C: No, they're born in HK.

R: What are their English like?

C: Um, my mother has problem understanding American accent, she couldn't keep up with native American speakers, but my dad's better, coz he had to talk with clients overseas like in Chicago, and um, over the phone to discuss business issues, so his English is better, but he doesn't speak with an American accent either.

R: Do you think that your teachers in your high school had authentic, or natural English pronunciation? Coz from what I remember, they're not that authentic, except the natives...

C: Okay, I guess I was lucky, coz the English teachers that taught me, they speak pretty good English.

R: Which one?

C: I was taught by Miss A. Chung, when I was in F.1, and also, I was taught by Mr. Pycroft, the blond guy from UK in F.3 and 4 I guess... and then I was taught by Mrs. I. Chui, and I think ever since F.5 I guess... but she speaks very good English, I learnt all my writing skills from her, she has a very good way of teaching vocabulary, so I learnt a lot from her.

R: I see. Well, in your questionnaire, in your self-assessment, you said that your listening and oral skills are pretty good already, and you wanted to improve your critical and analytical thinking skills, is that your main aim of taking this course?

C: Yeah, as I've said, one of the most important thing that I would like to do is to keep up with my oral and written English, coz the English level in CUHK is relatively, but no offence here... Like, in my high school, although my classmates didn't speak very fluent English, but they all spoke better English compared with the students here in CUHK, that's how I think, I think in here, we don't get a lot of chance to talk in English in class. Coz most of the teachers, they teach in Cantonese.

R: Even for business courses?

C: Yeah.

R: But the textbooks are in English?

C: Yeah, but they explain them with Cantonese, sometimes with a mix, English and Cantonese at the same time, or sometimes even Mandarin (laughs)... so, I, I think that if I didn't take any ELT courses, my oral and written English would deteriorate, from time to time, that's why I try to take an ELT course every term to keep up my English level, coz like, in the summer I went to

- Pennsylvania for 6 weeks, in the beginning I kinda like stammered, you know, even though you said that I'm very fluent in English, I stammered in the beginning, but then gradually I kinda warmed up, and it just comes naturally that I would think and also speak in English, coz at the beginning I still kinda translate it from Cantonese to English, but then after a while, I get used to it, it's kind of like a reflex, you know, you don't have to change it back to Cantonese and say it out in English.
- R: I see. Um, I still want to know when your English started to get fluent... even though you said you don't remember... (laughs)
- C: Well, I guess in high school, as you know, we have French girls studying there, and one of my best friends, she studied French and English, and sometimes, she, when she got real excited and wanted to say something, and she would talk in English, so it comes naturally that we communicate in English...
- R: So hanging out with French girls helped...
- C: Right, I guess that helped a lot...
- R: What is, in your opinion, the most effective way to learn English?
- C: I guess the most effective way is to traveling, hanging out with English-speaking people, u know, don't be timid and shy, don't be afraid to make mistakes, coz we always do, and it doesn't matter, and um, try to expose yourself to English as much as possible...
- R: Okay, how about watching film? Obviously you take this course because you like watching films... what are your favorite films? Do you have any favorite directors?
- C: No, but, my favorite...
- R: Like which film you're so into that you watched it over and over again, resulting in your correct accent?
- C: Um, I would say *Body Guard*, with Kevin Costner and Whitney Houston coz I love Whitney Houston, she's just a good singer, and um, I even bought the laser disc back home so that I can watch it over and over again, and uh, I found that DVD is a very good, you know, watching DVD, I would switch on the caption in English, for the hearing impaired, so I can read, I would try not to read the captions, even though you said I'm good in English, but there's some times that they speak in idioms, and sometimes they're mumbling, or they speak a different accent, I could, I would totally miss out that part, I would read what they're saying if I have problem understanding. I would listen for expressions or idioms that are American, that we don't learn in school. I have problem understanding them, I tried to look them through the dictionary, but I spelt it wrong, so I couldn't locate it in the dictionary, but with the DVD, you know, you know exactly how it's spelt, how it's written, so I can look it up in the dictionary to learn what it... what exactly that means.
- R: So, do you think that the language in film is pretty much the authentic, natural language in the real world? Like in real American style of life?
- C: Yeah, sometimes, coz with some of the expressions, even I don't use it, when people talk to them in those expressions, I would understand what they mean, you know, but the problem is, my friends found out that I speak so fluently, with no accent at all, they gradually, they thought that I would understand everything, but I don't! Local, in the US, they would speak in very local American English, with lotta slang, like "redneck," I mean, what, what is redneck? Now I know what redneck is, coz I asked, whenever I don't understand, but eventually they would think that I would understand everything they say... so that's one of the problems I encountered.
- R: Yeah, coz you definitely sound like a native Asian-American. Okay, what do you think of this course, the class, the students, the teacher, and the lesson approach? It's definitely pretty unconventional, I mean, it's very different from other classes, what do you think of this "hands-off," student-oriented approach?
- C: Um, I think the way they taught this course depends very much on our attitude. I mean, if you're really here to learn, it's all up to you, coz even if you don't go and watch the movie before class, nobody would know, you could just sit there without answering any question and you can get away with that, but if you really wanna learn, it's all in your hands, so I think it's a pretty liberal class.
- R: Do you think the approach is useful? It's very different from the traditional HK education approach...
- C: And I like it. Coz it's um, I guess I've been taught in such conventional way for so long... (mobile phone rings, conversation stops for a while)
- R: Okay, let's continue. What do you think of the students?
- C: I don't think they're too shy... well, I mean, some of the girls, they're a little shy, they're afraid that they'd make mistakes, and uh, there's a girl that sat next to me, last lesson, she would ask me

questions in Cantonese in class, so I, I get a feeling that she's not very comfortable talking in English. But uh...

R: What would you suggest them to do? You know, they may not be from a good high school like yours, and they may not have so many opportunities to talk to foreigners or travel abroad...

C: Well, but I guess, even though... um, the most important thing is to make them speak up in class, you know, try to encourage them to speak up, let them know that it's not a big deal to make mistakes, we always do, and we learn from that.

R: I see. How about the teacher? Any comments?

C: I think... his policy for me is good, because I get to have control over how I progress in class, I mean I've got so much to do in this semester, with my job hunt, my major courses, it would be a pain if I got extra work from this ELT course. But the main thing that, you know, even though I have to work in this course, it's, it's working in a relaxing way, you know, all you have to do is to watch the movie so far, think about it, discuss it with friends, I mean this morning I just went to the ILC to watch this movie *Trainspotting*, it's pretty strange...

R: Is it too radical for you?

C: Yeah, I think so, coz it's a very, very strange movie, I guess me and my friend would have to spend some time with Instructor A, we would definitely have a lot of questions for him. We understand the message of the movie, but we don't understand why they wanted to present it in that way, so we'll ask Richard a lot of questions regarding the movie. Also, one point that I wanted to add is, I had a friend, she wasn't interested in American thing at all, but you know, she hang out with me, I started to watch *Friends*, and she started to watch it as well, and eventually she gets more involved than I do, and the *Friends* we got is the old one, it's not the currently up-to-date one which is shown in America, so she would search on the web, search for the latest season of *Friends*, and she would search for the script, and she would send it to me, you know, sometimes we're very anxious to know what's going on in the next season, and we really can't wait, so we'd go to the web and read the scripts and learn slang and expressions from them.

R: So, um, did you see that her English improved, or did you *feel* that her English improved because of that? Was there anything working inside her?

C: Yeah, um, she doesn't speak in American accent like I do, but her vocabulary, she's very good in vocabularies, sometimes I have vocabularies that I don't understand, and she would tell me what it means.

R: Do you have any more comments to add?

C: Um, I don't think so, I think that's it...

R: Well then, thank you very much.

C: You're welcome.

Interview with Cora (2)

Date: December 3, 2001

R: Hello, Cora, welcome to the interview. What kinds of skills did you expect to learn in this course, but weren't fulfilled? Like, is this course up to your expectation?

C: Err... I think yes and no. In terms of English language, we didn't learn too much in this course, as the focus of the course was mainly on filmic devices, such as the narrative style, camera angles, background etc... we've learnt a lot about film techniques, but compared to other ELT courses that I took before, we didn't learn a lot of English language skills in this course. Also, because in this course it's almost like "we run the show,"-- each double lesson was assigned for student presentation and group discussion, therefore the time left for Instructor A to talk or lecture is relatively not enough. That's why I think we didn't learn a lot from Instructor A, in terms of English, but instead we got to know more about films.

R: What areas/aspects in film are you now more familiar with? Can you elaborate? Let's also talk about the choice of film. What do you think of the selection?

C: Err... actually I think the choice of film in this course is heavily influenced by Instructor A's personal preference, such as Sci-Fi, coz he's such a big fan of Sci-Fi, for instance, obviously he likes *Alien* a lot! Um... he also keeps on saying that he doesn't like Tom Hanks, so obviously he's not gonna play any Tom Hanks film. I have a feeling that the choice of film is not as diverse as it can be. Maybe it's because I used to watch mainstream Hollywood movies, and I'd never go to see a film like *Killing (The Decalogue)*, which is a Polish film, I mean, I wouldn't even thought of going to see such a film... so I think his choice is somewhat biased to certain genres, those that he likes.

- R: Okay. Anyway, you guys watched 6 films, are there any differences in film watching for you before and after the course? Are they mostly technical?
- C: Err... well, I think I'm now paying more attention to the shots, I mean, the way they make use of the camera to draw in audiences. Before, I just treat films as a catalyst for laughter or tears, and when the film ends, that's it. But now I'd think more. And I will now watch more, um, err... you know, we always think that those films which had won awards such as the French Cannes Award are extremely boring stuff, so I'd rarely go see them. But now, I will try to watch them. Not just watching the film, but also more aware of the shots, POVs, eye-level, bottom-up, etc. I can recall these stuff which I had learnt in the course and apply them to understand more the director's intentions, and also appreciate the director's efforts more.
- R: I see. Well, as in this term you're forced to watch some alternative films such as *Trainspotting* and *Pulp Fiction*, and I remember you told me that you thought *Trainspotting's* kinda weird... but as far as I'm concerned, you travel frequently to foreign places (like USA), thus I think you're pretty familiar with foreign culture. So, what do you think about *Pulp Fiction*?
- C: Although *Pulp Fiction* is about foreign culture, the way that the film is presenting it is quite unique. There're many cross-cuttings, and like 2 or 3 stories are intertwined into each other. To me, I didn't always watch films in such details, and I didn't know how to analyze films, so this film for me was a bit difficult to watch.
- R: Some students said that the dialogues in *Pulp Fiction* are too speedy. I think there shouldn't be any problem with your listening, right?
- C: I think it's okay. Coz for slang, I think the more you watch, the more you know. But one thing is, um, well, I have no problem in listening to American accented English, but then Black English, for me, is very hard to understand. You know, they have a distinct kind of accent, which is hard to listen to. Once I was in USA, in Chicago, inside the lift of an airport, a Black worker tried to talk to me and asked me questions, but I couldn't understand anything he said! I remember my friend once told me that Blacks have their own neighborhood, their own world, and so they got their own unique accents. For those, I couldn't even comprehend 20% of the conversation! For American, British, or Australian English, no problem for me; but Black English, big problem! However, Samuel Jackson's English in *Pulp Fiction* is to me okay though.
- R: I see. Let's talk about your presentation. You guys did "romantic comedies." I want to know why you chose this topic, and why even Instructor A said openly that he didn't recommend romantic comedies, you guys still did it? Was it because that you like to watch romantic comedies or Tom Hanks a lot?
- C: Err... you can say so. Coz we thought that the course didn't include romantic comedies, or films that are more for entertainment, so we decided that a change wouldn't be a bad idea. And while we were searching for films in the ILC, it suddenly hit me that *Sleepless in Seattle* and *You've Got Mail* both have the same director and same casting (Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan), both are super hits, both have similar plots, so I thought it'd be interesting to do a comparison and contrast on them. But then it turned out that Instructor A didn't like Tom Hanks at all! We didn't know that beforehand, it's only until after that we get to know. But anyway, it's still a good learning process to us, whether he liked the films or not.
- R: Okay. Let me ask you, if you weren't going to do these films, what would be your other choices?
- C: Other choices... err... when I was searching in the ILC, I had an idea of doing the couple Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan, and maybe because I've brought up this idea, my other group members also suggested Julia Roberts and Richard Gere...
- R: *Pretty Woman* and *Runaway Bride* eh?
- C: Yeah. Coz we're not familiar with directors at all, it would be hard for us to try to compare a director's different films or something like that. I think it's because we rarely analyze a particular director or actor, we, I mean, at least personally, I wouldn't pay special attention to what films this actor has done, like Gary Oldman, which one group did, like noticing his acting in one film and another... we're not used to doing that. So it would be more difficult for us to do such kind of topic. Even though I might understand, my group members might not.
- R: Lastly, I would like you to evaluate this course. Tell us something positive and negative about this course.
- C: Err... the good thing is, the course is very relaxing! I've never taken any ELT before that we can play games every lesson! (laughs)
- R: Well, all other courses taught by Instructor A are the same as well.
- C: This is the first time I'm taking Instructor A's course. In my previous ELT courses, there weren't as many presentations. Although ELT courses basically are pressure-free, this course was just very, very free! Each lesson I just looked forward to what kinds of films that we're going to watch,

and what kinds of games we're going to play! (laughs) And I got to learn a lot about film through this course. As for the negative side, I think there's not enough time for Instructor A to talk. I mean, except the first two weeks, all other lessons, mostly, were just student presentations and discussions...

- R: Well, actually Instructor A once expressed to me that the first two weeks were just for people to add/drop and settle down into the course, the two weeks were basically "pretty much nonsense," in his words.
- C: Yeah. Also, um, even for single lessons, the time is, um, honestly, the lesson starts at 5:30pm, and usually ends early, so there isn't much time. You can't do much in this short amount of time, right? It has already taken up time to fast forward /rewind/locate the scenes in the video. I think the lesson structure is kinda too loose. I don't know whether it's the teacher's style or the organization of the course, I feel it's pretty loose.
- R: It's his style.
- C: I realize his requirements are not high.
- R: Well, his only requirement is no Cantonese and no sit-ins.
- C: I see. Well, in those ELT courses that I took previously, there were goals being set, like after this amount of time, say this certain number of weeks, I'd be able to write a business letter, or that I've to had improved my listening and response... While for this course, we just needed to watch films, watch films, and watch films... POV shots... etc... Also, the class depends wholly on your self-discipline, you can not have watched the film and still be able to get away with it... Just sit quietly in the class and not say anything, nobody would know. Also, I think the workload was quite heavy, preparing the presentations was very time-consuming indeed, I think this kind of course structure was very different from my previous courses. Yes, there're group projects, but not as intensive.
- R: What suggestions would you make to improve this course?
- C: Err... I think there should be more variety of films. I mean, I don't mind Sci-Fi, or other non-mainstream films, but we should be exposed to any films. I think he didn't include any straightforward, mainstream Hollywood films?
- R: I think that's because he thinks that you already have access to those films easily.
- C: Uh-huh. But I think he can still put in easier films at the beginning, and introduces film techniques, and then after warming up, he can have more difficult films. Coz if you put *Killing* at the start already, it's like, wow, people just wouldn't know what's going on. I mean, the dialogues are in Polish, and we have to read the English subtitles, and the way the film is shot is not that conventional, it's very difficult for us to comprehend.
- R: Any other comments?
- C: That's about it. In a nutshell, I think the organization of the course can be tighter. Oh, also... I think the feedback he gave to our presentations was not enough. I've presented two times, he just told me, afterwards, that "okay, you've done a good job," etc, but no other concrete suggestions or advice were offered for us for further improvement. In my previous ELT courses, they used to have score sheets, which recorded comments on each different aspect...
- R: What kind of feedback do you want? In terms of the format of presentation, or the content?
- C: Both. I mean, we couldn't be perfect, right? Like, I'd like to know, which area(s) that I needed improvement, what was my grade for the presentation etc... but he didn't mention. For content, organization, and presentation skills... these are stuff that we learn, right? But it's like, after the presentation, I still don't know how well I performed.
- R: Did he give you guys guidance to follow? Was the format designed by yourselves?
- C: Yeah, he always said, you can do whatever you want, it's all up to you... So, the only feedback we got from him is in the scene analysis assignment. It has to be in black-and-white, then he'd give feedback. I would really want him to give me some feedback, how I did the presentation, what I should improve. I think this is something lacking.
- R: Thank you very much.
- C: You're welcome.

Interview with Evelyn (1)

Date: October 11, 2001

R: Researcher E: Evelyn

R: Welcome, Evelyn. What is your aim of taking this course?

- E: Well, actually I always planned to take ELT courses after I got into university. The reasons are that in the university, our major courses do not force us to speak in English, and also that English is very important. My English isn't very good already, that's why I'm taking ELT courses, hoping that my English would not deteriorate so fast. And also because my friends are taking this course, so I joined them.
- R: What languages are used in your major courses?
- E: Well, I have 4 major courses right now. There is one professor who's a foreigner and can't speak Cantonese. So he must speak in English. The other 3 are all Hkrs, and only one of them persists to teach in English, but he still allows us to answer in Cantonese. The remaining 2 basically speak in Cantonese all the time.
- R: In your questionnaire, it seems that you're quite humble, you checked "okay/average" or "not very good" in all your English areas... what areas are you particularly weak in, and why?
- E: Hmm. Well, I think too slowly. It's like, I can't make myself think in English... I have to formulate the sentence in Cantonese in my mind first, and then translate it into English. And I also can't quite express my opinions clearly and completely. My vocabulary pool is inadequate as well.
- R: What, in your experience, has film watching helped you in improving?
- E: Hm, I think it's the words. They don't use "formal" words, they use more daily words which we can't find in textbooks. And through constant listening, listening, and listening, I think it would help my pronunciation when I'm speaking myself.
- R: Are you aware of the difference between American, British, and Australian accent?
- E: No, I'm not aware...
- R: You don't know the difference??
- E: Hmmm... no... (laughs)
- R: Okay, never mind then... (laughs) What kinds of film you like?
- E: Hm, I watch... I watch...
- R: Mainstream Hollywood films?
- E: Yes... I think... um, how to describe? Like those films such as *You've got mail*, *Notting Hill*...
- R: Those are all Hollywood films. Okay, let's talk about the language learning environment in your high school. Is it an EMI?
- E: Yes.
- R: How's the English environment? Was the teachers' English good?
- E: To me, I don't think it's too good. Coz for subjects other than English, even though the textbooks are in English, the teachers would still teach in Cantonese. Also, their pronunciation isn't very good.
- R: How about practicing? Did you get a lot of chances to speak English?
- E: Well, just within lessons, I would say. Throughout the years, our school has failed to cultivate a habit of speaking English among the students, AFTER the lessons have ended. In some schools, the students would speak in English voluntarily and pretty naturally, but not in our school.
- R: How about extra-curricular activities? Were there chances to speak English?
- E: Well, there's an English Club, but for other activities, they're not related to English.
- R: What do you think of the students' English proficiency in your high school?
- E: Generally speaking, not very good...
- R: I see. What, in your opinion, is the most effective way to learn English?
- E: Watching film is one. Also, if you're forced to speak, and have more practices, that would help too. Just by reading the memorizing the book is no use.
- R: Can you give some comments on this course? For instance, *Trainspotting* is obviously not a mainstream Hollywood film, how's your feeling towards this film? Were you surprised?
- E: (laughs) Yes, very... I don't understand why he (Instructor A) chose this film. But then it's okay, it's pretty relaxing still. However I feel that his focus is not on learning English, it's more on analyzing film...
- R: Um, but actually the "film knowledge" that he taught you guys are very, very superficial and easy stuff, nothing too deep...
- E: Hm. But revolving around films, anyway. In my previous ELT courses, they'd require students to write essays.
- R: Actually one of your classmates complained that there are not enough writing assignments, as this class is mainly an "oral" class. What do you think?
- E: Hmm, it's quite okay. After all, it's hard to cover everything, and the aim of this course is to train your oral and listening skills. If I want to improve my writing skills, I would go take some other ELT courses. So I don't blame this course for not putting so much focus on the writing element.
- R: Any comments on the lesson approach, students, etc...?

- E: Would it be better if the lesson is tighter? Coz now... it's like too free, the lesson always ends early, and it's very much based on our own participation, like, we speak if we want to, no forcing on his part...
- R: You want him to be more "strict"?
- E: Yeah... maybe.
- R: Any other comments?
- E: Hmm, actually the students are quite active already. Compared to students in other classes, students in this class are more self-motivated to speak up. After I got into this class, I realize their English is very good.
- R: Thank you very much.

Interview with Evelyn (2)

Date: December 14, 2001

- R: Hi, Evelyn, welcome to the interview. Now, the term has finally ended, what do you think of the course? Were you able to learn the things you expected to learn?
- E: Um, the course was quite fun... and um, yes, I think faster now...
- R: You mean in terms of English?
- E: Um, maybe, you can say so.
- R: A lot of the students expressed that some of the films were difficult to watch, what do you think of the choice of film?
- E: Choice of film...
- R: Yeah, like *Trainspotting*, *Pulp Fiction*...
- E: Well, at first when we (me and my friends in this class) were watching *Trainspotting* together, we were a bit surprised... coz... it was like, wow, how come the film is like that? But it's okay, as we continued watching... it got okay...
- R: Do you feel there's a lack of any genres? Say, some people think he could've included some Hollywood films.
- E: I think Instructor A's choice is okay, after all, those Hollywood films indeed don't have a lot of depth to be analyzed.
- R: I'm glad you feel that way.
- E: But maybe next time can he NOT play *The killing*? It's very boring!
- R: Because of the language, Polish?
- E: Well that's one thing... but then, for other films, like the first two we had...
- R: The two Italian films.
- E: Yeah, Italian films, those even thought I didn't understand totally what they say, but it's still interesting, but for this one... I don't know why... it's boring.
- R: Do you feel that English films were not enough?
- E: Yeah, I do agree with that, maybe he can put in more English films next time.
- R: I see. Actually, you've answered my questions very thoroughly on the questionnaire! I guess you've already pointed out the positive and negative points of the course, thanks for taking so much time to really fill in the questionnaire!
- E: Huh? (laughs) I just wrote down what I thought...
- R: Um, let me see... right, I realize, maybe you realize yourself too, that you and your BBA friends, and also those Geography classmates, they always stick together. Do you have any suggestion to how to deal with this problem?
- E: I guess that can be fixed by "dismantling" them. That's what we tried to do during our presentation.
- R: Any other comments?
- E: No...
- R: Thank you very much.

Interview with Isabel (1)

Date: September 28, 2001

R: Researcher I: Isabel

R: Hi, Isabel. Welcome to the interview. What were your reasons for taking this course?

- I: Actually my aim wasn't so much to improve my English, it was just because our Department (Education) required us to have several elective courses, and so I had to take some courses to fulfill the requirement. I took this course because it looked kind of interesting, you know, learning English through film, and also the lesson time suited my schedule.
- R: Have you ever taken any ELT courses before?
- I: Yes, actually I took ELT 1107... something like that, but I forgot whether it was writing or listening, we had to write lots of diary entries... I think it's listening and writing... but then I didn't feel that course was useful at all. I've always heard people say that ELT courses weren't very useful, all they do is to give students a lot of work to do.
- R: I see. What, in your experience, has film watching helped you to improve? In terms of English language skills?
- I: Actually I don't think there's a big help, in terms of oral skills, coz they talk too fast. And since my listening skills weren't too good, I always resorted to reading the subtitles, if the subtitles are in Chinese, that would be even better. To me, what I got from watching films has not been the improvement in English skills, but rather the widening of my familiarity with foreign cultural issues. I tended to treat film watching as entertainment rather than learning.
- R: What kinds of cultural aspects do you mean?
- I: Like, um, people from different countries have different pronunciations, and different ways of speaking foul languages.
- R: Are you aware that there are different accents, such as American, British, Australian...?
- I: Yes. I notice it. However, since I rely mainly on subtitles to watch the film, if the vocabulary used were too difficult, I would feel less motivated to watch the film.
- R: I see. Could you sort of talk about the English learning environment in your high school?
- I: Well, my high school was an EMI one, I think it's band 1-2, so the English proficiency of the students should be quite good. However, I entered F.1 as an outsider, I mean, my high school had both primary and secondary sections, and I was from another primary school. At the beginning, I was put into English remedial class (15 persons per group). Besides in English lessons, usually both Cantonese and English were used during other lessons. There weren't any courses that totally used English only... It was until F.6 and F.7, that we had a very good teacher, I think she's studied abroad or something. But then it was only her talking to us in English, we still talked in Cantonese among our classmates, and she allowed it... So, I'd say, although my high school, appearance-wise, is an EMI one, however, it doesn't have the real "spirit" in it...
- R: The textbooks were in English, right? But they sometimes teach in Cantonese?
- I: Right, exactly.
- R: Okay. So, how about outside classroom? Any chances to practice English?
- I: Hmm... for English subject teachers, they'd require you to speak to them in English, even when it's after school, but for teachers of other subjects, we all just used Cantonese...
- R: How about extra-curricular activities? Any of them done in English?
- I: Nope. (laughs)
- R: Not even drama contest or speech festivals?
- I: Well, yeah, those are in English, but then those activities were just for a specific group of students, for those whose English was very good already, they participated through teachers' nomination, not voluntarily... I mean, other students could not voluntarily participate. And so, unless your English was excellent, or else you wouldn't get the chance of joining these activities. So, I kinda felt that, for me, there's no difference between learning English in an EMI school and a CMI school anyway.
- R: Hmm... how about activities conducted by the students themselves?
- I: Hm, nope. All in Cantonese.
- R: I see. What do you think of the teachers' English proficiency in your high school?
- I: Hmm... quite diverse, I'd say. Those who're teaching English had better English, but those who're teaching other subjects were... quite crappy! (laughs) Like, for instance, they would pronounce "student" as "still-dun" or something like that... this kinda situation always happened, and we as students often questioned their capability, as a whole, to teach us. Because their English was just too bad.
- R: I know you're your major is Education, what, then, in your pinion, is the best way to learn English? Or teach English...
- I: I think you have to really go and actually live in that environment, for me, my ideal country is the UK, it'd be best if you get the opportunity to live there, to experience... not several months, but a year or two, or even several years. Because I have lots of friends who went studying abroad, and their English wasn't like that before they left, and when they came back, wow, their English was

- SO good! So native-like! They'd even talk to me using native slang, when we're talking on the phone. It seems like I'm talking with a native! I enjoy talking with these people a lot, because I know I can learn a lot from them! (laughs) And when they say to you, "oh your English is not like other HK people," you'd be very happy! Sometimes, I even think, it would be great to have a foreign boyfriend, I bet it would be such a great help! (laughs) So, in a nutshell, I think first you need to get to know some friends like that (who went abroad), and second, immerse yourself in that target language environment. That's why HK is actually not a good place for learning English.
- R: Okay. Could you give some comments on this course, the lesson approach, the teacher, and the students... so far?
- I: I hope this course wouldn't affect my GPA too negatively (laughs), because I realized, after getting into this course, the students all had very good English! Actually I'm kinda worried.
- R: Oh don't worry... you'll do fine, Instructor A's not a harsh guy... (laughs)
- I: Hopefully...
- R: Anything else?
- I: Well actually it's just a short time being in this course... you know, I added this course during phase 3, it's barely a little bit more than one week ago. So, I don't have many comments yet... I guess I need more time... to catch up with what's going on in the class...
- R: Oh yes, I've forgotten. Okay, thank you very much.

Interview with Isabel (2)

Date: December 13, 2001

- R: Hi, Isabel. Welcome to the interview again. Now that the course has finally ended, were there anything you wanted to learn but wasn't really fulfilled in this course? Like, could you recall what were the expectations you had on this course at the beginning?
- I: Well I can't say it's so much as expectation... actually I was kinda worried when I first started... coz me and Verona added this course during phase... 3. I remember the first lesson, you guys were watching a film, and we didn't know what that was, and I was assigned into a group with two students with super excellent English—
- R: Cora? Yukie?
- I: See! You can say the names once I said super English!
- R: No... it's because I *observed* you guys... I remember you were paired with them!
- I: With Cora and Yukie, actually I felt very pressurized, I mean, for me, besides taking an ELT course during year 1, up until now (year 4), I haven't touched anything English! So seeing them with such excellent English, I kinda freaked out! However I couldn't drop the course, coz it was phase 3 already. Frankly, I didn't want my GPA to be downgraded because of this course, and I knew taking this course would cause trouble (laughs), and so I didn't like it too much at first. I remember he just gave us a long list of film terms, without explanation, and I felt kinda odd, I didn't have a positive expectation on the course, coz he gave me a list of terms without any explanation, and those were terms that I've never come across before, and facing students with such advanced English level, I felt pretty crushed... And so, I'd say I couldn't really enjoy this course at the start...
- R: Hmm... how about afterwards? Did things gradually get better?
- I: Afterwards... actually not really! (laughs) It was actually getting worse!
- R: What?! It should be getting better, right? I saw you guys chatted more with other students, and laughed happily...
- I: We were just chatting about nonsense, like, hey, Hirosaki, was that your girlfriend at when and where, etc., we're not discussing about things related to film or the course, you see—
- R: Well but *still* you talked in English, right?
- I: Err... that's because we're forced to do so coz Instructor A was there... And also, our English wasn't correct, I mean, the grammar was wrong. So, I really couldn't say things got better. I've talked with Verona, actually, I said to her that I felt she got along better with the students. But not for me, I guess I needed more time to warm up, so I didn't feel very close with the students... I had a feeling that they're a group of friendly classmates, but then I couldn't really blend myself into it... My feelings pretty much stayed the same throughout the whole term...
- R: Even now?
- I: Yes! (laughs) Especially after reading the photocopy of the "good" essay Instructor A handed us, I felt so hurt! I regret taking this course! (laughs)
- R: But really, I saw you guys got along happily, I think it's true—

- I: That's just on the surface... we're teachers (Education majors), we need to have this kind of skill... to "perform"... (laughs)
- R: (laughs) Well, going back to the topic of getting along with your classmates, I guess it's not your problem only, I mean, I talked with Instructor A too, about that everybody seemed to be sticking to their own groups of friends, such as Gilbert, Liz and Timothy; Nicole and her BBA friends... etc...
- I: Hmm... I think Instructor A can do something at the beginning, like grouping different students randomly, however, he didn't do it, maybe because he thought we're university students already, and so it's not necessary. But my feeling is, some groups were very happy, I mean, the guys were in a group, but we, we didn't really know where to fit in, you know, grouping with Nicole's friends seemed kinda useless, while our English level didn't really match grouping with Cora and so on. It wasn't a pleasant experience for me, but I guess usually the university teachers wouldn't interfere to change things...
- R: I guess that could be attributed to Instructor A's lesson approach—student-centered, so he would exert minimal interference, while just maintaining a hands-off policy instead.
- I: But then it seemed a bit rushed. I mean the presentations, like, we didn't even really understand the terms in the notes, and also occasionally he threw out some French terms, we got confused!
- R: *Mise-en-scene*? (laughs)
- I: (laughs) I mean, my English was already not very good, and you suddenly give us some French terms! And then I tried to ask other classmates, but they also didn't know what that term meant! I remember one time, Instructor A looked very surprised when he discovered that we didn't even understand the difference between a shot and a scene! But then with such an expression, it kinda discouraged me from asking him anymore... coz I was afraid that he would know that I didn't know... And the situation became worse as more and more terms were taught... they kinda accumulate. That's why I think I didn't get to learn a lot of English skills through this course.
- R: I think his focus was just on creating an atmosphere, an opportunity, for you guys to speak in English, and he just *happened* to use film as the trigger. Actually, the so-called film stuff he taught was just very, very basic stuff.
- I: Hmm... actually the presentations were quite good, at least we all had two chances to present, but then the participation was so different! Sometimes, in some presentations, some students could have a lot to talk about, while at some other presentations, they didn't even say a word. I think this can't be helped. For presentations create opinions, and opinions create conflicts. The presentation approach was quite a good idea, but then I think giving more guidelines would've helped, coz we felt like trying to guess what kinda stuff he liked, and then do them in our presentations... it's like trying to suit his taste. If you just did something very shallow, like the one on romantic comedies, he wouldn't be pleased.
- R: Well actually frankly, I don't think there's any "discussable" questions in that presentation, I mean the questions were just asking you about facts in the film, the place, the people, etc., nothing of a critical sort.
- I: But then film watching is an entertainment, and besides entertainment, you have lots of opinions and feelings towards it, like "what do you think about meeting your soul mate through email," something like that... they're also reflections on yourself, based on the film. You can learn things by doing critical thinking, yes, but you can also learn by expressing your thoughts and feelings, and sharing them with others. I think he can have a balance between these two... it seems like his aim is just on the critical thinking skills, but not expressing our opinions.
- R: Really? I have some reservation about that... his aim is trying to improve students' listening and oral skills...
- I: I feel that he didn't take care of all the students' oral aspect though...
- R: Why?
- I: Well, actually Verona and I both have the same feeling, maybe because we're Education majors, we noticed that Instructor A always called on more or less the same group of students to read out stuff or to answer questions. From my point of view, this is very discouraging to other "uncalled" students.
- R: You mean Cora or Yuki?
- I: I think everybody can notice that! Because they're the students who can give him what he wanted... while my English standard isn't good enough—
- R: Did he ever call on you?
- I: NO! (laughs) He didn't! And we would just *know* whom he's gonna call on every time, we just know! Coz those were his favorite students... actually, I was kinda wondering, is this the problem with all ELT courses? Coz the one I took during year 1 was like that too, the teacher tends to like

certain students, maybe because their English is up to their standard... but then this was very discouraging, it made me feel like I'm the "supporting cast" to the "main characters"... It's like, in primary school, kids would be unhappy if you didn't call on them, because they had a psychological phenomenon called "attention seeking," but actually it's also true for university students, the teachers' attention also directly influences our learning attitude and experience. So, in our class, we can guess who gets A and who gets A-, we just know, you can see it from the lessons. If the teacher pays more attention to a student, for example, he/she would build up more confidence in doing things in that lesson, while others would feel being neglected, thinking that even they worked hard, they wouldn't be "noticed" by the teacher. I have a feeling that he (Instructor A) is prone to praise a student's ability instead of effort... however, sometimes ability *comes* after effort, and he seems to be lacking in making encouragements to us, those less-gifted, or average English students, if you will.

- R: Wow, I didn't know you have so much discomfort. But hey, I don't think he's biased, I mean, he also never called on Hirosaki to read stuff either!
- I: That's because he's Japanese! (laughs) He would be speaking Japanese-like English, Instructor A usually called on like Cora, or Liz... it's very obvious!
- R: Maybe he's in a hurry, wanted to save time...
- I: Well then I guess he's in a great hurry then! (laughs)
- R: Okay! That's enough... (laughs) You've totally disrupted my interview plan. Now, we must move on to the next question... or else we'll never be done! Which aspect of language skills that you think has improved the most? Even if just a little...
- I: Well I guess it's listening skills.
- R: Yeah, most of the students said the same thing, listening.
- I: Don't talk of skills, I mean, given that you're lacking attention from the teacher, you wouldn't even feel very committed to the participation, then, how can you improve your skills when you're "mentally absent" in the class anyway!
- R: But then you really seemed to be enjoying the course—
- I: I've told u, it's just pretending! Because we know that participation makes up 30% of the total grade...
- R: Wow, you guys are so practical.
- I: It's true! This is the reality of university studying. I know his intention was good, encouraging students to participate, but, for real, how many students would really want to participate? I don't think Timothy is eager to participate, he's always mentally absent in the class...
- R: Eh? But if you don't participate, what's the point of coming to this class? How can you improve your English skills?
- I: Well that's only what students generally want to do... whether they can really do it, it's another story...
- R: Alright. What is the biggest/most valuable thing you got from this course? Well, if there's any... (laughs)
- I: For me, the reason why I chose an ELT course instead of courses from other departments was because this is already my final year, and I would like to do something to improve my English, I realized my oral skills were deteriorating, I couldn't say the correct pronunciation during presentation, it's worse when compared to F.7 days. I guess this is what's most valuable, that I got to realize my English is on a decline, and I must start doing something about it. However, the biggest disappointment or hit is that upon realizing my own inadequacy, I lost my confidence as well, in terms of English. That's why I couldn't really enjoy... I mean, sometimes, although I know he wouldn't call on me to read stuff, but when listening to them (Cora etc) reading out the stuff, in my heart I would follow the words and think to myself, "Would she know this word? Oh, she knows! She can pronounce it! But I can't!" something like that...
- R: Hey, but then you have to know, you're a Chinese Education major, she's not, if she's given a Chinese passage, she might not be able to know all those words either!
- I: No, we can't be like that! We're teachers, we must keep our English good as well.
- R: Okay, anyways, let's talk about film, did this course change your attitudes towards film at all?
- I: Yes, this course actually made me more interested in films, and also I got to have access to different films. I guess there're still some positive points about this course... (laughs)
- R: Let's talk about the choice of film then. What do you think of the 6 films?
- I: Hmm... I quite like some of them... but some of them—
- R: So what kinds of film did you usually/normally watch?
- I: I guess romance.
- R: Mainstream Hollywood films eh?

- I: Yeah, like *Titanic*! (laughs)
- R: So what do you think of Richard's selection then?
- I: They're quite good... but just as some classmate expressed, including two Italian films wasn't too suitable for an ELT course. Also, I think for *Alien*, I'd prefer some more modern, recent films. I know *Alien* is very classic, coz it came up with those effects, you know, given it's in the 70s, but then I think he can give us some freedom to choose films, maybe during the first few lessons, so that we can express our opinions. Coz some films I didn't really like, for instance, *Alien* was kinda boring to me, the aliens in the film weren't scary at all. Even *Life is Beautiful* was kinda boring. I know Instructor A hates films by Tom Hanks, but personally I think he's still done several good films which are worth seeing.
- R: Actually he explained his selection in the first lesson, that he wouldn't choose mainstream Hollywood films, but "difficult, underrated European films" instead.
- I: I didn't attend the first lesson.
- R: You know what, he used to include some even more bizarre, weird stuff such as *Clockwork Orange* by Stanley Kubrick. It's very violent, very bizarre... and made the girls scream! And so he cut it out.
- I: Eh? I think I'd appreciate watching these instead.
- R: What??
- I: Coz frankly, there weren't any films which gave me too much inspiration or pleasant surprises—
- R: Well, for some students, *Trainspotting* was already very shocking.
- I: That's because that film contains more sex, drugs, and foul language. I believe if not for this course, I'd never go to watch *Trainspotting*. Therefore what he can do is to introduce us to these alternative films—
- R: Are these "alternative"? Coz other people say it's too alternative already.
- I: That doesn't mean that the response is necessarily bad. I mean, it's impressive. You *can* teach based on that. You can use the students' response to lead out what you want them to learn.
- R: *Trainspotting* always received cheers and positive response from students, but this time, I don't know why, during the presentation on *Trainspotting*, students were so quiet and looked bored.
- I: That's because some students didn't watch it! I think it's the problem with the students, they didn't watch it, I guess the teacher has to think of some ways to *make* the students participate then, I can't give any suggestions, but when some students didn't see the film, the atmosphere would be like, dead.
- R: Were there any difference when you watch a film now?
- I: Yes, I think I'll watch more different films, I used to like just one or two actors/actresses, and I would only go for their films, but now I realize the film can still be good even though the casting didn't have good looks. But then I wouldn't analyze what shot is being used, POV or whatever, film watching to me is just an entertainment, but I guess I'd try to switch on the English captions and see if I can learn something from it.
- R: I see. Let's talk about your presentation. Actually, Instructor A was kinda worried about you guys, coz you and Verona never saw the film, only Timothy did. But then your presentation turned out very well done. Did you encounter any problems when watching this film?
- I: We put in a lot of effort to prepare for this film. We knew that our performance in the romantic comedies presentation wasn't so good, and we wanted to make use of this presentation to save our GPA, so we had BIG expectations for ourselves in this presentation. We put in lots of effort, watched the film 2-3 times, searched the internet and library for references... Even you said Timothy saw this film, he actually didn't put in effort. We did everything! (laughs) The preparation was actually quite tough, we knew that Instructor A had BIG expectations for us, he gave us lots of notes and references, but we're afraid that if we follow the references, he'd think we're just copying. So we're forced to come up with other special or new ideas to impress him...
- R: So, why didn't Timothy share his workload? Was he busy or something?
- I: He didn't do anything! Busy? Busy doing his *other* assignments. Every time we asked him out to discuss our presentation, he'd always refuse, I mean, we didn't have any meetings, it's basically me and Verona doing the job, exchange information, and send them to Timothy! His function was just "copy and paste," organizing the information and stuff. But we can't let this out to Instructor A, right? We're kinda pissed off, actually. If you paid attention, you'd realize he didn't have a lot to say during the presentation, coz he wasn't familiar with the presentation material at all!
- R: Wow, I really didn't know! I didn't know there're so many inside stories.
- I: Well talking about this I get very angry... Oh well, the term's passed anyway.
- R: Yeah, no turning back (laughs) Any other comments you would want to make?
- I: (sigh) That's it...

R: Thank you very much.

Interview with Jessy (1)

Date: October 9, 2001

R: Hi, Jessy, welcome to the interview. First, I'd like to know your reasons for taking this course. Why did you choose this course?

J: I took this course mainly because my friend and classmate, Nicole, was taking it. She recommended it, so I took it also. I once took an ELT course, and it was very difficult. So when Nicole persuaded me and said that this course is fun, I decided to give it a try. I'm also interested in watching films, especially foreign films.

R: At the beginning, did you know what lesson format/approach is used in this course? Like, did you know it was supposed to be student-centered?

J: Err... I know it's student-centered, coz I took several ELT courses before, and they're all pretty much student-centered, that students were divided into groups and were given tasks to do. The atmosphere of the class as also pretty relaxing. However, I didn't know that we were required to watch like one film per week, I mean, I didn't know the syllabus and course schedule beforehand.

R: Did you also know that there're two sections to this course?

J: No... I thought there's only this course.

R: Never mind then. Um, what kinds of film do you usually watch?

J: Mainly foreign films, coz I don't like local HK films. Foreign films... include like... romance, horror, I mean those about ghosts, and... how to say... um, films such as *Matrix* and *Mission Impossible*...

R: Adventure, thriller...

J: Right, right.

R: So, mainly mainstream Hollywood films?

J: Yeah...

R: No European films?

J: Rarely... Coz I don't normally have access to these kinds of film, unless I go to film festivals or the Broadway Cinematique... but I don't normally do that.

R: I see. Anyways, I know you've watched a lot of films, were you ever aware of any influence of film watching upon your acquirement or improvement of English language skills?

J: To a certain extent, yes. I'd try to listen to their speech, and the um... the slang, and vocabulary. However, since most of the time there're no English captions, I couldn't get words that I miss.

R: But there's Chinese subtitles...

J: Well, it's less effective, I mean, watching films which have English captions, like those in the ILC, I think they're more effective in enhancing language learning.

R: Okay. Could you sort of talk about the English learning environment in your high school? Was it an EMI?

J: Yes, it's an EMI, but the teaching approach was quite... rigid.

R: Rigid?

J: Yeah, like in the English language subject, there're still dictation tasks in F.7! They would assign say one or two chapters in the textbook for us to study, and there would be quizzes or dictations on the meaning of the vocabs.

R: Didn't you guys have to prepare for the public examinations?

J: Yes, we had to do past papers. But for vocabulary learning, it's taught in that way. They would have us read the vocabulary, explain the meanings to us, and learn them in that way. They would want us to practice reading them, but it's not like practicing daily conversation skills. The only time when we were required, really, to talk in English, was when we had to form groups and practice for the oral examinations. There were lots of other homework assignments, such as newspapers cutting...

R: So, during the English language lessons, were the teachers able to stick to the "English-only" rule?

J: I would say, yes... but it's only limited to the teachers themselves. I mean, if we're to talk with... um, actually, there wasn't much interaction between the teachers and students, we just sat there, and listen to the teachers give lectures. We got plenty of opportunity to listen to English, but rarely would we raise hands to ask questions or express opinions.

R: How about other subjects? I know textbooks are in English. But how about the teachers? What do they speak in?

- J: Both Chinese and English. Our interaction with the teachers was also in both Chinese and English. I mean when we were asking them questions.
- R: I see. Were there any chances of practicing English outside the classroom? Did you have extra-curricular activities that were held in English? Such as drama, choral speaking, etc...
- J: Yes we had... um, but not drama and choral speaking... they're relatively rare. But we had a native speaker, and she's required to help F.5 and F.7 students to prepare for the oral examinations. So each week they'd have one or two (I don't know how many) meetings, during lunch hour, and the whole class was required to attend. They would have some games and activities, and we're required to speak in English.
- R: Only for F.5 and F.7?
- J: Um, for F.5 and F.7, the lessons were regular and compulsory. For other forms, you can participate voluntarily.
- R: What do you think about the teachers' English proficiency in your high school?
- J: They're okay, pretty good. Then, of course their pronunciation and intonation couldn't compare to native speakers... but still, I'd say they're quite good already.
- R: I see. Okay, let's talk about your exposure to English media, coz you indicated in the questionnaire that you're exposed to a variety of media, such as TV, music, internet, newspaper, books... could you sort of explain why?
- J: Well, simply put, I'm an American freak! I love American culture! (laughs)
- R: (laughs) Like, how come you like Backstreet Boys and Eminem at the same time? They're kinda different...
- J: Well, I used to like Backstreet Boys when I was in high school, and now, my music taste has been changing...
- R: I see. So, do you feel there're any benefits of such a wide exposure? In terms of English skills, I mean.
- J: Um...
- R: Like, did you ever learn some new vocabulary from songs, the lyrics—
- J: Oh yes! I had... I would... I mean, if I couldn't understand what the lyrics were saying, I'd go look up a dictionary and try to work out the meaning of the lyrics. I also memorized the lyrics (laughs)... and sing along. But the problem is, although I've learnt, I couldn't use it.
- R: What does that mean?
- J: For example, when I watch English TV programs, I get what they mean, I get to learn how people live their lives over there (in foreign countries), I get to learn their culture, slang, but then I don't have any chance to "use" these knowledge myself in daily life in HK, as everybody's talking in Cantonese.
- R: I see. What then, in your opinion, is the best/most effective way to learn English?
- J: Um... just like what other people used to say, you have to listen more, talk more, and write more... yeah, and read more. But most importantly, I think you have to talk and write. Those are the more essential elements. Coz I realized, after I got into university, my writing skills have been on a decline, as there weren't many chances to write. Although some people might think that university students shouldn't still be learning vocabulary, doing grammar exercises, and have quizzes and stuff, but actually, when I look back now, it was during high school days that my English skills improved the most. My pool of English vocabulary was built up at that time.
- R: I know your business courses are taught in Chinese, right?
- J: Yeah, you're right, even though we have essays to write, they're just using very simple English, not many different vocabulary, like you'd tend to use the word "important" all the time, and wouldn't know or use other synonyms.
- R: So, does that mean that you feel your English is worse now? Compared to high school days?
- J: Yeah! That's why ever since Year 1, I kept taking one ELT course per term, up until now (I'm Year 2 now). Coz in ELT courses, at least you'd get to listen to, write, or speak in English, if only a little bit.
- R: I see. Okay, lastly, could you give some comments on the course, the lesson approach, the students, the teacher, etc.?
- J: Frankly speaking, I didn't have any expectations before the course. After taking this course, I felt that it's quite fun, and Instructor A has been very nice, and we (students) got along pretty well.
- R: How about the lesson approach? The student-centered approach?
- J: I think it's a must in ELT courses. It's not good to just have students sit there and listen to the instructor lecturing... I think it's good that Instructor A has successfully *made* us talk... he would invite us to give comments...
- R: Well, if not, what can he do? I mean, what're the alternatives?

- J: No! Coz some ELT courses aren't like that!
- R: What was the one you took which was not like that?
- J: It's called *Effective Communication*...
- R: Wow, those should be focused on oral skills...
- J: But then the instructor did not invite us to talk for the whole class... I mean, she just had us form groups and then gave us some stuff to do/discuss... However, we talked in Cantonese within the groups... (laughs)
- R: (laughs) And that's called effective?
- J: Well, *supposedly*, for her. I mean, she *did* expect us to talk in English.
- R: Was she a native speaker?
- J: Yes.
- R: Okay. How about the groupings of the students? Some of your fellow classmates expressed that they feel everyone's sitting and talking with their own friends all the time... do you have the same feeling?
- J: Yes. I think it's very problematic. It's always the same people... I think maybe by random assigning students into different groups would've helped.
- R: I guess it's also because you guys known each other already, before the course... everyone comes in with their friends... it's not like during the summer session that I sat in on, the students didn't know each other at first, and they ended up getting along very well in the end...
- J: Hm... I don't think that's necessarily true though... If the students didn't know each other at first, there would be two outcomes: either they get along very well or can't get along at all, coz they're not familiar with each other. Just like the one I took previously, since I didn't know anybody there, and my group members were Year 3 and Year 4 students... I didn't get along with them, we didn't get along...
- R: Really? Hmm... but for the summer course, the students ended up going to karaoke together!
- J: Really? That's nice.
- R: Anyways, any other comments?
- J: Not really.
- R: Thank you.
- J: You're welcome.

Interview with Jessy (2)

Date: December 14, 2001

- R: Hi, Jessy, welcome.
- J: Hi.
- R: Were there anything that you wanted to learn in this course but wasn't really fulfilled?
- J: Um... I guess... um, we didn't get to learn new things... I mean, we're just talking in simple English, writing in simple English, so...
- R: Do you think that aren't enough lessons assigned for lecturing?
- J: Um... I think... coz right now the workload is okay, I don't want more, watching one film per week is quite heavy, if you have other homework or assignments to do. For the lecture, I think it's the time constraint, there're just not enough lesson periods, I mean, given the time span of the lesson format now, all he could do was to introduce some basic filmic techniques, he didn't have any time left for other stuff such as vocabulary, critical and analytical thinking, etc. So, I think he's already done his best.
- R: Yeah, I agree with you too. Now, do you think there's any difference in your film viewing habits after taking this course?
- J: I think it's pretty much the same as before. I mean, I used to frequent the ILC since Year 1, I like to watch films anyway... my friends said ILC is my home, coz whenever there're free periods, I'd go to ILC to watch films, films that I didn't watch, or those that I wanted to watch but didn't have time.
- R: Let's talk about the choice of film in this course. What do you think?
- J: Um... some of them were kind of boring! Like the *Killing* film...
- R: Yeah, everybody said that. How about the assigned films?
- J: Assigned films?
- R: Yeah, I mean, those he played during the lesson was just to illustrate what kinds of film techniques were used... how about those that he assigned you to watch outside class?
- J: Um, no problem with those, though. But the ones during the lesson were boring...

- R: Just ignore those in the lessons for a minute... Um, what do you think about the assigned films?
- J: I have no problem with them.
- R: Coz some people, they've never ever watched any film like *Trainspotting* and *Pulp Fiction*... so they were a bit shocked and couldn't accept them...
- J: I don't think there's any problem with *Trainspotting* or *American Beauty*... I can take them... I mean, well, the first time I saw the film, I was like, "Wah, what's matter? How come it's like that?" I was a little surprised to why Instructor A has chosen such a film for us, it was quite embarrassing. But then gradually I thought, well, there's meaning to the film, so it's okay.
- R: I see. How about the two Italian films at the start? Some students expressed that he shouldn't have included non-English films as this is an ELT course. What do you think?
- J: Um... well, language-wise, it's true that these two films are not related to the course... but in terms of theme, I think it's okay. The film content is good, and the stories are interesting. After all, there're English captions! You can still learn by reading those English! (laughs)
- R: How about other films?
- J: Other films? They're quite okay... um... *Pulp Fiction*, I was the only one who understood the film! My other friends, Nicole, they didn't get it. The problem is the chronological order, you have to re-create the sequence again, you need to think.
- R: So actually, did you ever watch similar genres of film before?
- J: *Pulp Fiction*... I remember I didn't go see it in the cinema, but it was shown on TVB Pearl, and I kind of watched it, you know, in bits and pieces, I didn't finish the whole film. Actually, I think all the films he chose were interesting, except *Alien*. (laughs)
- R: Why?
- J: I don't know, maybe it's because...
- R: It's done in the 1970s... probably the effects weren't so great.
- J: Hmm... but I don't like their sequels either... I didn't watch them... I just don't feel like doing... I also don't like *Star Wars*...
- R: Me too, *Star Wars* is just for boys, I guess. Maybe you don't like Sci-Fis.
- J: Not exactly... I remember I watched *The Abyss* when I was little and I liked it.
- R: I wanted to have you evaluate the course, but it seems that you have articulated quite thoroughly in your questionnaire. So, let me ask you about some other stuff. What do you think about the student presentations?
- J: Presentations... um...
- R: Like the students' performance.
- J: Um... actually when we were doing the presentation, we all had a question... what did he want us to do? Did he want us to analyze the film using the techniques we've learnt in class, or whether he want us to analyze the story/content/meaning of the film? We weren't sure.
- R: I think he didn't mind, you're free to do whatever you like.
- J: Hmmm...
- R: So, why did you guys choose cartoons for the presentation?
- J: It's because no one did it. We didn't want to focus on people, coz some group did it already. Romantic comedy, someone did it. So I guess cartoons was left...
- R: Well, the guys looked kinda bored... during your presentation.
- J: Oh, I think it's not the problem with cartoons, it's the problem with the layout of our presentation! We didn't have enough time, and we didn't rehearse. We just did our own part, we didn't put them together and rehearse, that's why the time management wasn't good. We were kinda confused ourselves as well, we sort of didn't know what we're doing. There were lots of stuff we omitted.
- R: Like what? Games?
- J: Um, no, the discussions. We expected students to come up with ideas, and then we would sort of guide them to the correct direction, but it turned out that there wasn't enough time and we gave the answer away too easily. Each part was done too quickly.
- R: Would having 3 consecutive periods be better?
- J: Maybe... if there's a break in between.
- R: Okay, you mentioned in the questionnaire that you've watched most of the films already... that's not quite what other people say. Actually, they said the films were too alternative. (laughs) Which one did you NOT see prior to the course?
- J: Um, *Cinema Paradiso*, *Alien*, *Trainspotting*.
- R: Okay, now, here, you wrote that "some other films that are worth watching are just shown on class briefly," could you explain what you mean by this? Which one? *Psycho*?
- J: Yeah, *Psycho*, and also *Deliverance*... I was curious, I wanted to know why the people behaved like that in *Deliverance*, what happened before and after...

- R: I see. Also, you mentioned that it would be good to include some low-budget movies and those which are not starring famous actors/actresses. What makes you interested in them? What kinds of film do you mean by that?
- J: Hmm... it's hard to say, I can't think of any example. But I mean not necessarily those that were Hollywood-produced... maybe some other smaller-scale, local films. As long as the films are meaningful and worth watching. Maybe *Dancer in the Dark*? Does that count?
- R: Oh yeah, actually it was included in the summer course.
- J: But Bjork is also famous.
- R: Famous for being alternative. Do you think you can accept it?
- J: I think so. I haven't seen this film, but I sort of know the story. I guess it depends on different people. I mean, for people who don't normally watch any foreign films, they'd be really shocked if you give them something like *Trainspotting*. But if you're used to watching them, you could learn to like them and widen your selection choices.
- R: Okay, if you were to add in some more films, what kinds of film would you add? Or are you very satisfied with the selection already?
- J: I guess half and half. Yes, I'm quite satisfied with his selection already, but it seems that romantic comedies are lacking.
- R: Coz they're mostly mainstream Hollywood stuff.
- J: But I like to watch them! (laughs) Maybe some tear-jerkers...
- R: Like *Joy Luck Club*?
- J: Maybe. Yeah, you get different things when you watch it at different times. I mean, when I watched it when I was little, I didn't know what was going on. When I watched it again later, I got something out of it.
- R: So you always repeat watching the same films?
- J: No! It's because they're repeatedly shown on TV! My mom loves to watch films a lot, she would say, "it's on again, come and watch it!" She loves older films, like *My Fair Lady*, *Gone With the Wind*, etc... Also, she taped many of them, so we can always watch them again and again.
- R: I see. I guess that have influenced you a lot! Okay, lastly I want to ask you about this, in your self-assessment, you checked only "familiarity with foreign culture" as improved a bit, what do you exactly mean by culture? Like drug culture in *Trainspotting* or something?
- J: Hmm... no, I mean, for example in *American Beauty*, I get to know the other side of American society, their family problems, juvenile problems, and stuff like that.
- R: I see. Any other comments?
- J: Um, just wanna make one more, um, I realized it's always the same person in the group that acts as the "spokesman," I don't know why, like in our group, it's always Nicole. So, I think it'd be better if we're separated into different groups for discussion each time.
- R: You're right. I didn't really notice you talking! Why didn't you talk?
- J: I did! Well, I don't know. It just happened that every time Nicole was the one to answer...
- R: Anyway, thank you very much.
- J: You're welcome.

Interview with Liz (1)

Date: October 4, 2001

R: Researcher L: Liz

- R: Hi, Liz, welcome to the interview. In your questionnaire, you mentioned that through this course, you would like to improve your oral and critical thinking skills, why's so?
- L: First of all, watching films gives us a chance to think about what the director's message behind is, and since everyone's interpretation of the film is somewhat different, this can train our critical thinking skills. And for oral skills, the reason why I like to take ELT courses is because they provide more opportunity for practicing English as the lessons contain more discussions and student activities. I don't want to have lecture-approaches lessons.
- R: As you've taken so many ELT courses, can you tell me what's the difference between the lesson format of ELT courses and your normal major courses?
- L: My major courses are more teacher-centered, and the students just sit quietly and listen to the teacher lecturing. While in ELT courses, there's more time for students to interact with the teacher as well as other students.

- R: In the questionnaire, you also mentioned speaking speed, accent, and idioms to be the problem areas when you watch film, so, which accents are you most accustomed to? Like, are you aware of the differences between British and American accents?
- L: During high school, since we had many teachers from the UK, we were used to listening to British accent. However after I spent one summer on an exchange program at UCLA, I realized American accent is "not bad." And nowadays the films are very much in American accent. Both British and American accents are okay for me, I can catch them. For Australian accent, although I have a friend from Australia, I feel that their accent is quite strange. But I think it's good to know about different kinds of accents.
- R: What accent are you speaking?
- L: I think British accent more...
- R: I see. What, in your own experience, has film watching helped you to improve? In terms of English language skills, of course...
- L: Well, I would say listening, and conversation... like I get to know how Americans interact with each other in normal daily life, coz they are stuff that I don't have access to.
- R: Can you say something about the language learning environment in your high school?
- L: Umm, I think it was pretty good. As you know, the HK education system is very much exam-oriented, we did lots of drilling on grammar exercises and past exam papers. But in my high school, there're also lots of foreign teachers. During lower forms, our lesson approaches were mainly teacher lecturing. But for higher forms, which were taught by the foreign teachers, our lesson are done in group discussions.
- R: How about your teachers' English? Are they authentic?
- L: I think their English is very good.
- R: Were there chances for you to practice oral English in your high school?
- L: I think for English Literature. Because the class size was so small, it just contained a few students, we had plenty of opportunities to speak. We had to prepare for the lesson, watch films, read novels and poems, and then discuss them with the teacher and students in class. For example, discussing and analyzing the message or theme of the author, and also the personalities of the characters. That's why through English Literature (and watching films also) our critical thinking skills can be developed.
- R: How about extra-curricular activities?
- L: Hm. First of all, since my high school was a EMI one, all lessons and homework are done in English. But for extra-curricular activities, unless they were organized by the English Society (such as drama competition), they're in Cantonese most of the time.
- R: I see. Can you talk about your summer exchange program trip to UCLA? What inspirations have you got?
- L: Hmm. The lesson approach was very different...
- R: Did you take/sit in courses?
- L: I took a total of 8-hour credit; they were Geography and English (speaking). Although they were supposed to be lecturing lessons, the students were keen and active in voicing out both their questions and opinions. So, basically, lecturing lessons are pretty much the same as discussion lessons, students participated actively. Whereas in HK, students are more passive. Therefore, having been raised in HK, I feel that I'm not as good at that as the American students. Initially I wasn't used to it, and I felt I was very "quiet." Then gradually I realized it was a very good approach, and so I started to talk more, like asking the teacher questions.
- R: When was your trip?
- L: Summer 2000.
- R: Hm. It has been one year, have you noticed any change in you?
- L: Err... yes, I think I'm more active. At least I'd try to raise my hand to ask the teacher questions when I wanted to. Before, I didn't want to raise questions coz it's like challenging the teacher and the fact that everybody's looking at me made me feel uncomfortable. After the trip, I realized raising questions is not a big deal... in fact it's good, for the teacher can immediately clarify concepts/points that you don't understand.
- R: What, then, according to your experience, is the most effective way to learn English?
- L: I think it's reading newspapers, but must be facilitated by a teacher's presence. You can get to know new and different vocabulary, as well as the writing styles. It's a big help for your writing. Watching TV news can also improve listening & oral skills as well as acquiring new vocabulary. That's why I think exposure to media is the most effective.
- R: Why do you think the media is most effective?

- L: Hm... because the world is always changing, and the media are able to keep you abreast with the latest news, you can really learn your English through exposing yourself to the media more.
- R: What are your comments on this course, the teacher, students and lesson approach?
- L: Err... hmmm... I would like more writing assignments/practices. Although everybody thinks that an ELT course shouldn't give them so much homework pressure/burden, I think that by writing film reviews or doing activities that can train critical thinking, we can really learn a lot. Maybe it would be better if Richard concentrated on a fewer number of films, so that we can have more in-depth analysis of the films. Just having oral discussion is too biased. I'd like to have more writing assignments.
- R: How about the teacher's "hands-off" approach?
- L: Actually I took two other courses by Instructor A before, so I'm used to his approach. It's more relaxing, but we can still learn things. But I feel that he might be a bit too "hands-off," which made the lesson kind of loose. For presentation, he only talks to you for like 5 minutes, it's like, you can't really learn a lot about how to present. I think an ELT course should include the practice on writing, listening, and oral aspects. But what's lacking is the writing element.
- R: Any other comments?
- L: The students are not active enough. Maybe because it's just the start of the term, people are not warmed up... I hope gradually they will become more active in the course.
- R: Thank you very much.

Interview with Liz (2)

Date: November 30, 2001

- R: Hi Liz, welcome to the interview. First, I'd like to ask you, were there anything that you wanted to learn in this course, but weren't fulfilled?
- L: Err... I think it's uh, the skills of watching films, um, I know Instructor A gave lectures on film techniques during each Thursday lesson, but then since it's just a one-period lesson (45minutes), the impression was very shallow. If you ask me what I've learned, I might not even remember. And also because he put a lot of time on student presentation and discussion of their feelings/thoughts towards the films, the time for lecturing of film techniques became inadequate.
- R: This is actually almost everyone's feedback towards this course. Okay, let's talk about the choice of film. Unlike the summer which had 8, only 6 films were covered this term. What do you think of the selection? Is there anything missing or lacking?
- L: I think the choice is pretty good already, as each film has its own unique style. Personally, I feel quite satisfied with his selection of film.
- R: That's good. But some students were quite shocked... when they first watch films like *Trainspotting*...
- L: Yeah, I know. I didn't expect *Trainspotting* to be like that, I think it would be better if he could give us some explanation or preparation on the film before hand. Because I watched this film with some male classmates of mine, and it was kinda embarrassing... (laughs)
- R: (laughs) Okay, let me ask you, what is the biggest/most valuable thing you got out of this course? Anything inspiring?
- L: Actually before this course, I expected, I mean, I already knew that it's about presentations and discussions, for all of Instructor A's other courses were like that too, basically. But what I think is good is to learn English through watching films. Because this also depends on your understanding of the films, and you also need to function your critical / analytical thinking skills in order to make a good presentation. The course is quite good.
- R: Do you think there is any difference with regard to your own personal choice of film before and after taking this course?
- L: Yes, I think so. Especially for more off-the-mainstream films. Now I know that some films which are more alternative or less popular (in box office) can be good films as well...
- R: Actually *Pulp Fiction* did very well in the box office...
- L: Really? Maybe *Trainspotting* then...
- R: *Trainspotting* did very good also, it's a Scottish film, but it has successfully opened up the international market...
- L: Oh I see. Anyways, as I've studied English Literature before, which also included films, I tend to watch films not just on the surface, but to do deeper thinking and critical analysis already. So I would say what this course gave me was more information, knowledge, and consolidation on what I have been doing already.

- R: I see. Have you brought your questionnaire?
- L: Oops... I forgot! I'm sorry! I've already filled it in, actually.
- R: Well, what I want to ask you is, which area/skills did u check as having the most significant improvement after taking this course? Remember the table at the end of the questionnaire...?
- L: Hmm... I guess most of them are pretty much just the same... maybe for listening and oral.
- R: Okay, let's talk about what you think are the positive and negatives points to this course? Or maybe what can be improved about this course?
- L: I think um...
- R: Since you continuously took Instructor A's course for several semesters, I guess at least you'd think there's something in them which make them worth taking...?
- L: The good point is the atmosphere in the lesson. I think for learning, I mean, I think learning has to be done happily, that you find interest in it. And also because there's plenty of time for discussion, the interaction with the teacher also increases, unlike other class lectures which are so boring! However, as an ELT course, I think Instructor A has neglected some um, I mean, the areas that the course touched on was not comprehensive enough, such as, um, does this course mainly focus on discussion?
- R: Yeah, it mainly focuses on discussion, not writing...
- L: Well then that's okay then. If the introduction of the course in the student handbook has stated that listening and oral skills are more emphasized in this course, then I wouldn't expect to have much practice in writing skills. Coz in the beginning, I did expect year 3 courses to be more comprehensive... but it turned out it wasn't... so, well... actually personally I'd like to take some courses on writing... but then Instructor A's courses mostly focuses on oral discussions.
- R: Do you think the discussions are thorough enough? Coz Timothy commented that the discussions could've been done in more depth and diversity.
- L: Well, I guess it'd be better if we're required to jot down some points so that we'd have more to discuss... or maybe shorten... I mean, cut the number of questions to be discussed and just focus on fewer questions, but can be done in deeper level of analysis.
- R: How about comments on the students? I've had complaints about not being able to mix with all the classmates that much.
- L: Yeah, you're right... at the beginning it was very non-interactive, but now it's getting better.
- R: It's only until the last several lessons that the students started chatting across the room...
- L: I think a way to overcome this problem is to assign people to different groupings each time, for if you're always with the same group of people each time, you're already familiar with their way of thinking or general predilections, it's less useful in terms of training critical skills.
- R: Any other comments?
- L: I guess that's it.
- R: Thank you very much.
- L: You're welcome.

Interview with Nicole (1)

Date: October 9, 2001

R: Researcher N: Nicole

- R: Hello, Nicole, welcome to the interview. What are your reasons for taking this course?
- N: The reason why I'm taking this course is because I have some credit hours left for electives. I don't want to waste the hours, and also I took an ELT course last term, it was quite okay, and this time when I noticed there's an ELT course using film as teaching tool, I thought it would be quite interesting, so I signed up for this course.
- R: So personally you like to watch films?
- N: Err... not extremely fanatic, I'm not a frequent moviegoer, but if there's any film that I'm interested, I'll still go see it.
- R: Okay. Well, what kinds of film do you usually watch? Mainstream Hollywood films?
- N: Hmm... I like to watch thriller... like *Seven*...
- R: Okay, I see what you mean. Um, how, in your experience, has film watching helped you to improve? I mean in terms of English language skills.
- N: Err... I think it helped with listening more... not writing or oral skills that much... but mainly listening.

- R: Could you sort of illustrate with examples? Do you have any films in mind which you think have helped you to improve your listening skills?
- N: Not really. But, I realize when I was in Canada, and watched films without subtitles, it forced me to really listen to the lines, while in HK, there're the Chinese subtitles, and my eyes would just naturally follow the Chinese subtitles. However, for the former, I could only hear short and simple lines, while for more complicated and longer lines, I wouldn't be able to catch them.
- R: You were in Canada for vacation?
- N: No, I lived there for a while.
- R: You mean exchange program?
- N: No, well, we planned to live there, but then for some reasons we didn't, and came back to HK.
- R: Okay. Let's talk about your high school learning environment. Was your high school an EMI?
- N: Yeap.
- R: Could you say something about the environment for learning English at your high school?
- N: I think my high school put a strong emphasis on English learning. Besides Chinese subjects, all other subjects were taught in English.
- R: Did your teachers really stick to the rules? Coz I know in some schools, the teachers use Cantonese to use even though the textbooks are in English.
- N: Really? I think our school was quite good. The teachers could stick to the English rule on the most part, except maybe when for instance, during Maths lesson, the Maths were so difficult, then the teachers would resort to using Cantonese to explain. However, I'd say the lessons were basically done in English.
- R: How about the English proficiency of the teachers?
- N: Most of them were quite good. In fact, I think they're better than those in university now. I mean the English language. Well now the lessons are done in Cantonese, but if you're talking about English, I think the teachers in my high school had better English than those here.
- R: I see. Besides lessons, did you have chances to speak in English outside classroom? For example, were the extra-curricular activities done in English?
- N: Hmmm...
- R: Was your school successful in cultivating an English-speaking environment after class?
- N: Yes, I think so. Especially there were the speech festivals... um, our school strongly encouraged us to participate in them, so the atmosphere cultivated was very good, I'd say. I know in some other high schools, they don't really encourage the students that much. But in my school, they really spent a lot of money, time, effort, and having teachers help us with the preparation for the festivals and competitions. And also we had lots of drama contests... I guess we had more activities conducted in English than in Cantonese.
- R: I realize you're quite confident in speaking English, did you always participate in those activities you mentioned?
- N: Yes, actually I quite liked to do so.
- R: I see. What, in your opinion, is the most effective way to learn English?
- N: I guess you must "see for yourself," like watching news. I remember during high school, our teacher forced us to watch TV news, and we're required to jot down notes. Since the news shows didn't have Chinese subtitles, we're forced to listen to their English only. I felt that my listening skills improved within that period of time. So I think this is the best way.
- R: But that's only for the listening side...
- N: Yeah, you can say so. How to say? Um... that's why I felt that only my listening skills were improved at that time, but for oral... it's like we speak just for the sake of training for the oral examination... and I didn't really like that format. I think the classroom atmosphere is very important, I like the atmosphere in this class, very relaxing, and cordial... I think this encourages speaking more.
- R: Could you comment on the course, teacher, students, lesson approach, and workload?
- N: Actually I didn't expect the lesson to be conducted by the students... I mean, run by the students. I thought we're to watch a film, and then participate in discussion of the film. It turns out that the discussions are led by students. However, I think Richard can talk more, I think I would be able to learn more if he can talk more about the films.
- R: So, you think that he hasn't commented adequately on the films?
- N: Err... I think there are both sides to the same coin. I mean, student-led discussions could train our presentation and oral skills, but lecturing by him would enable us to know more about films. So I think it's a matter of what he wants us to be trained on. But I would say the lesson format is a bit different from what I expected.
- R: Any other comments?

N: Not that I can think of.
R: Thank you very much.
N: You're welcome.

Interview with Nicole (2)

Date: November 28, 2001

R: Hi, Nicole, welcome to the interview again. Were there anything that you wanted to learn but weren't fulfilled in this course?

N: I guess it's the lesson format, I think because it focused on student-led discussions and presentations, Instructor A didn't talk a lot. I think we could've learnt more (about films) if there're more lectures done by him.

R: I see. How about the choice of film?

N: I think the choice is quite good! Coz personally, most of the films I've never watched before... I think I've only watched *American Beauty*... I never saw the other films before this course.

R: Do you have any problems when watching those films? Coz I realized during class that some of you looked quite shocked when Instructor A played some scenes...

N: Hmm... shocked... um, I guess no, instead, I'd say, it's the dislike for some films, like those old films *Killing*, I didn't like it, it's too boring.

R: But then *The Decalogue* is very famous...

N: Well, maybe it's just my feeling... I mean, I know these films are worth discussing, like Instructor A pointed out to us the special camera angle used, etc.

R: Okay, now that the course is over, are you aware of any improvements? Or was it not very noticeable, since the course was short, just 3 months' time?

N: Yeah... I think it's the knowledge on films. Coz before, I wouldn't pay attention to what kind of shots are used, I'd only focus on the plot, and whether it can entertain me or not. But now I think I'd focus more on the techniques used. I think I also learnt more vocabulary, but those vocabulary are just film terms, such as what is filmic device, top shot, etc.

R: Which area do you think did not / hasn't improved that much?

N: Hmm... writing. Coz we're not required to do any writing... well, except that so-called scene analysis... which wasn't much anyway.

R: What do you think, is the biggest/most valuable insight you got from this course?

N: Hmm... most valuable... I think it's watching from different angles. I mean, he has introduced to us films that we wouldn't normally watch, like *Cinema Paradiso*. I mean, I wouldn't go rent it, coz I've never heard of it...

R: But *Cinema Paradiso* is a VERY famous film...

N: Yeah, but then, I don't know why, I've never heard of the name before... Usually, I'd go see whatever film people say it's good... I don't pay attention much myself. Well now, it's like, after his introduction of some films, such as *Psycho*, it makes me want to go watch it!

R: Of course! *Psycho* is a classic, you must go and watch it.

N: Yeah... I want to watch it...

R: It's the classic thriller... watch it at anytime and it still chills you... Well, anyways, um... right, could you sort of comment on the positive and negative aspects of the course?

N: Um, the positive side is, the small size of the class...

R: Small size?

N: Yeah. I took another ELT course, *Effective Oral Communication* before, and it's a class with 20-something to 30 students, I think the class size was too big, there wasn't much opportunity to speak up. But there's plenty of opportunity to speak in this class.

R: And the negative point?

N: Negative... um, I think it's the people always sitting with the same friends—

R: Oh, you realized this too! I thought you guys *liked* sitting together... (laughs)

N: Yeah, we all noticed this, that's why we tried to assign numbers to people during our presentation and had them sit in random groupings. I mean, it's hard for us to not sit with our friends when we come into the classroom, I think it has to be done by force, like the random assignment we did.

R: I see. How about the presentation, what do you think about it?

N: Actually we're a little bit frustrated... coz there wasn't much response from the students...

R: Maybe because a lot of the students haven't seen the animations before...

N: Yeah, I guess that's the reason.

- R: How about other presentations? Done by other students? Like *Pulp Fiction*, *Trainspotting*... these are more difficult films...
- N: Um... *Pulp Fiction* was quite okay, it was quite fun, and we learnt a lot of film knowledge from it... About *Trainspotting*... um, I think there should be more discussion... I think the discussions on this film weren't enough.
- R: You mean it would be better if Instructor A has provided you with some background to the film before you watch it?
- N: Um, no, I don't think that's a good idea... because if he informed us beforehand, the pleasure of watching the film might not be the same... compared to if he hasn't given us any background information to the film.
- R: I see. Any other comments?
- N: I quite like Instructor A, he's very nice! When preparing for our presentation, he made a lot of effort to help us... when we asked to see him about the presentation, he arranged a lunch meeting with us to discuss and prepare on the film *Alien*. You might say it's because he likes *Alien*/Science-fiction a lot, anyway, I think he's very nice indeed.
- R: Any other comments?
- N: No...
- R: Thank you very much.
- N: You're welcome.

Interview with Sue (1)

Date: October 3, 2001

R: Researcher S: Sue

- R: Hi, Sue, welcome to the interview. Let me first ask you, what are your reasons for taking this course?
- S: Um, when I first registered for this course, I didn't know exactly what it's about. Just by looking at the name of the course, *English Through Film*, I thought this would be different from other courses, I guess courses that include films wouldn't be too boring, at least. So I thought this course could provide a stress-free and relaxing environment for me to learn English.
- R: Okay. Well, you've taken this course, which means that at least you don't dislike film watching. What kinds of film are you interested in?
- S: Actually I rarely watch any western films. I usually watch local Hong Kong films. Due to the difference in cultural issues, I think that western films aren't as attractive as local films.
- R: So, you rarely watch English films. Um, do you think watching English films could help you improve your English language skills? How?
- S: Err... actually I hadn't taken special notice... that's why I rarely watched any western films before...
- R: I see. Could you sort of describe your English learning environment in your high school? Was it an EMI?
- S: EMI? What is that?
- R: English medium school...
- S: Um no, my high school was a Chinese one... Well, English learning... um... it's mainly taught by one teacher, grammar and comprehension exercises were done. The lessons mainly revolved around the exam... for instance, for cert level exam, we'd do a lot of past papers or similar tests. And so, I'd say all the learning of English was for the sake of training students for the examination.
- R: Does that mean you didn't have any chances of using English outside the English subject lessons?
- S: Yeap.
- R: How about extra-curricular activities?
- S: Hmm... not really...
- R: Did your English teacher use English or Cantonese during English lessons?
- S: Basically she would use English, but sometimes in order to explain difficult terms, she'd use Cantonese. But because she's not a native, her English wasn't too good, I'd say.
- R: What do you think of teachers' general English proficiency in your school? Were there native speakers?

- S: Um, there were two foreign exchange student teachers in F.6 and F.7, and they held like one lesson per week, and we usually had games. However, it depends very much on your own effort, if you don't participate, you don't get to learn much...
- R: I see. What, in your opinion, is the best and most effective way to learn English?
- S: I think... um... the best environment would be one in which everybody is very much motivated to learn English, and also you are forced to listen to English in all your surroundings, such as watching English TV programs, talking to friends in English, attending the lessons in English, etc. I think this way of learning English is more relaxing, and you can put what you've learned back into use instantly. I think this is more effective. However, right now my lessons are in Chinese, friends talk in Chinese, and I watch Chinese TV programs... that's why...
- R: What do you think of this course, the teacher, students, and selection of film?
- S: Um... the course is quite relaxing, it gives students the space and time to share and participate. The teacher is also very nice.
- R: How about the selection of film?
- S: Hm, it's quite okay...
- R: Any other comments?
- S: Not really...
- R: Thank you very much.

Interview with Sue (2)

Date: December 6, 2001

- R: Hi, Sue, thanks for coming to the interview. Were there anything that you expected to learn in this course but weren't fulfilled?
- S: Actually, I think this course put the emphasis on analyzing film techniques more than learning English. Like, we got to learn different shots and stuff. But what I expected to learn, in terms of English language was, for instance, analyzing how characters in the films speak in their daily lives, what kinds of language they use, and not analyzing what kind of filmic device this shot has used, etc.
- R: I see. I remember you once said you hardly watch any western films. Now that the term is over, and you're forced to watch some not-so-mainstream films. What do you think of them?
- S: Hmm... I think the films are quite good. Previously, I usually go for films of the same genre, such as romance, or drama, but now I get to know more about other alternative films.
- R: And you can accept them?
- S: Yeah, I think they're okay.
- R: What do you think of the choice of film?
- S: I'm quite satisfied.
- R: Do you feel the choice is lacking anything?
- S: Hmm... I think Instructor A doesn't like romantic comedies...
- R: He doesn't like mainstream romantic comedies... coz there're too easily accessible.
- S: Hmm, yeah, I think these films are what're lacking in this course, but I don't think there's any problem with that. Coz I don't think those films are worth analyzing anyway, and they're too easily accessible, so it's okay he didn't include them in the course.
- R: I see. Okay, can you sort of evaluation this course? What're done well and what're not?
- S: Um, the good thing is that there're lots of participation. We watched the films, prepared, and got to share our ideas during the class with other students, and I think this is very good. But that doesn't mean he didn't put in any effort. Actually during preparation, he'd meet with the students, spent time with them, and guide them back on the right track of thinking, and also expose us to some issues which we're not capable of spotting for deeper analysis. The thing which I think, had not been adequately dealt with, is the English language. Actually looking at the course name, *English Through Film*, I expected the lesson to be like this: first, watch a scene or film, and then, pick out some lines which are specifically said only by native speakers, or vocabulary that we don't know, or any other interesting conversations, and analyze them... and not just taking the film, and doing an "anatomy" on it. I tend to think that since this is an ELT course and not a film course, the focus should be on English learning.
- R: I see. How do you feel about the groupings of students? Do you feel that you guys are always sitting with the same friends?

- S: Err... yeah... but actually every course is like that... it can't be prevented... this course is already quite good. Actually I didn't expect to take this course with friends, I registered very late, two weeks late, and I didn't know that my friends have also taken it, until I met them in the course.
- R: Oh, really? But you know them beforehand, right?
- S: Yeah, we're from the same major, but I didn't know they also signed up for this course. Well, we tried to go to different groups sometimes, and talk. We also chat with other people as well, it's not like we're total strangers.
- R: Do you think the structure of the course is too loose?
- S: Uh... I think it's quite good, quite inspiring. Coz too many classes are teacher-centered, while in this course, the students took the active role, they led the presentations, they discussed questions... I think this is quite good.
- R: Any other comments?
- S: Nope.
- R: Thank you very much.
- S: You're welcome.

Interview with Verona (1)

Date: September 28, 2001

R: Researcher V: Verona

- R: Hi, Verona, thanks for coming to the interview. Let me start by asking you, what were your reasons for taking this course?
- V: Um, my reasons were sort of the same as Isabel's, for we're both Education majors, and our Department requires us to take a certain number of electives. I'm taking this course because I still have elective quotas... but then what's different with my case is that I've never taken any ELT courses before, while Isabel had. So, I just wanted to try. Also, a classmate of mine recommended this course.
- R: So, you mean your friend also took this course before?
- V: Yeap.
- R: Do you know which section he/she took? Coz there're two sections to this course...
- V: Um, she didn't take Instructor A's course.
- R: I see. Then it's Instructor B's.
- V: Well, she told me the workload was quite heavy, they had to read and write lots of stuff. However, because of the lesson schedule problem, it turned out that I took Instructor A's course instead.
- R: Actually you're lucky. Okay, um, what, in your opinion, has film watching helped you to improve? In terms of language skills, of course.
- V: Um, I do think film watching can enhance language skills. However, I think there's a limitation to watching films in HK. Because of the cultural differences, sometimes you wouldn't know what they're talking about, plus if there're Chinese subtitles available, you'd more prone to rely on reading the subtitles instead. You'd tend to totally read the Chinese subtitles instead of listening to the English track. That's why you can't learn much by that way. However, in this course, I realize that using English captions is way better, coz when you don't know what the characters are saying, you'd read the English captions, and even though you can't catch their meanings by ears, you can still understand the story through reading the captions.
- R: I see. Now, I want to know something about the English learning environment in your high school... could you sort of talk a little bit about it, how was it like?
- V: It's an EMI.
- R: Was your school able to stick to the "English" rule?
- V: Hmm... in our school, it was kinda strange, all courses used both Cantonese and English as the medium of instruction, except for English and History. For History, I don't know why, but from F.1 up to F.7, the lessons were really all in English! I remember, still very vividly, that in the very first lesson of History when I was in F.1, the teacher completely did NOT use a Cantonese word throughout the whole lesson!
- R: That's interesting... was it because the students in your school always maintained good grades in History in public examinations, and so your school wanted to keep up the standard?
- V: Um... the real reason I don't know, actually many of the students asked this same question over and over again, how come all History teachers did not use any Cantonese at all? Unless the students really really don't understand the meaning of the terms, THEN the teachers would resort

to using Cantonese to explain. However, we realized that all History teachers were also English teachers, so I guess they tend to put the emphasis on speaking English, like, even when you wanted to see those teachers during recess or after school, they required us to speak in English. I think they put more emphasis on training our listening and oral skills instead of writing (composition).

R: I see. Besides English (and History classes), were there any chances of practicing English? Like, outside the classroom, extra-curricular activities such as drama contests, choral speaking, debates and so on?

V: Yes there were such activities... we had the "English week," during which all assemblies, games, activities, anything... had to be conducted in English, for both the teachers and the students. Well, the aim was good, but the time wasn't enough. I mean, how could you learn anything from just two weeks' time of a "total English environment"? The idea was good, but not enough time...

R: How about the teachers' English proficiency in your high school? What do you think?

V: Hmm... it differed from teacher to teacher. Generally, I think the writing skills of most of the teachers in my high school were okay, the problem was in the oral aspect... they spoke HK style English. Well, there *were* some good teachers, they're mostly those who studied abroad, but then I realized they wouldn't stay in the school for long! Because they studied abroad, they tend to have more native-like English. For me, talking from my high school experience, I was very happy when I got to study under those good teachers! But it didn't last too long, unfortunately. You tend to have more respect for these teachers. Even when they're yelling at you or reprimanding you, you felt quite okay, when compared with the teachers who don't speak good English... I mean, the other teachers, they wouldn't (couldn't) even use English to scold you, even some of them were teaching English, and they used Cantonese to scold you, and you just wouldn't feel anything... I mean, you'd tend to think, "Well let's see if you can say that in English? If you have guts, say it in English!" something like that... (laughs)

R: (laughs) Okay, I know you're an Education major... what, in your opinion, is the best/most effective way to learn, or teach, English?

V: I think two things. First, the language environment you're in. If say, people around you are all speaking in Cantonese, you'd never get to learn English. For instance, even you've got a lot from the lesson, you know, absorbed a lot, but, without practice after lesson, how could you sustain what you've learnt? It's just like, when some foreigner comes to HK and learn our language, they can at least say one or two phrases in a month or two, why? It's because the people around him are all Cantonese speakers, and therefore... having no choice, um, if English doesn't do a good job in communicating, I mean, the only thing he can do is to learn to listen to and speak your language. Same with us, when we want to learn a foreign language, we must force ourselves to do the same, we must not give ourselves opportunity to use our first language. Second, the age factor... learning English from my present age would obviously be less advantaged than learning it from childhood, for children are highly imitative and susceptible. Therefore, if HK were to maintain as a "bilingual" society, it's very important to be able to provide such an environment for learning English for students from childhood period and up.

R: That would be a little too difficult to do though... for HK...

V: Coz, coz looking at Singapore's case, the people there can speak their own language, they can speak Mandarin, but they also can speak English fluently. Why? It's because the government has been doing a good job in providing the Singaporeans with an authentic environment from childhood onwards to learn languages.

R: Yeah, I think you can really say Singapore is a bilingual country, while HK... oops... way to go!

V: Yeah!

R: Okay, what do you think of the course, the teacher, lesson approach, and the students?

V: Err... actually... the first day I came in, I didn't really know what to do... I think Instructor A knew that we've just added the course, but I don't know why, um, how come he didn't tell us what you guys had done in the past two weeks? He just gave us a pile of notes, and that's all...

R: It's okay, this course isn't a very strict course, you'd be able to catch up soon.

V: I hope so.

R: Any other comments?

V: I think that's it.

R: Well thank you very much.

Interview with Verona (2)

Date: December 13, 2001

- R: Hi, Verona, thanks for coming. First, let me ask you, what did you expect to learn in this course but wasn't fulfilled? When I asked Isabel this question, she started talking all about her comments on the lesson approach and stuff like that! (laughs)
- V: Talking about what?
- R: Like, her feelings towards the course, the teacher and getting along with the students at the beginning...
- V: Oh, I know why... I know why! (laughs) Coz we didn't know what's going on at first! You know, me and Isabel just added the course, and we came into the classroom on the first day, and you guys were presenting on some film which we didn't watch... Instructor A, I think he knew that we've just added, but all he did was giving us some notes, without explaining them. And so, I tried to ask other classmates what were those notes about, but then to my surprise, they said they didn't really know either! And so I started to doubt... doubt his teaching approach... was it because he thought we wouldn't be able to understand the film stuff anyway, so he didn't even bother to explain them clearly at all? That was my first impression. Talking about getting along with the classmates, I was first put into Nicole's group... the girls who were kinda crazy (laughs), playful, and talking to them seemed kinda fun, I mean, our English was of comparable standard, we spoke unauthentic, HK-like English, and it was kinda funny! It's like, I spotted your mistakes, and you spotted mine, but still I could understand what you said and you could understand what I said! (laughs) Maybe the first impression made a lasting mark in my memory, so, different from Isabel, I think I got along pretty well with them...
- R: Oh yeah, Isabel just told me that she didn't really enjoy the course... she couldn't really blend herself into it...
- V: I continued talking with Nicole and the girls after the first lesson, so we've built up a pretty happy and cordial relationship...
- R: That's good. But talking about groupings, didn't you have a feeling that everybody's sticking to their own groups of friends all the time? Like, you and Isabel, Timothy and Liz and Gilbert, etc...
- V: Well, as an Education major, I believe there are ways to solve this problem. You can, the teacher, can assign students to, because you're already not so familiar with other students, if you don't break them up, they would've built up a habit of staying with the same group of people. Also, about his approach, can I express something?
- R: Yeah, sure, of course.
- V: Um, it's too obvious, he did it too obviously, calling on more or less the same people to read out passages/notes. I, myself as a teacher, I know that this happens a lot, coz the teacher would want to go on with the class smoothly, no mistakes allowed, and wouldn't want anything to disrupt the run-down of the class, and those certain students (usually the same ones) could give the teachers those. That's why they tend to call on the same students. This is very discouraging, and we noticed that easily, coz we're teachers ourselves, and we tend to make the same mistake. When we were doing teaching practices in real schools, our observing teacher told us that we tend to give attention to certain students, while we didn't considerate other students' feelings. It would make other students feel discouraged.
- R: I see. Okay, um, within such a short time of 3 months, do you feel there's any improvement in your English language skills? Listening? Oral?
- V: Hmm... I guess listening... not oral...
- R: Coz of not enough chances to speak up?
- V: Right, not enough chances. During the lesson, I mean, how much opportunity you get to have for practicing oral skills depends how the teacher, whether he's giving you any opportunity to do so. Yes, he did provide us with the chance to discuss with our classmates in groups, but in the end, he'd still call on more or less the same students to summarize.
- R: Really? That bad...?
- V: Okay, very simply put, given if, if there're several groups, one with Cora in it, another with Liz in it, and another with Nicole. Did you notice that he'd call on Cora, Liz, and Nicole to answer the questions?
- R: But then there're only like 2-3 people in each group...
- V: Yeah, and they're always the representatives! (laughs) I think he had a "target" already. He wouldn't think that, "okay, since you answered last time, this time it's someone else's turn." He wouldn't do that.
- R: Hmmm... it seems that I didn't really notice this phenomenon...
- V: Maybe because we're more sensitive towards these kinda stuff, coz this is our major...
- R: But I think you may also do the same thing... coz I realize I do the same thing too, when holding the tutorial sessions.

- V: Yes, so maybe it's not just Richard's problem, it's majority of the teachers' problem. But it should be avoided. It's avoidable.
- R: Okay, let's proceed to the next question, that is, has this course changed your views on film? Like, did it motivate you to watch more films? In terms of quantity and diversity. Also, what do you think of the choice of film?
- V: You mean those assigned to us outside class?
- R: Right, those 6 films... by the way, what kinds of film do you like?
- V: I watch everything... horror, thriller, sci-fi, romance, I watch them all... coz I don't have much time to watch films myself, I'm always influenced by my friends, and they're always pretending to be "high-class," not watching local HK films, but foreign stuff. Therefore I normally watch foreign films.
- R: So, do you like Instructor A's choice? Isabel thought that he could've asked the students' comments first... in the first lessons I mean...
- V: Um yeah, that would be a good idea too...
- R: But because he's the instructor of this course, I think he had the right to choose what kinds of film he wants the students to be exposed to... after all, he's been teaching the same course for 8 years!
- V: Did he always use the same films throughout these 8 years?
- R: Of course not. Just like what I've told Isabel, he used to include some more alternative films, such as *Clockwork Orange*, I bet it'd be classified as a category III movie, if it's ever allowed to be released officially in HK. It's very psychologically violent, even I don't have the guts to watch it... yet... ! But, Isabel said she'd appreciate these films instead.
- V: (laughs) Oh... me too!
- R: Huh?
- V: Coz after all, these are films which we wouldn't normally have access to, we wouldn't go see them ourselves—
- R: It won't work! Coz the students would be appalled, and that would create discouragement!
- V: Eh, negative response is also one kind of student feedback. You can teach stuff depending on the students' susceptibility. Yes, you do need to consider students' feelings and their response, but you can't let them change your original teaching plan, what you want them to learn, just based on their response.
- R: That's why he always included *Trainspotting* in the course. So, did this course have any effect on you, on your film choice in the future?
- V: I think so. I think my attitude is kinda different in a sense that I used to think that films that are good usually don't do well in box offices, but looking at Instructor A's choice, I realize the films were quite non-mainstream—
- R: *Pulp Fiction* and *American Beauty* were BIG hits!
- V: Hmm... but for HK people, they're still not famous.
- R: You'd know these films if you're an American.
- V: That's the point. Given HK's people's tendency, they wouldn't go for alternative films...
- R: And they'd only shown in Arts Center and Broadway Cinematique...
- V: Yeah, those art films, people would think they're too boring to watch. I tend to think that way too, but now I know I can learn and experience a lot of things in these films.
- R: I see. I talked with Isabel about your presentation, you guys did a very good job, Instructor A was very happy. Hmm... but it seems that Timothy wasn't doing his part properly eh? According to Isabel. He was the only one who saw this film in your group though.
- V: Yeah, he just *saw* the film, that's all he did! (laughs)
- R: Well your presentation turned out very good anyways.
- V: We were so relieved after hearing Instructor A said we were "well done" after the lesson! Our feelings were so different from Timothy! He'd never get to understand this feeling... I guess Isabel has told you already (?), Timothy didn't put in any effort! I must admit to you that we have NOT met, even once, to discuss about our presentation. Me and Isabel did all the work!
- R: Right, he just did "cut and paste" eh?
- V: Exactly! I think you get the feeling too, I mean, during our meeting with you—
- R: He did come...
- V: He did come! Why? Because I called him beforehand and reminded him to! He didn't really know what our presentation was, what we're doing in the presentation, that's why he didn't talk much. I mean, even for the part he had to present, the music, in the end he didn't even know what music were used, he couldn't come up with the soundtrack listings...

- R: Who would've guessed? I didn't know that's what he did. Well, I was gonna have you comment on the positive and negative points of the course, but it seems that you're talked about them more or less already, were anything you would like to add?
- V: Hmm... I was wondering whether a tutorial could be offered, to explain terms, and concepts etc.
- R: I don't think ELT courses include tutorials though...
- V: I think that would really help, acting as a support for us.
- R: Oh well. Anyways, thanks for coming, thank you.
- V: You're welcome.

Interview with Yukie (1)

Date: September 27, 2001

R: Researcher Y: Yukie

- R: Hi, Yukie. Can you please tell me how you got your accent and also trace back your English language education history a little bit?
- Y: Sure. During the New Year holidays when I was in year 1 (university), I went on a 2-week exchange program held by Yale University. When I was in high school, my English accent was pretty much British accent, as my school teachers and also the examinations focused on mainly British accents. Although my stay at Yale was only for 2 weeks, I had intensive interactions with the Americans there. And of course their accents are all North American, and so after the tour, I realize the difference. After coming back to HK, I lived with an exchange student from Canada for one year when I was in year 2. Since we lived together, we always talked and gradually I started using the American accent. At the same time, I was taking a course called "Improving your pronunciation" held by the ELTU. Since the class had only 6 students, each student was able to receive full attention from the teacher, and she helped us correct our pronunciation problems. We also learnt about stress and intonation, and I applied what she said in class to my daily conversations with my Canadian roommate. I realized it's very useful. Now I can speak with continuity, like phrase by phrase, and not word by word individually. Although she's from the UK, I guess the stresses and intonation of foreigners are pretty much the same, so I guess it didn't really matter whether she was from the UK or USA.
- R: What do you think of your high school environment? Did it provide an authentic and natural environment for you to learn English?
- Y: Yeah, it was quite okay. Coz from primary to high school, my teachers were pretty good, and we had lots of chances to practice using English, for example, during Assembly (each morning and afternoon), all the announcements and notices were in English, which means that everything was pretty much in English, both heard and seen.
- R: Did you talk with French girls?
- Y: Not really, coz actually I was never in the same class as they. I think the most crucial thing was that the whole environment was able to provide space for practicing English, such as extra-curricular activities, drama, choral speaking, etc.
- R: Since your listening and oral skills are already pretty good, what is your main aim of taking this course?
- Y: Well, because I think movies not only help us improve our listening skills, but they're also a doorway to other cultures in the world. Sometimes, your English ability doesn't necessarily correlate with your familiarity and understanding of that country's culture. Through watching movies, as the locations are set in foreign places, and that the movie is shot according to the director's point of view, you get to see the life, values, and behaviors of people from other countries, which is very good. I really believe movies can do this. I think that a good movie can "strike a chord" in people from different countries. The movies can also be the conversation topics for our communication between different countries.
- R: I see. Are there any movies, among those you've seen so far, presented you with some "shocking" inspiration of cultural differences?
- Y: Very "shocking"? Hmm. *Trainspotting*. I just finished watching this film at the ILC this morning, and I never thought that *Trainspotting* would look like this! I thought that the movies in ELT courses should be more accessible, not necessarily middle-of-the-road type, but at least not presenting so many difficult issues as this movie does. Coz throughout this movie, there're lots and lots of swear words and slang, and I think it's too hard for people who do not have so much

contact with foreign culture to understand. Well, I guess *Trainspotting* is kinda shocking for me already, as I don't usually watch movies of this kind.

R: Well, that's a good thing, it can "widen your horizons"!

Y: Well yeah, I think so too...

R: Coz Richard will have some more "even more shocking" movies in the schedule...

Y: Actually I was very shocked the first time I watched it, but gradually, during the second time, and also reading the chapter titles as well (on DVD), I ended up from totally clueless to eventually understanding more about what the movie's talking about. And this makes the movie more attractive, as you need to give it some time and thought, which makes your impression deeper as well.

R: That's improving your critical thinking skills then...

Y: Well, to sum up, my most important aim is to get to learn other cultures and also improve my listening skills. Coz when I came across talking with native speakers, when they talk to me, they would talk very slowly, and explain things to me what they mean, but once they're talking with their native fellows, they switch back to their local language and natural speed of talking, and then I just can't get what they're saying 100%.

R: What is, in your opinion, the best and most effective way to learn English?

Y: Well, I think that writing should be treated separately. Coz I think listening and oral skills are very much related. The more you listen, the more you become aware of the sounds (phonetics) of the words, which in turns help your pronunciation of the words orally. That's why I think listening and oral skills are closely related. They should be learnt side by side, not separately. It wouldn't be effective if you learn them separately.

R: What kind of environment, do you think, would be able to afford such practice? (listening & oral skills together)

Y: Well of course the most ideal way is to go to that foreign country! Coz when you're there, everywhere you go, you're surrounded by English, you hear them, and you're also forced to talk English in order to communicate with the people. However, if traveling abroad is not possible, the best way would be to watch foreign movies and get to know more foreign friends, to both increase your chances of exposure to English as well as broadening your horizons.

R: Very good. Okay, say, for you, which language area do you think that watching movies have helped you improve the most?

Y: Hmm. I got to learn a lot of slang which can't be done by simply looking at textbooks. Coz the movie itself provided the location, occasion, manner, reason, and the way which the slang is being used, when, why, and how. Whereas in the textbook, even they really do have the slang/idiom, you still wouldn't know how to use them. In the movie, the language is accompanied by actions, which makes the language easier to grasp. I think that providing visual and audio stimulation is very crucial and beneficial in facilitating language learning, and movies can provide that, readily.

R: Are there any movies that had such a deep impression upon you or that you loved so much that motivated you to watch it over and over again?

Y: Well, I don't normally re-watch movies, unless their plot or message or filming technique is special enough which could like inspire me or shed a new light on the way I view life, then I would re-watch that movie. But not for improving language skills...

R: Well then, is there any really inspiring movies in your mind?

Y: I guess talking about inspiring, then *Mr. Holland's Opus*. Maybe because of my interest—music, so I feel very much related.

R: I see. Do you have any comments about this course, the lesson approach, the students and the teacher?

Y: Hm. I think the lesson approach is pretty good, this course has lots of opportunities for us to practice English, as we have to share our thoughts and feelings towards the movie. I think it really helps us to learn to organize our ideas before expressing it.

R: What do you of the "free" style of this course?

Y: I think the style is appropriate. I don't think it's out of control. I think it's very important for the teacher to motivate us (the students) to take an active role. For if we are to improve our English skills, it's necessary to give us chances to practice, the more you speak, the more fluent you become in speaking English.

R: Do you have any more comments or opinions to add?

Y: Hm. I guess that's it...

R: Well thank you very much.

Interview with Yukie (2)

Date: December 4, 2001

- R: Hi, Yukie, welcome to the interview. Were there anything that you expected to learn in this course but weren't fulfilled?
- Y: Hmm... Not really, I can't think of any. I remember I couldn't think of any to write in the questionnaire too...
- R: Oh yeah, right. You wrote nothing here, see... (laughs)
- Y: (laughs) Yeah.
- R: Well, what about the choice of film? Did you expect to see these kinds of films? I mean, not straightforward, mainstream Hollywood films...
- Y: Um, actually before taking this course, I haven't really thought about what kinds of film would be included. But um, it's quite um, well I guess the only thing I can say is that I didn't expect to see the two Italian films. After all, this is an ELT course, so I guess all films should be in English, and not other foreign languages.
- R: I see. So other than that, were there any problems that you encountered when watching the other films?
- Y: Hmm... I think to me, the selection of film was quite okay... except putting those two Italian films there seemed kinda weird. I think the films that were assigned to be viewed outside of class was okay, but some of those which Instructor A used to play during the class were kinda boring. Like "*The Killing*," I mean, I don't really understand that film... the dialogue is already scarce, and the pace is slow... I think it's quite boring.
- R: Well the aim of showing that film is to demonstrate the cross-cutting technique.
- Y: Uh-huh, but cross-cutting is already not a technique that can be easily understood... and *then* he's using this difficult film... that made it even harder to understand...
- R: Yeah, actually I talked to him about it, and he said next time (term) he'd use other films to demonstrate cross-cutting instead, such as *Godfather*.
- Y: Also, why did he have to use those black and white old films?
- R: That's because Hitchcock is famous...
- Y: You mean all the black and white films were Hitchcock's?
- R: No, um... let me see... there's *Psycho*, um, in the beginning you had *The 39 Steps*... um, what else? I think there're some more... Anyway, in this short period of time (3 months), are you aware of any improvements in your language skills?
- Y: Um... I guess my listening and speaking skills improved, but only a little. Just a little. And for writing, none at all...
- R: Yeah, coz there's almost no written assignments.
- Y: Actually, I find this class quite active. The students are interactive, and we have lots of discussions.
- R: That's a somewhat different view from other students...
- Y: Oh why?
- R: Um, like, do you feel that the students were just sticking to their own group of friends all the time?
- Y: Yes, I realized that too. I think we should sit with different people every time. You know, during discussions, it's like, discussing with Cora, (sighs) even she hasn't said her comments yet, I already *knew* what she's gonna say... I just knew already! (laughs)
- R: Right... you guys knew each other since kindergarten, right? Or primary school?
- Y: (laughs) Not that long. We just started being friends in F.6! She just came to SPCS from F. 1 onwards...
- R: Yeah... that makes it less interesting... I mean in discussions.
- Y: Yeap. I think talking with different people is better, like I talked with Hirosaki, or Nicole, and I got different people's point-of-views. And also, female students' view might be different from male students' view.
- R: Okay, after this course, are you aware of any difference in film watching habit of yours? Say, in terms of quantity and diversity.
- Y: Um, I guess the biggest difference is that before, when I come across a film which looks uninteresting or boring, I wouldn't go for it. But now, I think I'd try to read the summary or plot of the film before passing by it. Like before, I tend to watch more um... mainstream, the most famous or hottest films. But now after this course, coz the films have more depth, now sometimes I realize Hollywood films really don't have much depth in them... they're actually quite simple and boring. Like *You've got mail*, it's very simple, didn't take a lot of effort to make. Well, I watched *Sleepless in Seattle* before, it's quite okay, I did like it, but for *You've got mail*, it's just too simple, no meaning inside... I was like, "very boring!"

- R: Then why did you choose them for presentation?
- Y: That's because I was late that day, and they'd already chosen the films, *You've got mail*, so I said, okay...
- R: But how did you come to realize that Hollywood films don't contain much depth?
- Y: If you haven't seen the films, you won't know how it's like. I wouldn't go do research before watching a film, I'd just go for films that I think might be interesting. But then after viewing films like *Trainspotting*, I feel it's true that some other Hollywood films are really shallow. But you have to watch it first to know. It's like now I also, I mean, the enjoyment is different. Before, I just laugh and enjoy a film... while now I can enjoy watching how the film is shot, like what camera angles they're using, etc.
- R: Wow, that's good! These are the points I'm looking for in my research! (laughs)
- Y: Oh really? (laughs)
- R: Yes! I'm trying to get you guys to say these stuff all along! (laughs)
- Y: (laughs)
- R: Okay, let's do some evaluation of the course. What do you think are the positive and negative points for this course?
- Y: Positive and negative points? Um... I guess the good thing is that there're lots of interaction going on, discussions, but I think Instructor A *can* give more comments... and um, I quite like the idea of letting students present... I mean, Instructor A is so nice! Coz usually in other classes, the professors would add their ideas or opinions into the presentation, when preparing with the students. But Instructor A just let us hold the presentations ourselves, there's no time limit, we had more space for creativity.
- R: How about the lesson structure? Do you think it's too loose?
- Y: Um, no. I think it's quite okay, and the workload is not too heavy either.
- R: Okay, what about negative points?
- Y: Hm... I guess it's about group discussion again. It'd be better to "dismantle" the different groups of friends, and maybe just randomly assign them with different people.
- R: Well, but usually people like to sit with friends, that's human nature.
- Y: Yeah, and for Chinese it's even harder. I mean asking them to split and join other people. I guess it must be done by force... like the teacher assigns them.
- R: A lot of students commented that they prefer to have three continuous periods of lessons instead of cutting it into two parts... what do you think?
- Y: I don't agree. Personally, I think it's a torture to go through three consecutive periods! It's gonna be too boring. I think the structure now is okay. Two periods for student presentation, and then one period for conceptual stuff. Like, Richard can talk about the film concepts.
- R: You really have a totally different view from others!
- Y: (laughs) Really?
- R: I feel that you're quite positive, I always saw you laugh in the lesson. It seems that you really quite enjoyed the class.
- Y: (laughs) Yeah! I think the class is very fun! I really do think so.
- R: (laughs) I know, you were so interested in playing with the rubber(?)... And you really did seem to be enjoying it a lot!
- Y: (laughs) Well actually I like playing rubber, so that's my reaction no matter under what circumstances!
- R: (laughs) Alright. Can you suggest some improvements for this course? Like adding in stuff or changing some format/structure...
- Y: It's actually quite okay already...
- R: You're really positive.
- Y: Oh, maybe um, maybe he can invite some exchange students to talk about foreign culture. Like during the presentation of *American Beauty*, he can have an American exchange student come into our class and talk about the culture he's living in. Coz Instructor A is not an American, right?
- R: He's from England.
- Y: Right. So his point of view may be different. It'd good to invite some exchange students, maybe as guest speakers... to talk about their opinions and, I guess from them saying it out, it's another inspiration. Coz we can get more different perspectives. But I know there's the time constraint. Maybe he can just arrange once or twice (the guest speaker thing), or maybe even just have some exchange students join in our small group discussion. I think we can learn more by that. You know, I tend to think that *if* Hirosaki is an American, he would have a lot to talk about on *Trainspotting*!
- R: *Trainspotting* actually opened up the American film market... for Scotland, as it's a Scottish film.

Y: Yeah.

R: Any other comments?

Y: That's it.

R: Thank you very much.

Interview with Gilbert (1)

Date: October 4, 2001

R: Researcher G: Gilbert

R: Hi, Gilbert. Welcome to the interview. First, can you tell me why you think you need improvement in leading presentations as well as familiarity with foreign cultural issues, as you've stated in the questionnaire?

G: Hmm... I think I'm not good at expressing in English, it's like, I always stammer, and so if I were to lead a presentation, or to speak in front of a group of people, I'd feel nervous, and I also can't find the appropriate words/vocabulary to convey my meaning. Because the use of English is not frequent, I mean, not as frequent as Chinese, and so I'm not used to using English, which caused me to become afraid and nervous. As for foreign issues, I mainly get to know what's happening in other parts of the world through reading newspapers and watching TV news. However, I mostly read Chinese newspapers.

R: Seems like you rate yourself better in listening.

G: Yes, as long as the English sentences are not spoken in a too-fast pace, I can get them pretty well. Actually, for both Chinese and English, my listening skills are better, therefore I have more confidence in listening skills than oral skills.

R: Which accents are you most accustomed to?

G: Well, British accents are harder for me to get. Although HK was a British colony, and that we learnt British English at school, in reality, we have more contacts with American English, such as through films. Therefore, it feels more comfortable to listen to American accents now. For Australian accent, I don't really know how it is like.

R: According to your own experience, what and how has film watching helped you to improve? In terms of language skills, of course.

G: For short term, definitely the listening, oral, as well as vocabulary skills would become better, but because the chances of practicing English are so rare that, in the long term, the skills acquired would decline instead. Also, I used to jot down difficult vocabulary, special terms or phrases that I came across in film on paper. However, the papers were lost very soon... in fact, this has happened many times. Unless you keep up with watching one or two films per week, short-term results can't sustain. But now due to the heavy workload in school, sometimes I don't even get to see even one film in a few months, which resulted in my declining language skills. Actually, I think my English language skills are on a great decline compared with before. I think it's best that we can have Chinese or English subtitles accompanying the films we watch. This makes it easier to follow and also I can understand the slang, idioms, and colloquial expressions. It's hard to even notice these stuff just by listening.

R: I see. Now, can you please tell me something about the language learning environment in your high school? Was it an EMI or CMI?

G: It's an EMI.

R: Was the teachers' English authentic, and were there a lot of opportunities for you to practice speaking?

G: Well, there were definitely more opportunities to use English during high school than university now (laughs). Although in other subjects, the high school teachers would explain in Cantonese when coming across difficult ideas or concepts. For the authenticity problem, as I didn't really know then what constitutes "authenticity" and what not, I can only say, I think the teachers were okay. Especially the one I had in my junior grades, I think my English improved the most, especially in vocabulary building. But then once I got to F.6, the teachers/lessons were pretty much exam-oriented, and so we had to drill for the exams' sake. And after I got into CU, maybe because my major isn't English, and that I'm a pretty passive person, I wouldn't make active attempts to learn English, therefore my English has been declining...

R: What language(s) are used in your present university courses?

G: Well, Cantonese, English, and Mandarin. However, some professors from mainland China used very poor English, which would "lead me astray." Actually, I can hear English okay, it's just that, I

don't know why, once it comes to speaking, I can't really do it well. Whether giving oral report, presentation, or just natural, spontaneous conversation, my mouth stammers.

R: It seems like your biggest problem is in oral skills, eh?

G: Yeah, in oral skills, as well as the lack of vocab. in my mind...

R: Let me ask you, you mentioned that your English improved the most during junior high, what was your teacher's approach? Why has it been so effective?

G: Well, I think the word is "frequency." It was like, we've fallen into a totally English world, the teacher gave us lots and lots of dictations, forced us to read books outside school, she really had a way to force us to expose ourselves to a wide range of English media, like listening to BBC, revising the textbooks, and doing lots of grammar exercises. And so, my English improved a lot during those years. However, once you get to F.4 or up, you tend to study for exams' sake, and those grammar skills were lost due to lack of practice. That's why I still keep my notes during F.2 or so, so that I can refer back to them occasionally.

R: Okay. Outside the classroom, did the extra-curricular activities in your school promoted English? Or provided chances of speaking English?

G: Well, we had some English choral speaking contests, but I didn't participate though (laughs). That's because we boys were more interested in sports (such as playing basketball) than language activities.

R: What, in your opinion, is the best way to learn English?

G: Hmm... I think it would be best to really live in foreign countries, such as the UK, or USA, it doesn't need to be long, even just by joining a one-month language tour to a foreign country would be great already. Coz within that one month, except with your group mates, you have to speak English to the foreigners. That's a very big chance for practicing already. Besides, you can also get to learn the slang, idioms, colloquial expressions, which are my favorite areas. I think my English will improve tremendously if I were given the chance to join such kind of tours.

R: Okay, I see. What do you think of this course, the teacher, the students, and the lesson approach?

G: Well, I quite like the lesson approach, it's more interactive. However, for me, there is still a lack of chance, as I always wanted to say something, but just couldn't think of the right thing or appropriate word to say. But film did really provide some good topics for discussion.

R: What do you think of Instructor A's approach?

G: Hmm, I think since this course is just an ELT course, and not one on film studies, the aim is to learn English through film. That's why I think his hands-off approach is more appropriate and better than just listening to him lecturing. From primary to now, we've been too restricted by teacher-centered lecturing approach, I think it's good to have a new change, and I think R's approach is quite suitable for this course.

R: Something about personal interests, what genres of films do you like?

G: I like films with "spectacles." I tend to stick to films casting the same actors/actresses, such as Tom Hanks, Juliet Roberts. War films for Tom Hanks, sweet love comedies for Juliet Roberts. The common thing is that both types of film provide natural, authentic local slang.

R: Seems like your choice of film is very "middle-of-the-road." Have you seen *Trainspotting* or *Pulp Fiction* yet? They're in the syllabus...

G: No, not yet.

R: Then beware... I think they would be pretty "shocking" to you... (laughs)

G: Well, I mean, I don't deliberately stay away from "alternative" films, I guess I'd treat them as, on the one hand, homework for this course, and on the other hand, an "eye-opener" experience. They might be difficult, well then, watch them a few more times, and learn to understand gradually.

R: Any other comments?

G: I guess that's basically it. But I also want to say, it's better if a person is more active in learning English. Since I'm a more passive person, learning English to me is somewhat hard. I also believe that it's good to expose yourself to more English stuff, such as the people, the place... then your use of English would improve. What we learnt in primary and high school were all very rote grammar drills, they failed to provide with us the skills needed to really communicate in that language in daily life and in the real world.

R: Thank you for your comments.

Interview with Gilbert (2)

Date: November 27, 2001

- R: Hi, Gilbert, welcome to the interview. So, finally the term has ended. I'd like to ask you, were there anything that you expected to learn when you first joined the course, but weren't fulfilled in the course?
- G: Hmm... well, I wouldn't say that I haven't learned anything, it's just a matter of how much you've got out of the course. Actually, I'm not satisfied with my own performance in the course. It seems that I haven't been active enough (in participation), which might contribute to having acquired less... or that I haven't made good use of the course. For example, my oral skills are still not fluent, I think it's because of my own laziness, though. Instead, what're improved are my listening skills and understanding of foreign culture.
- R: You seem to mention often that you're not active enough. Why is that? And why didn't you push yourself to be more active?
- G: Err... I think it's because my personality is quite passive. Actually during lesson, I'd want to say something or answer questions, but then I didn't... for one thing it's because I didn't want to speak out, and another because my poor oral skills would make me look bad. Actually I know that if I can gradually speak out more and more, and try to "dig up" more suitable vocabulary to be included in my speech, I can help myself in improving. The thing is, I must think of some ways to force myself to overcome my passive personality.
- R: Well, actually, I think you can do it just by spitting out whatever that first comes to your mind... Frankly, I think people wouldn't mind how you speak, they just want to know the content, what you think. Okay, as you've said, your listening skills seem to have improved the most, how about the opposite, which skills/areas that you think have improved the least, or, have remained the same?
- G: I guess writing, as this course didn't focus on training writing. However, it doesn't mean that my writing skills are the worst, it's just that maybe the improvement in this area is the least significant. After all, the main focus of the course is not on writing.
- R: Hm. Okay, let me ask you, what do you think is the most valuable insight / skills acquired in this course? Like having a "light bulb moment," or what is the biggest inspiration, revelation, something like that...?
- G: Hmm... not really...
- R: Huh? Oh...
- G: Well, just as I've said, my understanding towards foreign culture is better. First of all, all films watched in this course are foreign films, and they are not ordinary... I mean like action films which I like, but they've become so formulaic... But from films such as *American Beauty* which talks about the problems in the American society, I get to know more about American culture and way of life. However, for other films, I don't think I've got "a lot" from them...
- R: Both *American Beauty* and *Pulp Fiction* are relatively more heavy and dark, do you think you have problems getting used to them? For you're used to watching formulaic action films.
- G: No, I don't feel that I can't take them. Coz I've watched *American Beauty* before, actually, and uh, *Pulp Fiction*, maybe I've watched it, maybe not, I forgot... but I didn't have any problems with them. You know, I like action films, but that doesn't necessarily mean I don't like other genres of films. For films (such as the above) which contain deeper meanings inside, I like to watch them too. For I like to figure out what's the hidden message in the film, the experience of exploring the underlying meaning of the film can always gives me great pleasure.
- R: That's good then. Oh, I suddenly remember this, that you did your group presentation with Liz and Timonty on feminist films. I was just wondering, whether you had any objection to choosing those kinds of feminist films? For you and Timothy are guys... Was that more of Liz's preference?
- G: Hmm... although the protagonists in the films (in our presentation) are females, but putting aside the mother-and-daughter-relationship topic, you can still explore issues concerning the culture clash between Chinese immigrants and their American born kids, or something like that. Although these films focus on female relationships, they do also touch on how immigrants live their lives in a foreign land.
- R: If you weren't doing this topic, what would be your second choice? What kinds of films would you choose? Action films?
- G: That's possible. Maybe comparing the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western action films, or pick an actor and talk about his filmography... well, luckily we didn't choose Tom Hanks! (laughs)
- R: (laughs) So, what do you think about Instructor A? He said, openly, that he doesn't like Tom Hanks, and he didn't find any films by Tom Hanks which he likes. What do you think? Some students think he's too biased... But from his point of view, he thinks that romantic comedies are too shallow, that's why he doesn't encourage students to do presentations on them.

- G: Hmm... I don't know why Instructor A doesn't like Tom Hanks, I think this is just personal preference, no need to argue so much... Well, I mean, there must be some commercial, more middle-of-the-road type actors/actresses in this world, or some that focus on the same genre... I think Tom Hanks doesn't just do commercial films, he also does great films such as *Cast Away* and *Forrest Gump*.
- R: You mentioned in your questionnaire that you'd pay more attention to the music and effects in the film, what else would you also look at?
- G: I guess I would try to pay attention to everything ranging from on screen to "behind the scene," to get as much as I can get. I like films a lot, and I'm also participating in drama activities, that's why I think watching films is also useful, for I can learn some acting techniques.
- R: Would the course / choice of film in the course motivate you to watch more films? In terms of quantity and diversity.
- G: Yes. Actually I already watch a lot of other non-Hollywood films such as European or Chinese low-budget films, I don't restrict myself to any kinds of film, except action films, which just happens to be my favorite. Instructor A did a good job in introducing us to different kinds of film, for example I was rarely exposed to films such as *Trainspotting*, as I just watched those like *Life is Beautiful*. So now I have more exposure to other "alternative" films; I don't object to them.
- R: If now you are to evaluate the course, what are the positive and negative points of the course?
- G: Well, although Richard in the beginning said the workload of this course was heavy, it actually wasn't. In fact, the course was quite relaxing, the workload wasn't heavy at all. Watching one film per week was not too much, I think you'd watch one or two films per week at your leisure for entertainment too, right? Also we could just watch the films inside campus, no need to go elsewhere. There're little writing assignments, so the course was really quite relaxing. We only had to watch excerpts of films and discuss in class, it seemed that it's getting TOO relaxing...
- R: Do you think this "relaxing" approach is good/bad in motivating you to learn English?
- G: I think it's quite good. Although there wasn't much writing assignments, at least the limited assignments (scene analysis and final paper) still forced you to train your writing. I think the most important thing is to fight for opportunity to speak in class...
- R: (laughs) Seems that you're always concerned with your "own" performance...
- G: Yeah...
- R: Are there any negative points to the course? Besides insufficient writing practice and "over-relaxing" lesson approach...
- G: Hmm, not really. But I think it'd be better if he can include more recent and also diverse films.
- R: For this Fall term, you guys had 6 films, but for the summer term, they had 8 films, as they're fewer students in the class, thus fewer presentations, thus more time for more films... Anyways, what do you think of the students?
- G: The students... I think the lesson atmosphere was quite cordial, however it seemed they were kinda slow in mixing with each other, for a friend of mine who had also taken this course said that the students in his class got very well with each other very soon... but I guess that had to do with different personalities.
- R: Actually I and Instructor A also noticed this problem. I think it's because all of you come with your own existing friends already, so it took more time to get out of your circle of friends and talk to other students.
- G: Yes, u're right. But I think if we could get along better with each other sooner, it might contribute to an even better learning environment.
- R: Any more comments?
- G: I guess that's it.
- R: Thank you very much.

Interview with Hirosaki (1)

Date: September 25, 2001

R: researcher H: Hirosaki

R: Hi, Hirosaki. Let me first ask you, is film popular in Japan?

H: Yes, of course it's very popular in Japan.

R: What kind of films do you guys have?

H: Ah it's very similar to Hong Kong, we have Hollywood movies, and some European movies like *Life is Beautiful*, *Cinema Paradiso*... yeah.

- R: So, are the films Japanese-dubbed, or are they in English?
- H: They are in English, but the subtitles are in Japanese. If there is no subtitle, we can't understand nothing... nothing.
- R: So, looking back during your life in Japan, how do you think watching films have helped you in improving your English?
- H: Hmm... When I was a freshman, I watched one film, I tell you, I watched the "Die Hard," do you know *Die Hard*? I like the Bruce Willis very much. So over and over, I watched. I just record it from the TV, there's no subtitle in the TV, so ah... we can change the language, Japanese or English. First I watched in Japanese, so that I understand what they're talking about, and then ah, second time, I watched in English, the third time in English, the fourth time in English...
- R: And then you fell in love with movies?
- H: Yeah. (laughs)
- R: Tell me some more about what kinds of films you like to watch... besides Action films, because action films don't have much dialogue, not like drama, or comedy...
- H: So... the comedy. You know Jim Carrey? He's talking so fast! (laughs) So fast that I cannot catch even one word, you know, he speaks so fast! It's very funny. I have to listen to that, lots and lots of English words, so I watch the comedy like Jim Carrey, or *Austin Powers*. Yeah... but uh, the most favorite kind of movies is very serious movies, *Pelican Brief*... something like that.
- R: So you definitely have a wide range of choices. So, did any of your teachers use films in the language classroom?
- H: Yeah, of course. Because the students like to watch the, some kind of native English movies, so uh, it's the best way to learn very natural English, so almost all the English teachers use the movie.
- R: How often?
- H: How often? Well... depends on the teacher... Actually, in my university...
- R: Is it English subject?
- H: Yeah, of course. Right. Yeah, the many students watched the tapes in English classes, especially movie classes.
- R: So, is film one of the contents of the course, or is it a whole course specifically on film?
- H: Okay, but uh, during the class, we don't speak English. Teacher, of course teacher said to us, don't speak Japanese, speak in English, but uh, um, I think most Japanese students can't speak English so very well, so they speak in Japanese. You know, the cultural hesitate... Culture of hesitate...
- R: Hesitate? Hesitation?
- H: Yeah, like I don't want to make a mistake, like that... it's very Japanese traditional culture. Don't fail in front of the many people...
- R: Oh, okay. I see what you mean. Lose face.
- H: Yeah.
- R: Hm. Well then how can you practice your English then? If nobody's willing to talk?
- H: Hmm. I just talk to teacher many times. Purposely... after class or before the class, so uh...
- R: So, there's no student discussion in your course?
- H: There is discussion, but the language is in Japanese.
- R: And the teacher allows that?
- H: Hm. Teacher don't want to allow. (laughs) But it can't be helped.
- R: Oops. I see. Um, how about in highschool?
- H: So uh... hmmm... I didn't met, didn't meet any kind of foreign student in high school. But some of the high school in Japan, there's exchange program, yeah. A friend of mine went to Britain. Britain, for one year, and learn English.
- R: And so, after going abroad studying, did your friend improve his or her English?
- H: Of course. Very much. One of my friends speaks English very very well.
- R: I see. Is film used in high school?
- H: Film? Never, I think.
- R: So during high school, what kinds of English did you study? Just grammar...
- H: Yeah, from junior high school we started to learn English. And then after high school we have to use English as a way of passing the exam. Yeah.
- R: How about listening skills, oral skills?
- H: Only focus on grammar, but it changes recently. At my time, my high school time, like focus on the grammar all the time... hmmm...
- R: So you said it changes, so right now the focus is...?
- H: Little bit on the oral or listening... I had to listen to radio, English radio show, and then I bought a some kind of cassette.
- R: How about before junior high, no English lessons?

- H: No.
- R: Do you watch any English films then, or is it totally no contact?
- H: No totally. Hm, Japanese like to use English, for example in a song.
- R: Oh, I see what you mean. But they're just like one or two words.
- H: Yeah. (laughs) Of course.
- R: What did the films motivate you to do? Do you remember? Like if that movie's based on a book, would you go and read the book also, or did you have any inspirations triggered by film watching?
- H: Well there's some kind of serious film, like uh... the film which shows racial discrimination, or uh, sexual discrimination, I became like, anti-discrimination.
- R: Really?
- H: Yeah, after I watched *Pelican Brief*, or some kind of movie like that, we just talk about it, in many times. You know, usually we never talk about such serious films. So...
- R: So, one movie totally changed your mindset?
- H: Yeah.
- R: Okay. Like you, Hong Kong students also expressed their difficulty in understanding slang, idioms, or vocabulary in films. So if you come across these kinds of problems, how would you solve them? Would you check the dictionary? Like okay, pause the video, and check the dictionary first...
- H: (laughs) No no no, never. When I was, when I been to Canada, I went to Canada last year, when I came across the difficult word, I just ask my host mother, or host brother, or teacher... just ask, what does it mean? Could you please explain it? Like that.
- R: Is it useful?
- H: Yeah, useful. Never use a dictionary. I think it's wasting time, u know, during the conversation, just saying "stop it," (laughs) I check the dictionary... (laughs) Yeah, it's very, it's a waste of time.
- R: (laughs) I see. Well, that's good, I mean, you can also practice your oral English at the same time.
- H: Hm. I think so too.
- R: So, English, as you said, you started learning English in junior high. Does that mean English is a second language or foreign language in Japan?
- H: I think English is a foreign language in Japan, not second language. Because um, whenever I go shop, shop like supermarket, or big shopping mall, nobody speaks English so very well, I mean the, um, when I was working for uh, a kind of shopping mall, I was in the women's cloth(e) section, but uh, many foreign customers came to the shopping mall, but uh, nobody speaks English except me, so every time the foreign customer came, (laughs) I was called. Hisashi, come over! (laughs) And speak to them in English.
- R: Interesting. So, um, English language education, as you said, from junior high onwards... so uh, is English very important in Japan? Like if you had to go out and get a job, is English, u know, one of the criteria for employment?
- H: To get a job in, I mean, working in a big company, like Toyota, or Matsuda, Honda, something like that, it's very important to use English ability, it's very important. But uh, to tell the truth, we don't have to use English all the time.
- R: How about the people's opinions towards English? Do they think that...
- H: Hm. The elderly people, I mean, older, 40 or 50, hm, many people don't speak English. Even the trip in summer, they use Japanese. When I went to uh, women's street, Mong Kok, I saw a Japanese old lady, she's talking Japanese, yeah. I think they're traveler, tourists. All the time they speak in Japanese.
- R: Okay, back to Hong Kong, what is your impression of HK students' English, at least in our school?
- H: Hmm... Great. Everybody speaks in English, during the class...
- R: Just during the class. (laughs)
- H: (laughs) You know when I talk to the students at the bus stop, or at Parkin' Shop, I ask them something, they speak English very well, they answer in English.
- R: How about like, when you go out to Mong Kok?
- H: Hm. Some kinds of money words...
- R: Did you try using English in Mong Kok? Did the people...
- H: Yeah. They can understand, but uh, they were some easy words, like uh, get a discount, (laughs)...
- R: Oh, that's pretty good already, you know, the Women's street in Mong Kok! (laughs) So comparing to Japanese students, what would you say, their English level?
- H: Hm, actually, I think the students in university, they learn, we learn English very hard, to get into the university, so uh actually the ability is hm, higher, but uh, never use English, I mean uh, in conversation or in the class, so uh, the English ability get down and down...
- R: So you mean your critical or writing skills are better than your oral skills?

H: Yeah, I think so.
R: How about compared to HK students?
H: Hm, I think HK students is more kinda intelligent, they know how important English is, so uh hm.
(laughs) When we talk with friends in Japan, we don't use English at all, or...
R: Well, you use English translations, "katagana."
H: Yeah, we use it.
R: Well that's not exactly English.
H: No, it's completely not English.
R: So I know you're an English Linguistics major, and your English's very good. What is, in your opinion, the most effective way to learn English?
H: Hm, it's very...
R: Watching films?
H: No...
R: No? (laughs)
H: Just go to the country which the people speaks English...
R: Hmm... that's not very easy to do...
H: (laughs) Yeah, I know, but very effective way, the most effective way, is to go to the country, for example USA, or Canada, or England, or Australia.
R: Okay, so in Japan, do teachers train you in analytical or critical thinking?
H: Hm, not really...
R: How about confidence level?
H: Hm. Since I come here, I felt that uh, it's very difficult in making communication in English, you know what, recently, my vocabulary disappears in my mind, you know, every time I talk to the English speaker, I always use uh, that kind of sentence, for example, "how can I say," or "what should I do," "what should I say," "wait a minute," "let me see,"... yeah. Always I translate Japanese into English, so it takes long time...
R: You mean you think in Japanese and then translate it? Do you ever think in English?
H: Sometimes. Sometimes, when I feel like think in English, or talk in English, yeah I use English, but hm, especially when I was in Japan, nobody speaks to me in English, just listen, and understand what he or she says. Very confusing.
R: So, I'm just curious, do you read any newspapers, books, magazines, or watch any TV shows in English? How about popular music, you're wearing the "Korn" T-shirt.
H: (laughs) Yeah, Just it's, uh cheap, so I bought it.
R: And you don't know what "Korn" is?
H: Yeah I know what Korn is, but I don't like them... But uh, actually I practice the English listening to music. Or singing the English song...
R: Is that useful?
H: I think it's very useful.
R: Can you give me any some examples, your favorite songs? What kinds of music do you listen to?
Jazz, rock?
H: I like... punk.
R: Wow, so you like punk music. Which band? Offspring, Greenday, Sex Pistols? (laughs)
H: (laughs) Yeah, I like Sex Pistols. Yeah, just watching the paper...
R: The lyrics?
H: Yeah, first I read it, listen to music, and then read it, sing it.
R: Hm. I have one of their CDs—"Smash."
H: Oh (laughs).
R: But they're so fast! I can't get what they're saying. (laughs)
H: There's so many slangs in the song, so I thought it's a very natural English, like bad words, hm.
R: So, your aim is to learn very natural English, is it?
H: Yeah.
R: Any other comments or opinions to add?
H: Learning English with movie, I think it's very useful.
R: Well, thank you very much.

Interview with Hisashi (2)

Date: October 23, 2001

R: Researcher H: Hirosaki

R: Hi, Hirosaki, thanks for being in the interview again.
H: Hi. You're welcome.
R: First I would like to ask you to give some comments on this course. What do you think of the selection of film for this course?
H: I think these films uh, very nice, yeah, it's very good material to discuss about. So uh, actually I have watched all, almost all of the movies, without *Alien*.
R: So you have watched *Trainspotting* before?
H: Yeah.
R: What do you think? A lot of people object to this film.
H: I like it, but uh, when I was watching that film, I was so interested in the fashion, you know what that is, fashion... type of trousers, yeah.
R: Style?
H: Yeah, type. (?) yeah, something like that. So I like that movie and then I became to like the main character, I don't remember the name...
R: Ewan McGregor?
H: Yeah, yeah. I like him. He's so cool.
R: Well some of the students think that the films are a bit too heavy.
H: Too heavy?
R: Yeah, what do you think? Why do you think they think it's too heavy...?
H: I think it's because of their other classes or other examinations or something like that, coz uh, I have only taking the Chinese classes, so I have much time to watch—
R: Heavy in a sense not in the workload but in the movie itself...
H: The movie itself?
R: It's so dark.
H: So dark? I don't think so.
R: So... you know... so full of negative, dark stuff
H: I think... they only try to get some funny things into it I think, but uh what I want to watch or feel is much more, how can I say, detail. (laughs) Yeap, detail about the movie.
R: Okay.
H: I want to show my opinion, I want somebody to give me some other opinion, yeah.
R: Uh-huh. Okay, well talking about opinions, what do you think of the class? Like, you said you want to share your opinions with the students, do you think it's workable, is it successful?
H: Right now?
R: Yeah.
H: I don't think so. (laughs) I'd say I don't think so. (laughs)
R: (laughs). Why are you saying "I don't think so?"
H: When I was talking about the presentation, with Korey, he was like uh, he wants to show them very funny or very laughing scenes, but I don't want to. Coz I want to share the opinion with other students, you know but, the problem is that my vocabulary but I can manage to share opinions.
R: You mean you had conflicts in choosing the scenes to show?
H: Yeah.
R: So, how did it end up? It ends up showing the funny scenes or... how did you guys decide on which scenes to show?
H: Uh...
R: Is it more of your choice, or his choice (Korey's)?
H: I think it's more of my choice.
R: That's good then.
H: But uh, actually they, they, before that they never watched that movie, so I was in charge about the...
R: In charge?
H: Yeah. What about this scene? What about this scene? Yeap.
R: And they said okay, okay, okay?
H: Yeap.
R: How about the lesson? Other students?
H: Hmm...
R: Do you think you have enough time to speak up, actually? Because, do you think you have enough chances to speak English? Because actually during the summer course, every student said more, they just kept on saying a lot of things. But for this class, it's like nobody talks, I don't know why. Do you have this feeling too?

- H: Uh... I want to say something, I want to make some comments on that scenes which uh, Richard show us, but uh, the problem is vocabulary. Or other students never spoke, speak in the class.
- R: So it affects your mood?
- H: Yeah. (laughs) Just quiet and sit tight. (laughs)
- R: Actually Instructor A told me this is quite different from his previous classes, because in the summer it's more active, everybody had a lot to say, and their English was really bad, but they still had a lot to say. Yeah. Um, let's see... (laughs, look at question sheet)
- H: (laughs)
- R: Um, so this is your first presentation, are you satisfied with it? If you're going to grade yourself, (100 marks), how many marks would you give yourself?
- H: Hmm... 80.
- R: 80. That's quite good. What are the things that you wanted to improve?
- H: Ah... actually I want to make some more comments on that, about him.
- R: Gary Oldman you mean?
- H: Yeah, Gary Oldman. If I have much more time, I could have studied about him more and more. So uh, hmm, it's quite difficult, you know what, our group is the first one, I have completely no idea what the first time. So...
- R: But it seems that your time management is quite good.
- H: Oh really?
- R: Yeah, I mean, the lesson ends at 4 o'clock sharp.
- H: Ah yeah.
- R: Um, how about the students' response? Are you satisfied, or what do you want them-
- H: Almost. But uh, I'm wondering that the role play section, is good or not. Some groups are very good actor/actress.
- R: Well actually do you want the people to act out, they just, you want them to just make up the story or predict what the story will become?
- H: I want them, I want them to make up the story or... yeah, but if they know the story, I want them to just act as you know, yeah. As you like it, yeah.
- R: I see.
- H: Hmm... that's what, I think it's quite difficult.
- R: Yeah, it's quite difficult. But it's pretty fun.
- H: Korey—Korey's idea.
- R: Oh? Good. How much time did this presentation take you? Like, how much time from concept forming to, you know, doing the um, deciding the stuff to hand out, and they typing it to hand out—
- H: Last week...
- R: One week? Three days?
- H: Hm. Last week, oh, Tuesds—oh, just one week.
- R: Just one week. That's quite good.
- H: You think so?
- R: YEAH... (laughs)
- H: (laughs)
- R: Okay, you talked about your lack of vocabulary to comment on films, do you think this lesson provides enough information, like—
- H: I want my teacher to teach me more about the special terms or some expressions.
- R: Do you think Richard is not uh, not teaching enough? Because he doesn't, his main uh, structure of the course is group discussion and presentations and uh, lecture is just like a minor part. Do you think this is, do you think there is also some negative points to this approach? Or do you still think it's a good approach?
- H: I don't think it's the best. I don't think it's the best. Uh, how can I say? They, oh no no no, Richard, just show us the one certain scene, and he needs a comment on it, just speaks some students, that's all. And uh, sometimes I feel so confused, you know, just look, just watch that scene and then uh, you know, comment on it.
- R: Right. So you don't have the basic background knowledge.
- H: Yeah. I didn't what that, I mean uh, what's that movie's name I don't remember, but uh, suddenly we watch it, uh he said watch it, and then I watch it... (laughs) He said, some comments on it, (murmur) I don't think, I want to know more detail about that scene or that movie.
- R: I see what you mean.
- H: So uh, to prepare for it, I want him to say, about uh, you know, next time, next time we will watch that movie, so uh, if you have time, please watch it or something like that. Yeah.

- R: I see. Yeah, that's more professional. But this is only an ELT course. I mean, if, for like a film course, we would have a schedule and we would have to watch that film before we come to class. Anyway. Um, okay, um, I noticed you have lots of body languages, can you talk about this? Like you just talked about it with me? Are you aware of your body language?
- H: Uh, actually I don't aware of it, yeah, I didn't notice when I was speaking English, but uh, when I was in Japan and I talk in English with my friend, suddenly he said uh, why, why your hands are always moving like that? (laughs) Yeah, almost moving. And then I, I think it's very easy to express my what I feel or what I thinking. Can you feel it? (uses it with hand gestures, laughs)
- R: Uh what about in your own language, do you have any body languages? When speaking Japanese—
- H: Japanese? No, I never move.
- R: Never move?
- H: Yeah, just, when I get angry with something like that, and then I just hit the table.
- R: Do you think it help you in communicating?
- H: Of course. Sometimes I have to use by body language.
- R: Okay, how about some personal stuff, so you've come to HK for like 2 months, do you feel that there's any change within you?
- H: Ah...
- R: In terms of language skills, yeah...
- H: Ah... I'm wondering that my English abilities improved or not... I think it's not improved...
- R: Oh?
- H: But uh, my listening ability is improved.
- R: Hm.
- H: You know my friends who's from America... Canada or the US, they speak English very fast, sometimes they omit some words in a sentence, so uh, I can, I can guess it, in a whole sentence...
- R: So you're living with international students, is it?
- H: No no no no no no. Uh, just outside of the dormitory... u know, do, do you know that I smoke?
- R: Ah yeah I know. I can smell your cigarettes.
- H: I cannot smoke in my room (dorm in Chung Chi), outside and there's a bench, and uh, sit there and talk with the some, yeah.
- R: So you just talk with international students?
- H: Yeah. Sometimes there are HK students came in and talk to me.
- R: Oh, do they smoke?
- H: Last night I meant to go out, she suddenly talked to me, "can you borrow your cigarette" or something like that...
- R: HK girl?
- H: Yeah. Oh, it was very, I was surprised, you know, HK students never smoke, that's my seary— theory... (laughs)
- R: (laughs) That's quite true.
- H: Yeah, so I was so, oh okay.
- R: Maybe, maybe she just wanted to strike a conversation with you, since you're so handsome—
- H: No way.
- R: (laughs) Well anyways, do you have a roommate?
- H: Yeah.
- R: Er... American?
- H: No, he's a HK student. A local student. Yeah.
- R: So do you talk to him a lot?
- H: Yeah, especially at night. Yeah, actually in the morning I have classes, I always go back to my room and cook or something... cook or take a rest, and then at night he came back and talk about some cultural matter or... everything.
- R: So did he apply to live with an international student?
- H: Yeah. Before that the, I think it's June or July, he went to—and his girlfriend went to Japan. Yeah. And then he came...
- R: Addicted to Japanese culture?
- H: Yeah, maybe. (laughs)
- R: So, you have, I mean, you do have a lot of oral practice.
- H: With him?
- R: Yeah. So how come you don't think your oral skills have improved?
- H: Uh...
- R: What would you like to improve more? Besides film vocabulary?
- H: Hmm... sometimes—

- R: Like which area, you would like to improve more?
H: The conversation.
- R: Okay, daily conversation?
H: Yeah, daily conversation.
- R: Casual talking?
H: Casual talking—everything! Everything about English. Sometimes uh, native English speaker talk to me very fast, sometimes I cannot understand, what did you say, say it please or change the sentence to the easy, easier, easier sentence. Yeah. So I want to understand without any explanation or something. So hmm. My roommate can speak English and Mandarin, but the ability is quite equal. Not so different. Yeah.
- R: Well, do you have anything you want to talk about? Was it what you expected in HK? Like did you learn what you expected to learn and see what you expected to see, or do you think it's still lacking something? Is it up to your expectation?
H: Hmm... Not completely satisfied.
- R: Hm. Like, did you expect to meet a lot of foreign students and talk with them? What did you expect that did not come true after you came?
H: Uh... that's a quite difficult question. (laughs)
R: (laughs) Not enough extra-curricular activities?
H: Actually I thought is, I thought I was going to be more busy, busier, but in the morning, Chinese classes, then finish it, in the afternoon, Tuesday and Thursday I have ELT class, but Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, free... (laughs)
- R: How come you don't take more classes then?
H: Yeah, I was wondering, but uh, I thought like uh, I wanted to take some time, much more time to study Mandarin. You know, my purpose is to study Mandarin. Yeah, so, just all day—
R: Then you should hang out with Chinese mainlanders then...
H: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, I have to find some of them yeah. You know, but uh, my ability is from the very bottom, you know, just consonant or vowel, instead of studying, so I need more practice, or need much more, much information about grammar or something.
- R: So you did not learn Mandarin before?
H: I did, I did. But just a little bit. Yeah. Oh, I have a complainment.
R: Yeah, you can make it then.
H: About uh, Chinese classes...
R: About Chinese classes? That's not related to my research! (hand prepares to switch off recorder)...
H: (laughs heartily)
R: (laughs) No, I'm just kidding... please go ahead.
H: Okay. I was, I was expect, I expected that the Chinese University of HK is the best place to study Chinese, especially Cantonese or Mandarin. But it's not, I think it's not. You know they speak English, and they explain it in English.
- R: Oh, were you taking the Chinese classes with other international students? So they're all international students, they're not HK people?
H: Yeah, no.
R: Oh I see. And you're learning Mandarin, not Cantonese?
H: Yes, not Cantonese. But I want to learn Cantonese.
R: Cantonese does not sound good.
H: Really? But uh, I want to see the HK movie.
R: Oh, well, that'll be very difficult. (laughs)
H: (laughs) Just feel the atmosphere is okay.
R: Actually they speak Cantonese so fast I couldn't even hear them.
H: Really?
R: Yes, sometimes they just talk very fast. Um, okay, anything more you want to add to the interview? How about the students? Do you think you can get along with the students in this class? Are there any interesting people?
H: Yeah, there is so many interesting people. Coz all students are from every department... like...
R: Actually there's only BBA, Geograp—Geography, and Language Education. There's only 3...
H: Oh really?
R: Yeah, it's actually not that diverse. The girls are all BBAs...
H: Oh really? But it's my kind of practice to speak in English.
R: So who do you think you get along with the most?
H: Korey, Evelyn...
R: Evelyn?

- H: Yeah, she and he work together, in this project, presentation, and that discussion. Sometimes I get a phone call from them, or I make a phone call to them, something, I don't remember, yeah.
- R: Okay, anymore comments?
- H: Nope.
- R: Okay, thank you then.
- H: Thank you.

Interview with Hirosaki (3)

Date: November 30, 2001

- R: Hi, Hirosaki, welcome to the interview again, the third time. Okay, let me first ask you, what did you expect to learn in this course but wasn't really fulfilled? Or somewhat inadequate?
- H: Oh uh... actually, what I... ah... what I expected is to express my feelings very detailed... detailed, my feelings but ah, sometimes I couldn't, you know, say anything, but other students say, you know, what they wanted to say, but I couldn't. So uh, originally the problem is, you know, my lack of vocabulary, so I should have learnt some kind of vocabulary about movies more.
- R: Okay, talking about vocabulary, do you think... feel that Instructor A has provided enough vocabulary? The knowledge... because some students said he hasn't provided enough vocabulary, so they didn't have the right terms to express their meanings.
- H: Oh... ah yeah... I agree with the students. Actually yeah, he never talked about the you know, it's except the movie terms.
- R: Right. So what do you think can be improved? Like what is your suggestion to overcome, to remedy this problem?
- H: Hmm... how can I say? Since I came here, I made some, you know, lots of friends, like from the US, or from the Canada, and then you know, I had an opportunity to talk to them, and my English is getting used to, listen to English, and then express my feelings a little bit.
- R: Hm. So, practice makes perfect?
- H: Ah... I think so.
- R: Okay, which aspect of English, of language skills, that you think have improved the most?
- H: Oh... in this course, I think the listening ability is most improved.
- R: But you did not tick listening as— (laughs)
- H: (laughs) Because sometimes I can't understand you know, the movies, when the movie is very very difficult movie, I can't understand, you know, for example, ah—
- R: *Pulp Fiction*?
- H: Yeah, *Pulp Fiction*. That movie, you know, actors always talking too... talk you know, very very hurry. Very fast, and then dirty words, so I can't understand. I need subtitles.
- R: But you still think that your listening skill has improved, even with such a...
- H: Yeah yeah yeah. Other movies I almost understood, could almost understand.
- R: Like *American Beauty*, have you watched it before?
- H: Oh yeah yeah yeah yeah...
- R: Um, so, let's talk about presentation. Why did you check that as "improved a great deal"?
- H: Presentation? Oh yeah... in Japan, I never had a kind of presentation like that before...
- R: Never? Never?
- H: Just once or twice, and then we have to present in Japanese, even if you know, we have to talk about in English, English problem, but we have to talk in Japanese.
- R: Hm. Ah... I remember your first presentation... Life is... uh, *Cinema Paradiso*, do you remember? It was quite um, actually it went quite...quite...
- H: Quite what?
- R: Um, quite...
- H: (laughs)
- R: (laughs) It didn't went like what Richard has expected, a little bit. Do you feel so?
- H: Ah... actually—
- R: What was the problem encountered? Is it because you didn't talk to him prior to the presentation?
- H: Hmm... before we hold the discussion, we didn't go, go to Richard's room...
- R: Because sometimes I realized there's some dead airs during your presentation.
- H: So uh, we didn't know how to you know, discuss about movie, what is the problem, what should we you know, present.
- R: Why didn't you go to talk to him? He was waiting for you guys.
- H: (laughs) Oh uh... we're just in a hurry, and then we didn't have time.

R: Okay. Your second presentation was a lot better.

H: A little bit...

R: A little bit? (laughs)

H: A little bit I think.

R: Okay. Are you satisfied with your performance over the term?

H: Ah... not one hundred percent. Not.

R: Why?

H: Why... because uh, sometimes you know, with my schoolmate, classmates, I couldn't you know, make a conversation perfectly. They understand what I'm saying, and then I understand what they say... but sometimes I couldn't. So uh, that's gonna be very, that was a big problem.

R: Did it, was it improved during the course?

H: Oh yeah, I think so.

R: Um, if I ask you, what is the most valuable thing you got from this course, like, what is the biggest inspiration? Or maybe revelation?

H: Hm. I think you know, when I watch a movie, like I have you know, one point of view, my point of view only, but you know, some other students, with some other students discuss about the movie, and then I could get some other opinions, other point of views. I think it's very yeah, useful, and then valuable thing to learn, I think.

R: Yes. How about the choice of film, what do you think?

H: Choice of the film.

R: Is it too little? 6 films is not much. In summer they had 8, including like *Dancer in the dark*.

H: Oh...

R: Yeah... because there're so many people in the class this time, more presentations, less films, you know.

H: Oh yeah, I understand. But uh, for some other students, it's not my opinion, but some other students, you know, some other students have uh you know, other classes, and then they got very very busy, so I think it's enough...

R: You think it's enough...?

H: But I take some time to watch other movies.

R: What kinds of film do you think can be added to the course? Like do you think it lacks some kinds of film? Like some students said, they should include like Hollywood films, that's what some students said.

H: Other students want to add some Hollywood movies?

R: Yeah. And then Gilbert said there should be some action movies.

H: (laughs) Action movie! Oh I don't like add some action movie that course. Coz action movie is you know, only one way, you know, there's a hero, and then the first, hero was beaten by the evil, but finally they win, that's all. Some of the movie, you know, very successful, but hm... others yeah, is not successful at all...

R: So, you're satisfied with his choice of film.

H: I think I'm very satisfied.

R: So all of them you... you're okay with all of these films and you don't think it's too boring or—

H: Ah... but the *Killing...the Killing...*

R: Oh... how come everybody is so...

H: Yeah, very very difficult...

R: Object, you know, they object to this film! Everybody!

H: (laughs) I think it's too difficult to understand in that course you know, the very little time, and then teacher wanted to, want us, wanted us to understand the movie but I think, (laughs) I think it's not enough, the time is not enough. Yeah.

R: Okay, since you've already liked movies you know, before, I don't think this course has really helped to widen your horizons, is it?

H: What do you mean?

R: Like, has anything in this course really opened your eyes? Like an "eye-opener"? Like for example, for Liz, she's never seen such a film like *Trainspotting*, and she's like pretty shocked...

H: Uh-huh.

R: And she commented that, oh it's not too good that she's watching with two guys, you know... and... so it's like an eye-opener for her.

H: Ah... actually I think most of the movie was, you know, I had watched before in Japan, subtitles in every movies was in Japanese, I think it's good opportunity to have English subtitles and then I understand in English, thinking in English is, very good.

R: Oh you... you before you watch the subtitles were in Japanese.

- H: Yeah, of course. Coz you know every theatre in Japan has a Japanese subtitle movie. There's no English-subtitled movie in Japan. So, yeah, I think, it was very good opportunity to watch it.
- R: But did this course like, influence your choice of film in the future? Like choice of choosing which films to watch, or is it pretty much the same?
- H: Ah... I don't think so. (laughs)
- R: Okay, can you evaluate this course? What is the positive point about this course, and what is the negative, or something which is insufficient, or which is not done very well.
- H: Positive point is...
- R: Like what is the good thing about this course...
- H: Sometimes this course you know, force us to watch some movies, but you know, after we watched that movie, we don't think, you know, we're forced to watch that movie. But actually we wanted to watch the movie, but there is no time, and then teacher arranges some time to watch the movie, so I think it's a positive point... But negative point, is just like what I said before, you know, the teacher never taught us to like, you know, expression. Express our feelings or vocabulary, except the movie terms. That's ah, I think that's a negative point.
- R: Okay. Um so do you think providing you with some notes or background information of the film or vocabulary list would help?
- H: Ah...
- R: What do you suggest to overcome this course?
- H: I think I should have paid much attention to the vocabulary in the movies, you know, just, you know, when I watch a movie, I have to watch subtitles, and then when I come across unknown words, I didn't brought a dictionary, so uh, I have to guess it, but sometimes I can't, so I have to bring my dictionary or search on the web or something.
- R: I see. Okay, um, lastly, what about the groupings of the students? Actually all of the people I've interviewed, they also feel that you know, the groups were like sticking to their own friends, and there's not much interaction between them. What do you think? I think it's better in the end, it's getting better in the end... at least—
- H: Yeah, I think so too. And—
- R: At least Gilbert's like talking to Nicole or something, and— (laughs)
- H: (laughs) Yeah. I think nobody dislike everybody, you know, uh, nobody dislike other students, so I don't think... it's not so bad. Ah, because um, they didn't know everybody, so they had to introduce themselves, and um—
- R: But they keep sticking to their friends every time.
- H: Ah... actually yeah, you can say so. But I think it cannot be helped. Even in Japan, you know, every student wants to gather with their friends. Yeap.
- R: Any other comments?
- H: Nope.
- R: Okay, thank you.
- H: You're welcome.

Interview with Korey (1)

Date: October 9, 2001

R: Researcher K: Korey

- R: Hi, Student K, welcome to the interview. What is your main aim of taking this course? What would you want to improve the most?
- K: I want to keep up my English standard. Because in HK, the environment does not allow you to speak English too much, and so I'm taking ELT courses hoping that my level of English can sustain longer... or rather, to decrease the speed of the on-going decline of my English.
- R: Well then, why would you think ELT courses can help? What are the differences between ELT courses and your other courses?
- K: For ELT courses, the atmosphere and environment is more lively and fun. Other courses (e.g. major courses) are more boring, comparatively speaking.
- R: In the questionnaire, you indicated that your English skills are all either good/very good, except "familiarity with foreign cultural issues" which you only gave a "okay/average" status... why's so?
- K: I think I'm not familiar with the thought system of foreigners. You know, just by casual conversation you just get to know them superficially, but their attitudes, values, and views towards

- life are not easily detected. In that one year of my exchange trip to Arlington (Texas), I couldn't really understand their culture.
- R: We'll talk about your exchange trip later. Now, what, in your experience, has film watching helped you to improve? In terms of English language skills, I mean.
- K: For example, when you hear foreigners speak in their normal daily lives, sometimes you won't understand what they're saying, coz their conversations contain too much slang. But in the film, you get to know how, when, and why the slang are used, and you get to know their meaning as well. And so your oral English will improve.
- R: What kinds of film are you interested in?
- K: Hollywood films. Films that are more funny, comic.
- R: Hmm... that may cause some trouble coz Instructor A's choice of film is not mainstream Hollywood...
- K: Well, actually I was kinda surprised that he chose European films... but since I rarely have access to these films, it's a good chance for me to learn something new.
- R: Have you seen *Trainspotting* or *Pulp Fiction*?
- K: Not yet.
- R: Well... be ready for some shock then... (laughs)
- K: Hmm...
- R: Okay. Let's talk about your high school environment. Is it an EMI?
- K: Yes, EMI.
- R: Can you sort of describe your language learning environment there?
- K: Well, we had a pretty good teacher, he's sort of those "professor" type...
- R: Professor teaching high school?
- K: Well, he's like 70, ready to retire, and was teaching us F.2, which was his last year before retirement. He spoke very good English, and he didn't use textbooks. Instead he used teaching materials of his friends/colleagues from university. And so, I started to become interested in English. However, from then onwards, the teachers teaching higher grades became worse and worse...
- R: What is the nationality of that teacher?
- K: HK man... but he had lived in some foreign country for a long, long time.
- R: Hm, I see. You said your English declined afterwards, why's so?
- K: That's because the teachers' quality were worse. A lot of the new teachers who just graduated from the Institute of Education weren't that good. Those who've taught for like 10-20 years were okay, but compared with very good teachers (such as that "professor"), there is obviously some gap in between.
- R: What do you think of their accent?
- K: Well, when I came back from the States, I found that their accents are very funny... (laughs)
- R: haha... (laughs)
- K: I realized their English is very crappy... And so even you can learn a lot of other stuff from these teachers, you'd still be lacking something.
- R: Okay. How about extra-curricular activities?
- K: Yes, I was the President of the English Club in F.6. But still, there weren't many chances to speak English. And high school students liked to play, even though you keep asking them to speak in English, they wouldn't really take it seriously.
- R: Let's talk about your exchange trip to Texas. So, you went there for one year right after F.5, right? What inspirations have you got out of the trip?
- K: Wow, a lot. I realized you have to make decisions by yourself and be independent, coz you don't know the place, the people, the language, it was a pretty big cultural shock.
- R: So you lived in an American family then, how was the interaction?
- K: Hm. It was okay at the beginning. On the surface, it was quite normal, a mom, a dad, a daughter, and a son. It was only until later that I got to know that the parents were both divorced, they were originally from another family. And each one of them brought with them a kid. Two divorced parents end up as a married couple.
- R: How about in terms of language skills?
- K: Before, I couldn't really speak what my mind's thinking, but now it's pretty spontaneous and natural. Many HK people think that you should translate Cantonese to English perfectly, but then that's not true. You don't have to mind so much. It just can't be translated 100%. Instead, you can other ways of expressions to get the same meaning across.
- R: What do you think of the lesson approach there? Compared to HK?

- K: Hm, it was actually quite boring. Some students over there were even more “quiet” than HK students...
- R: Really?
- K: Yes.
- R: That’s very surprising!
- K: Yes. When you look into their classroom, you see lots of colorful slogans and posters decorating their classroom cheerfully, but then actually their lessons were quite boring.
- R: Is it because the students’ quality was low?
- K: Um, I don’t think so. That high school is the best in the city already.
- R: Were there a lot of Blacks?
- K: No, not really.
- R: But usually after going to the exchange programs, HK people realize students in USA are much more active than HK students...
- K: You can say so, it’s still true, to some extent. But then maybe because in grade 11 and 12, there was no exam pressure, no in-school exams.
- R: But they need to prepare for university.
- K: Yeah, but they only need to prepare for the SAT test, in-school results weren’t that important. That’s why they didn’t have any pressure.
- R: People got lazy, eh?
- K: Yeap.
- R: Were there any significant improvements in your oral skills after the trip?
- K: Definitely.
- R: What, in your opinion, is the best way to learn English?
- K: Hm. To have contacts with foreigners as much as possible. Maybe some cultural centers can provide such chances by organizing exchange programs. Coz really, I mean, in school there weren’t really many chances to practice speaking English.
- R: I see. How about comments towards this course?
- K: It’s okay.
- R: Not too loose?
- K: Not too loose, ELT courses should probably be like this. However, I found the lesson kinda boring... the film choice is...
- R: Eh? What kinds of film do you want?
- K: Hollywood films (laughs)... well, that’s okay, it’s a new change...
- R: How about the students?
- K: They’re okay, they’re quite active.
- R: Anymore comments?
- K: Well, as this course is more relaxing, I think it’s quite okay. It’s not like in high school, in which you have to write a report for everything! It doesn’t mean that the more reports you write, the more improvement in English you’ll get.
- R: Thank you very much.

Interview with Korey (2)

Date: December 8, 2001

- R: Hi, Korey. Welcome to the interview again. First, let me start by asking you, was this course up to your expectation? Were there anything that you wanted to learn but weren’t covered in this course?
- K: I guess the only “gap” between my expectation and the course is the choice of film. I expected, coz I like them more, to watch American Hollywood films, but then most of the films in this course are European films, which isn’t exactly my interest...
- R: Um, but then *Pulp Fiction* and *American Beauty* are American films...
- K: Yeah, but not too many. However, I think this course has enabled me to at least keep up my English level, which has been what I’m trying to do.
- R: How is your English level being kept? Through the discussion in class?
- K: Yeah, at least there’re two lessons each week during when I can speak English, and also listen to English.
- R: Do you mean that you don’t have access to English other than this course?
- K: Right, because my major courses, BBA courses, they’re all conducted in Cantonese.
- R: I see. What is the most valuable insight you got from this course?

- K: Well, in terms of English language skills, I don't think there's a great improvement, I can only say that the course kept up my English level. But in terms of films, I get to know more. Like I get to know, "Wow, there's so much stuff inside the film which I hadn't noticed before."
- R: I see. Okay, you've watched *Pulp Fiction* and *Trainspotting*. Some other students expressed that they perceived these two films kinda weird, and found them difficult to accept. What do you think? Do you have any problems when watching these films?
- K: Well, I think *Pulp Fiction* and *American Beauty* are okay, since they're American films. For me, European or non-English films are much harder. I just couldn't catch up with the them, coz I could only read the subtitles visually, and could not listen to them, as they're not in English. It's not as good "feel" as watching English films.
- R: How about *Trainspotting*?
- K: Um... err... actually I didn't watch this film...
- R: Oh... (laughs) Okay. Anyways, do you think there's any difference in the way you'd watch a film before and after taking this course?
- K: Um... I would still choose films that I like (Hollywood films), I guess the difference is that now I'd be able to spot deeper meanings in film, because we're trained to do so in class, and the questions we had for discussion weren't shallow at least. I think I had some improvement in this area.
- R: Do you think that the lesson structure is a bit too loose?
- K: Hmm... not really.
- R: Do you think there's enough time for discussion?
- K: Hmm... I think it's adequate. Coz prolonged discussions would just cause boredom. Leaving some space and time for games and activities is good.
- R: I see. What do you think of the student presentations?
- K: They're quite good. I expected this course to focus on the oral/discussion component, I think the presentations were done quite okay.
- R: Some students expressed that the presentations on romantic comedies and cartoons were a bit boring, what do you think?
- K: Boring? I think they're quite okay. At least they included some games. If that's called boring, then our group, which had more discussion questions, would be even more boring! (laughs)
- R: (laughs) But then the student response to your group's presentation was much better than the cartoon group!
- K: Maybe it's the genre. I know some guys just don't like cartoons that much... so... yeah.
- R: Yeah, I guess you're right. Now, can you sort give some evaluation on this course? What're done well and what're not?
- K: The positive side of this course... hmm... well, I always think that English language is most effective when done under a stress-free, relaxing environment, and I think this course has successfully achieved this point. While the negative side is like what I've said earlier, the choice of film's much too biased on European films. Personally, I don't appreciate this too much, but this may not be the same case with other students, other students may think it's a good choice. I guess it depends on different people's perception.
- R: So you think it's not that appropriate to put in European films in an ELT course, right?
- K: I think the ratio should be just the opposite, like majority of the films should be American films, while one or two could be other foreign films.
- R: I see. What suggestions would you give to improve this course?
- K: Improve this course... um... I think maybe because Instructor A tended to like discussion, so we had quite deep, in-depth discussions a lot of the times. I think there could be more games and fun. Coz sometimes the single lessons were kinda boring. You know, during the single period lessons, he'd play some scenes from some films, and then explain to us the techniques used whatever, the way of communication is just the instructor conveying knowledge to the students, more than interaction. One-way communication is relatively more boring.
- R: Wow, you have totally different opinions from other students! They all said that they wanted Instructor A to talk more, to give more comments! While you think that he talked too much! (laughs)
- K: Hmm... coz I expected more interaction with the instructor. I think there should be more general interaction, that is, between the instructor and students, not just within the students' discussion groups themselves. Coz the single lesson... you know, it's the 10th lesson session, it's the last lesson, people were usually very tired already.
- R: What about the groupings? Do you feel that students stick to their own groups of friends all the time?

- K: Well yeah, I did notice this, but I don't think it's too hard to solve. You just have to randomly assign numbers to them and group them into random groups. Maybe there's not much interaction during the start of the term, but now they're gradually getting along quite well, I think. We had more jokes to share, and the atmosphere got better.
- R: Any other comments? Are you satisfied with his assessment scheme?
- K: Um, remember the scene analysis we had? He gave us a sample of a good essay from some other student, and after I read over that one, I realized that my own was a lot worse... no wonder the grade was so different...! (laughs)
- R: (laughs) Thank you very much.
- K: You're welcome.

Interview with Pete (1)

Date: October 9, 2001

R: Researcher P: Pete

- R: Hi, Pete. Firstly, in your questionnaire, you indicated that you would like to improve your pronunciation and use of "modern" English, could you elaborate that?
- P: Yes. Um, it's very important to have correct pronunciation, but then my pronunciation is not that good. It's important that students and parents have confidence in their teachers' English; however in the HK education system nowadays, most of the teachers' English is very poor. Those teaching English are marginally okay, but those not teaching English but other subjects, their English is very bad. I think this is a basic need, as HK is an international city. If you can't even speak English fluently, it's gonna be very difficult to compete with others.
- R: Do you know what's the difference between different accents? British, American... As you're a Language Education major, you have to teach later, you must have a standard in doing everything...
- P: Well, I was brought up listening to British accent, but personally I like American accent better. I believe the teachers nowadays are using British accent, as we're once a British colony. So I guess I will stick to the British accent...
- R: And for "modern" English?
- P: That goes back to my experience of talking to foreign people. They use lots of slang and daily conversation words... which I couldn't quite understand. I can't give any specific examples, but they're just very "slangy." That's why I think I need more improvement on that.
- R: Why do you think your critical thinking skills are not very good, according to the questionnaire?
- P: Um, I'm very strange, I like to create things, but I don't like to investigate a piece of say, writing, and make "critical comments" out of it. It's a kind of laziness, I guess... I don't like reading other people's writing... that's why my reading comprehension skills are the worst among other skills such as oral or listening.
- R: I guess you should be an original creator instead of a professional researcher then...
- P: I think so too. It's very hard for me to try to analyze what the author's point of view is, I always gave wrong answers (based on the experience from reading comprehension exercises in high school). My weakness is that I'm incapable of spotting main/important points in a very long piece of writing.
- R: What has film watching helped you to improve?
- P: Um, a lot. I like to watch films. Learning language is not just about words, sentences or how to construct a meaning, but also how to incorporate them with body gestures, facial expressions, etc, to facilitate meaningful and effective communication. Through watching films, you learn not only to "speak" the language, but also how to "use" the language. Also, vocabulary. English subtitles are perfect. It's very useful. Coz you won't jot down difficult words when you're watching films...
- R: I have a friend who does that...
- P: Oh? Hmm... (laughs)
- R: Let's talk about the language learning environment in your high school. Is it an EMI?
- P: Yes, EMI.
- R: A co-educational school?
- P: No, all boys'.
- R: Was the teachers' English good? Were there lots of chances to practice English?
- P: For the lessons, um... well, for lower forms, teachers would create some fun/interesting ways to teach English. However, I don't know whether it's because the students in my high school wasn't

- that good in English, so our lessons were full of code-switching between English and Cantonese. When you get up to F.4-F.7, basically there is no English lessons... I mean, you could just not attend, it's not useful...
- R: Drilling past papers eh?
- P: Right, past paper. The teachers' comments on e.g. your oral skills (for exam) isn't good enough, like they say stuffs like "you lack eye contact" or something... which are stuffs that I can also say... Anyways, the lessons were very much done in English and Cantonese, for the teachers would explain things we didn't understand in Cantonese, so to save time. And so in a nutshell, I didn't really enjoy the English lessons. For extra-curricular activities, I could remember one English camp (organized by CU?) that I participated in during F.1, I remember I was quite surrounded by English, it was quite good.
- R: In the questionnaire, you indicated that you're exposed to English media very widely... what have you got from them?
- P: I love watching films, listening to songs, I love watching English TV programs...
- R: Which channel?
- P: The local ones, Pearl, World... Those half-an-hour sitcoms, I watched them just for fun. Then gradually I started to watch 60 min+, you can learn a lot from there. Their programs are way more interesting and professional than the so-called programs in HK.
- R: How about music?
- P: I love to listen to songs. I get to a point that I would get on the internet and search for the relevant lyrics so that I can sing along. I realize it's very useful. But I think that it's not very effective to learn English from songs nowadays, they don't have the correct grammar and I don't know what...
- R: You mean English songs?
- P: Yeah, too confusing. I like old songs better.
- R: Golden Oldies?
- P: Right. Their English is clear, grammatical, more beautiful... if you really want to learn English, listening to old songs is a good way.
- R: What, according to your own personal experience, is the most effective way to learn English?
- P: I think it's very important to practice oral and listening skills together. I mean, in HK now, the schools placed too much emphasis on writing skills, but actually it's also important that you get to practice speaking. There just weren't many discussion activities in high school... Also traveling abroad, but it depends on what kind of people you're being with. For example when I had my trip to Singapore, I was always with the Singaporeans, didn't really get a good chance to learn English... Like, if you send your child to study abroad, if he/she sticks with Chinese people all the time, it's quite useless. Just like my two cousins, I don't think their English has improved tremendously, even they've been there for 6-7 years. They don't watch local English programs, instead they just rent tapes of HK soap operas... And I also think that it's better to learn a language as young as possible. Coz kids are more willing to follow the rules (like in the English camp) while adults? No way, they don't care.
- R: How to teach kids effectively?
- P: I guess the key word is interesting. Once they get to have fun and feel interested in your language games, things begin to work. That's the most effective way.
- R: Please comment on this course, the teacher, the students, or lesson approach, or selection of film... anything.
- P: Okay, selection of film. I think for an ELT course, they should choose some films which we can really learn English. Like today (*Trainspotting*), I don't think I can really learn a lot.
- R: Why?
- P: We won't learn Scottish accent, right? And as for learning vocabulary, there're many other ways to learn vocab. Also, like we had some Italian films (in the previous weeks), well, they're good, you get to learn a lot of filmic devices, and lessons of life... but then can you really learn English from them?
- R: So your main concern is very much with learning "English"... What kinds of film would you prefer?
- P: Well, maybe for beginners, *The Sound of Music*, I really like this film. I would again emphasize "interesting," that's the most important part, it's not effective to show "heavy" films. This course should be more relaxing, but watching films that are so "heavy" turns people off. *Trainspotting*, *Pulp Fiction*... Therefore I don't really agree with the choice of film.
- R: How about the lesson approach?

- P: I don't know how to design the course, but I don't like having clips cut out from different films to elaborate points, and also, showing those 1930s black-and-white films just makes people fall asleep.
- R: And the students?
- P: Well, maybe it's because of the HK education system, students just don't feel like participating... I mean, I have something in mind, but just didn't want to voice out... don't know why... and I also think that interaction between students and the teacher is not enough.
- R: Anything else?
- P: I think he (instructor) should also include more handouts, such as vocab. list, or summary of the films...
- R: You're definitely a Language Education major, you're really concerned with the design of the lesson activities... (laughs).
- P: I guess so... (laughs)
- R: Thank you very much.

Interview with Pete (2)

Date: December 3, 2001

- R: Hello, Pete. Welcome to the interview. I want to ask you, now that the term is over finally, did you have anything that you expected to learn in this course, but wasn't really fulfilled? Or somewhat inadequate?
- P: I think it's the film techniques in details. Err... actually it's quite biased/insufficient... we just got to learn one or two terms, some shots... I think he can teach us more, if his focus is on film, in this course.
- R: So you want more "technical" information?
- P: Right.
- R: But if that's so, the time for presentation might have to be cut down, for now the lesson structure is mainly student presentations and discussions, while lecturing is very rare. Do you like this presentation-based lesson structure?
- P: Hm... I quite like it, coz it can train my confidence in public speaking, but then since there's a presentation every week, and frankly, some of the presentations weren't very good, so actually some of the classes were quite boring. I think the number of presentations was a little bit too many.
- R: Why is the presentation not good? Like, which area did you find problematic?
- P: I think it's just too difficult to organize. I mean, I always tend to think that it's hard/impossible to cut up a film into different segments and present them... I think this format tremendously diminishes the attraction of the film as a whole. That's why sometimes they're boring.
- R: I see. Well, within such a short period of time, were you aware of any improvements, in terms of language skills? Could you feel it?
- P: Err... if, I think... it's the oral aspect. Little improvement, I guess.
- R: I see. Now, let's talk about the choice of film. Well, Instructor A has forced you to watch some non-mainstream films, would this have any influence in your choice of film in the future?
- P: Err... in the beginning, the two foreign films weren't very exciting, but gradually the films got better... and in the end, although the films were kinda dated, they're still okay. They're quite special. Overall, I'd say I'm quite satisfied with the selection.
- R: If you were asked to add in some films, what would you suggest? What kinds of film, do you think, were lacking? For example, another student mentioned that the choice could've included more diversity, such as including some romantic comedies.
- P: Hmm... personally I like musicals. Even if he put in *The Sound of Music*, I'd still it a great idea. Also, I think it'd be more attractive.
- R: I see. Could you please evaluate this course? What are the good sides and bad sides to this course? Or which areas needed improvement or change?
- P: The good thing, definitely, is the light workload. For me, this is the most enjoyable class in my whole week. It's comfortable, but we can get to learn things in it. The bad side is the problem of the presentations. I think we just don't know how to do a good presentation, a presentation that is meaningful and has messages to convey. The presentations were quite formulaic, and I gradually got bored with them one week after another.
- R: How is your ideal presentation like?
- P: Actually it's quite good that they included some games in the last several presentations. I don't know how to express exactly, but I suggest to put in more diversity in the presentations... and also,

the feedback and support given wasn't that enough either. However, one example of "over support" given was when we're doing *American Beauty*. He gave us too much information and references from last two years, it's like what I'm thinking was pretty much the same as the references, it made me feel like copying them... I didn't feel too comfortable...

R: Did you ask him for the references?

P: No, he gave us voluntarily.

R: Maybe because the film was kinda difficult... so he gave you guys some reference materials.

P: Yeah, I think so too.

R: Have you watched this film before?

P: No, it's my first time watching this film.

R: This film was kinda like an alternative one stepping into the mainstream.

P: I think this film, which contains so many meanings inside, it's hard to analyze it just by one presentation. Actually I had a lot more to say, I could say a lot more on each character, but there's not enough time.

R: If you were asked to give suggestions for the improvement of this course, what would you do? Or would you make any change in the format or add in something?

P: I think the structure is a bit loose. As I've said before, I don't think it's a good idea to chop up the film into bits and pieces. So, I guess having a 3-period lesson would be better.

R: Well but you still can't finish watching a whole film in a 3-period lesson...

P: At least there'd be more time to analyze the film in more details. Well, the 2-period was okay, I just don't like the single period lesson, the Thursday lesson. Personally, because I have 5 periods free prior to the single lesson, and I had to wait. (laughs) Also, since there's only 45 minutes to that lesson, you can't really do much in it. So, it's quite useless. I think they can work on the lesson arrangement a little next time.

R: Any other comments?

P: Other comments... um, I've talked about the negative sides already, for the positive side, Instructor A is indeed a very nice person, he's also very helpful, he's willing to help us.

R: I remember in your questionnaire you mentioned that some of the presentations were too boring, do you have any suggestions to remedy the situation?

P: Cut down the number of presentations. We had two presentations, one on assigned films, the other on films of our choice. Actually for the second one, he gave us some suggestions. For instance, for our presentation, he suggested us to do Gary Oldman.

R: He *suggested* you to do Gary Oldman?

P: Yeah. I think that's what Hirosaki said. He suggested it because Gary Oldman acted as the "bad guy" in those two films, so it would make a pretty interesting topic. I think this way is better, not just sticking to one particular film. And actually, a lot of people have seen *American Beauty* already, long time ago. You can't ask them to watch it right before lesson again, and so the discussions weren't as fervent as they could've been.

R: But if unfamiliar films were included, such as *Killing*, people might also complain too. The students that I've interviewed so far all said that *Killing* was too difficult for them! They might be discouraged by unknown, alternative films.

P: Well, I guess taking the middle stand would be the best then: include both types of films.

R: Any more comments?

P: No.

R: Thank you very much.

Interview with Timothy (1)

Date: October 11, 2001

R: Researcher T: Timothy

R: Welcome, Timothy. What is your aim of taking this course?

T: My aim is to learn more vocabulary and also get to know different cultures in the world. Prior to taking this course, I heard from people saying that this course not only includes American films, but also films from other countries as well. And that's quite right, as we just had two Italian films.

R: What, in your experience, has film watching helped you in improving/learning?

T: You mean in terms of English?

R: Yes, language skills.

- T: Err... I got to know how foreigners really speak in this world, as they include slang in their daily conversations as well. Besides, you don't get to learn slang and idioms in high school, right? Not even in university.
- R: Are you aware of the different types of accents, such as American, British...
- T: Yes. This is also one of my areas of concern. But I would put this as my second priority, for I'm not very good in even the most basic stuff, and further learning different accents would not help but just confuse me.
- R: (laughs) What languages are used in your Geography major courses?
- T: You mean which language is used more often?
- R: Yes, which is more often.
- T: Well, they're pretty much on an equal base, in terms of frequency. English, Mandarin, and Cantonese... 3 of them.
- R: In your questionnaire, your preference of film includes documentary and independent/cult, which is quite rare... you see, nobody else in the class has included them... I'm curious to why your choice is so "special"?
- T: I like, um, how to say, I like those films that show humanity, like documentary, that's totally humanistic, it's about history... by documentary, I don't mean those like *Pearl Harbor*, but those on the real history of say, the Second World War. And for independent/cult, um, how to say... for example, I like mimes, I don't know where this belongs to...
- R: (checks the questionnaire) Well, because, um... I thought of including "silent films" in the category of choices, but I thought, well, probably not many people would choose it, so I didn't include it. Maybe as "others" then.
- T: Oh, I see. But what exactly does "independent" mean?
- R: Independent, um, how to say, let me think... (turns off tape)
(continues)
- R: So you like independent films.
- T: Well, sometimes I'd still watch "middle-of-the-road" films.
- R: Okay, take for example, *Pulp Fiction*, you mentioned you like *Pulp Fiction*... in this film, their conversations are very, very fast... were you able to get what they're saying?
- T: Well, I watched it with subtitles the first time already, so I know what they're talking about...
- R: This film tells you how to use swear words... like how to use the F-word...
- T: (laughs) No, that's just of minor importance. There're lots of slang and American language inside... I want to know more about these stuff.
- R: Let's talk about the language learning environment in your high school. Is it an EMI?
- T: Yes.
- R: Co-educational?
- T: Yes.
- R: Were the teachers' English good?
- T: Very good.
- R: Very good, why?
- T: Because our school, I mean, the students' average English ability are very good.
- R: Which one?
- T: Cheung Chuk Shan...
- R: Oh, Cheung Chuk Shan. No wonder.
- T: (laughs, murmured something)
- R: Now I want to know, was there the habit of code-switching during lessons?
- T: You mean English lessons? Well, unless you talked "under the table" (chats secretly), otherwise, everything was in English, such as answering questions. All other subjects were in English as well...
- R: But the teachers in some other schools teach in Cantonese even though their lessons (of other subjects) should be in English.
- T: No, no, no. In our school, they're all in English, except Chinese lessons. Maths, Geography, History, all English.
- R: Hm. How about extra-curricular activities? Were there lots of chances to speak English?
- T: Yes, a lot of course. Actually, more activities are prone to be done in English, in our school.
- R: That's somewhat different from other so-called EMI schools.
- T: Well, in our school, there were lots of English activities, but also lots of Chinese activities as well. But um, actually, sometimes some activities, such as those organized by the Student Union or something, it's difficult to avoid using Cantonese.
- R: What is the level of English proficiency of the students in your school?

- T: You mean when I was studying there or now?
- R: When you were studying there.
- T: I would say it's pretty proficient.
- R: Why did you mention now?
- T: Um, because now, teachers are starting to use more Cantonese.
- R: Okay. Let's talk about your life with the exchange student.
- T: Yes. He's from America.
- R: How did you end up living with him? Was it just randomly assigned?
- T: No, I applied for it.
- R: Oh...
- T: Well, that's because I want to, um, after studying for two years, I'm year 3 now... studying in university for 2 years, I realize my English has been on the decline.
- R: Everybody says the same thing! (laughs)
- T: Seriously, I mean. Coz when I went backpacking in Europe during the summer, I almost couldn't speak a word. It got gradually better in the end, but initially, there were serious communication problems. That was the time I realized my problem-- so I wanted to do something to remedy my bad oral and listening skills. And so, I chose a foreign exchange roommate, I didn't even want ABC.
- R: Is he a guy?
- T: Yes, Black.
- R: Um, their English is heavily accented.
- T: Not really. I think his pronunciation is quite clear.
- R: What kinds of interactions are there in your daily life with him?
- T: Daily life... we're talking about computers recently, coz there're some problems with the server... But then, because he came with 6 other people from The University of Georgetown, they always go out together, until very late at night. Initially I thought that I would take him around, but it seems now he's got a whole bunch of his own friends, then that's okay. But I would tell him where to eat out in HK, I think I will take him out to eat "late night snack," coz these are some of the stuff they won't know.
- R: Umm...
- T: Well, I don't expect to go out with him always, actually I just want to talk to him in our daily life.
- R: Are there any inspirations or revelations?
- T: Hmm... not particularly. Coz I already had contacts with foreign culture when I was in Europe, I lived with some people in the dorms (motel). Well, I expected foreigners to be very warm and passionate, um, but actually there's some difference between different cultures. For instance, for Europeans, they'd just sit in their beds and read their books quietly. Well, they won't totally ignore you, but they're just more aloof. Whereas for Americans, they'd immediately shake hands with new guests, and say "hello everybody" and stuff like that. There is a big difference in their way of life, you can really feel it. For him (the exchange student), he's more prone to the quiet side, but he would still shake hands. Initially, I expected him to be very punk...
- R: But punk kids are horrible... (laughs)
- T: (laughs) Well, he likes to read a lot.
- R: So after living with him for half a year, you...
- T: Not that long yet, just started from September...
- R: Okay, one month, well, in such a short time, do you feel that there is any improvement in English on your part?
- T: Um, at least listening is better now.
- R: Okay, I see. Let's see... um,
- T: But for next term, there will be another different exchange student.
- R: Eh?
- T: Coz he's just here for one term, so another one will come, but don't know from where yet.
- R: I guess you'd choose Americans?
- T: Not necessarily, as long as they are native speakers of English.
- R: What, in your opinion, is the most effective way to learn English?
- T: Using English in daily life, living with an exchange student. This is to force you to use English in situations which you would use Cantonese normally. Even though you know you aren't speaking very fluently, and that your sentence contains lots of mistakes, but you still have to keep on talking. Even though you know your pronunciation is ugly, but he (the exchange student) doesn't mind, as long as he understands what you mean.
- R: What if you can't find an exchange student to live with?

- T: Well then, force yourself to read English newspapers and watch English TV programs. You can't possibly talk in English with your Chinese roommates, right? (laughs)
- R: I see. How about comments on this course, the teacher, the students, and the lesson approach?
- T: I prefer this kind of lesson approach. It's the reason why I'm taking this course. But what can be improved is to have more "whole-class discussions," coz for small group discussions, we're prone to stick with the same group of people, own friends, like me and my other friends from Geography. I think we can try whole-class discussion, but I'm not sure about the time constraint... More interaction with different people would be better... For the instructor, I think he's quite good. Students are pretty good, coz I've taken other ELT courses before, and they used Cantonese during lessons.
- R: Hm, actually some of the girls in this class always used Cantonese in the beginning. Instructor A was pretty annoyed with that...
- T: Of course he would be. If you come to learn English, speak in English.
- R: Is the lesson structure too loose?
- T: No, I think it should be like that! (laughs) I'm pretty satisfied so far.
- R: How about the selection of film?
- T: No problem for me, but for the girls, for example on *Trainspotting*, they seemed pretty scared... but for me, it's quite okay.
- R: (laughs) Anymore comments? Some of your classmates complained about the lack of writing practice...
- T: Well, my strengths are in listening and oral skills, my writing is very bad, especially my grammar, and so I'm more focused on listening and oral skills, and I also think that communication is more important than "paperwork." At least I think so. We've been doing too much "paperwork" in secondary school already. If I want more "paperwork," I would've taken ELT 108, or 107, I forgot which one... instead.
- R: Thank you very much.

Interview with Timothy (2)

Date: November 30, 2001

- R: Hello, Timothy. I want to know, were there anything that you wanted to learn but weren't fulfilled in this course?
- T: I think vocabulary. Initially, I thought we would be able to learn some bizarre, exotic vocabulary, slang, or colloquial expressions, but it seems that the course didn't really touch on this area, maybe because this area is not the main focus of this course.
- R: Actually *Pulp Fiction* contains a lot of such kinds of vocabulary and slang as well.
- T: Well, actually I, being the presenter of this film, had forgotten to take notice of this area (vocabulary), coz there're just too many things to say about this film, and there's a lot of vocabulary you don't know even when reading the subtitles, but there's just no time for discussion on this topic. You wouldn't understand the film if you're not the presenter. Just watching the film once is not enough, you won't know what a lot of words mean in the film. Actually, I think there's a lot of vocabulary that are worth learning in each film, which cannot be learned through ordinary routine English lessons. In this course, the time assigned for presentation was way too much, which left little or no time for discussion of films. Initially I thought this course mainly consisted of teacher-led discussions, and not student-led presentations...
- R: Yeah, the active role falls on the students' part.
- T: There's both good and bad sides to this approach. But there should at least be some time for the instructor to tell us *his* opinions...
- R: Well the instructor's aim is to get *you guys* to talk.
- T: Err... but I want to um, listen to more of, well, in the beginning, he taught us a little bit of film techniques, I don't know whether it's because he thought they're too difficult or unnecessary or what, but I expected him to teach us more of the stuff in that area. I mean skills related to watching films. For example, all we know is POV, always POV, I got tired of POV, so I decided not to talk about it in our presentation, it's too boring.
- R: So you feel there's a lack of vocabulary to express your opinions?
- T: Well, you can say so. Err... I think he can teach us film techniques on a deeper level of analysis.
- R: Right. I want to ask you, what is your general impression of this course? If other people ask you, what is the most valuable insight you got from this course, how would you answer them?

- T: Err... if other people ask me, I'd still recommend that they take this course, because um, although I haven't taken any other ELT courses before, but during these few years I've heard too many people complaining about the harsh workload of ELT courses, and that they're too boring. But for this film course as an ELT course, my impression of it is already very good. Err... this course didn't use the traditional approach for learning English, it's not that mainstream, and this made it less boring and more interesting. Talking about the most valuable insight, I'd say the culture, foreign culture. You'd never have thought that English could be learned in this way. If you tell your mom, she wouldn't believe.
- R: (laughs)
- T: I didn't tell my mom! Coz she wouldn't believe. Like if you say to her that you can learn English through watching TV, she wouldn't agree. So if people ask me, I'd recommend them this course. I think at university level, the courses shouldn't focus that much on paper work (written assignments), the traditional HK education system has already put too much emphasis on paper work, so I think it should be different. There should be some other ways to inspire students to learn English. I think learning daily conversational English is more useful. And also how native speakers really talk instead of "lecture" English.
- R: I see. Now, what do you think of the choice of film? I know you watched *Pulp Fiction* before. Have you seen other films in the schedule before?
- T: *Alien* as well.
- R: If you watched these two films before, other films shouldn't be a problem for you.
- T: Definitely no problem.
- R: Uh-huh, then how could you still understand foreign culture more? I mean, did watching the two Italian films helped?
- T: Actually those two European films (*Cinema Paradiso*, *Life is Beautiful*) I'm not particularly fond of, and their culture issues aren't too significant as well.
- R: How about *Trainspotting*?
- T: I'd say *Trainspotting* is about subculture. You get to see the other side of foreign society. As for *American Beauty*, you get to see what the "real" family life in American society is like. Coz generally, American life depicted in films are usually like Lester's family, very free, no strict discipline, but the film also shows us other family models, such as um, I forgot the name...
- R: Ricky...
- T: Yeah, Ricky's family. So I got to know that there's also strict families in America. And in *Pulp Fiction*, TOO MUCH to say about culture! (laughs)
- R: So, are you satisfied with the choice of film? Coz this term you guys only had 6 films, while usually you should have 8 films. There're more people in the class this term, which meant more presentations, thus less time for more different films.
- T: I think for the choice of film, the first two films (*Cinema Paradiso*, *Life is Beautiful*) were a bit strange. I don't understand why he chose the first film.
- R: For *Cinema Paradiso*, Richard once said although it's not his personal favorite, it's still a good introduction to movie, that's why he put it there.
- T: Actually I feel that they could've been omitted. They don't fit with other films. Um, how to say, I mean, this is after all an ELT course, I didn't expect to go and watch foreign films with English subtitles. So these two films really turned me off at the beginning. In terms of diversity, I think including one mainstream Hollywood film is okay. Although I hate Hollywood films, putting just one Hollywood film alongside non-mainstream films provides a chance for the students to compare and contrast the differences. Like you can talk about the narrative/topic structure of the two different kinds of films. There's no straightforward mainstream Hollywood film in this course, *Alien*'s not, it's another category of film...
- R: *Alien* is a science-fiction.
- T: You can choose films with Tom Hanks, or other commercial films, to let students have a comparison between the two. For the "alternative" films he chose, there're no problems for me, but only for me. Maybe for other students, they're a bit problematic. Also, they wouldn't be able to distinguish the differences between a commercial and an alternative film. The choice of film was generally okay, except the first two.
- R: Some of your classmates say that they couldn't really understand *Trainspotting*. They couldn't even comprehend the storyline, and the presentation went so fast that there was no time for clarification whatsoever. What's your opinion?
- T: You mean the presenters or the students don't understand?
- R: The students.

- T: I'd tend to think this is the presenter's problem. I think the responsibility falls on the presenters to provide adequate and clear background introduction to the film presented. Actually we didn't do a good job in that either, we didn't provide any background information. However, sometimes it's not necessary to comprehend the storyline of the film. Don't put emphasis on it too much, coz I realized the students in this class like to use logic to try to understand the films. But then a lot of the films can't be logically explained. Actually, you can find a lot of, it's a lot of information on the web! You can even find the whole script, there's no reason to say you don't understand. I don't think the films are too difficult to understand. What we're worried about most was having not enough time to present a harder film such as *Pulp Fiction*.
- R: I guess it depends on the students' response as well, like they generally couldn't really understand and appreciate *Trainspotting*.
- T: I think this class is very mainstream.
- R: Some of them have never ever watched these kinds of films before.
- T: Right, and they also couldn't welcome them. I don't know whether they expected to watch films such as *Titanic* in this course or not, but since I got some information from other people about what kind of films are included in this course, I knew what to expect already. I wouldn't want to watch mainstream Hollywood films. They're way too easy to comprehend, you can understand it just by yourself, then why need to take a course? What can you learn from these simple films?
- R: Okay, let's talk about your English improvements. You indicated in the questionnaire that your listening skills have improved the most. Actually, are you aware of your improvements just within a short period of 3 months?
- T: Um... I think so. I mean, watching English films, listening to not just the instructor, but also other students as well, and also due to the focus of the course, which is on oral and listening more than writing, you're being forced to listen and speak English. There *must* be some improvements under such situation. Also, you're not listening to pre-recorded-English learning tapes, but very daily conversations in a casual, natural manner. I feel that Instructor A didn't use a lecturing style of talking, but rather a casual, daily manner.
- R: Could you comment on the positive and negative sides of this course?
- T: Which area?
- R: Any area.
- T: For the positive side, I think it's the structure of the course. It's very good that the course adopted a casual manner in teaching, for I think we can really learn in this way.
- R: How about the negative side?
- T: Hmm... the worst thing was that when the students' own choice of film for their presentation was not liked by the instructor or other students, that would create a very bad lesson mood for learning. We learned less, had less fun. I've heard extreme comments on this course. Some people, during last term's course, said the course was so fun!
- R: You mean the summer one?
- T: Uh no, the previous one... they even keep contacts with Instructor A until now, and come out for lunch gathering once a while. For this class, no way! I don't understand why Instructor A still took the pain to invite them for a gathering in his house. (laughs)
- R: But you just can't control the students' cinematic sophistication...
- T: Yeah. Actually two of the student presentations weren't too good. One was on cartoons and the other on romantic comedies.
- R: Actually Instructor A had already warned them beforehand, that he didn't recommend these films. But they went ahead anyhow.
- T: Well, I don't think they would choose other non-mainstream films.
- R: Still, if you force them, maybe they *can* do it. Just like Isabel and Verona, I think they really did a good job on *Pulp Fiction*.
- T: Yeah, *if* you force them.
- R: Okay, my last question is, how to improve this course?
- T: Firstly, I think either add one more lesson or combine the three lessons into a day's lesson. Coz with the present arrangement (two periods on Tuesday and one on Thursday), there's not enough time. Right after the presentation's over, it's the end of the lesson. Instructor A didn't even have any chance to clarify points in the films. While the one period lesson on Thursday is too short, we can't learn too much. For it's like just after we got there, then very soon it's the end of the lesson already. Secondly, I think the students can be required, I mean, the choice of film for student presentations can be restricted... sometimes having a over-free approach creates problems. I think it's okay to give them a list of films to choose from. Lastly, adding more films would be good too. That is, assigning more students to each presentations, which means fewer number of

presentations, but more time for more different films to be watched. I think the student response to the presentation of assigned films was better than self-selected films.

R: Oh I see what you mean. The thing is, some people may not like some genres, such as Disney cartoons. You guys looked so bored! (laughs)

T: Yeah, all of we guys didn't know what to do. I think the lesson structure could be stricter... now it's too loose, it seems. He can exert more demand and requirement, to a certain extent.

R: Any other comments?

T: Nope...

R: Thank you very much.

T: You're welcome.

APPENDIX G1 Instructor A's Course syllabus

ELT 3104: Thinking Through Film

Introduction

This is an integrated theme-based course designed for students who have an interest in film and want to learn to better understand and appreciate films, while at the same time improving their English, especially their vocabulary, understanding of idioms and oral fluency. Specifically, the course will focus on the analysis of technical, cultural and thematic aspects of films. Course work will include class discussions of assigned films (viewed outside of class), a short written paper, and a group presentation.

Objectives

During the course, you are expected to:

1. develop the ability to extract ideas from films, articles and discussions;
2. share your insights with others in both oral and written forms;
3. understand and appreciate films as a source of cultural insights and intellectual stimulation.

Course requirements

In this course, you are required to:

1. view the assigned films and read assigned articles outside class time.
2. attend all classes, prepare for and participate actively in all class discussions and other activities. For each assigned film selected students will be responsible for setting questions and leading the classroom discussion.
3. present a group term project. This involves selecting a suitable movie or theme and presenting it in class for in depth analysis.
4. write a short analysis of a scene or a movie covered in class.

Course grades

Grades will be calculated on the following basis:

- | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|
| 30% | Participation in class. |
| 20% | Film presentation. |
| 20% | Leading discussion of assigned movie. |
| 20% | Written papers. |
| 10% | Attendance & punctuality. |

APPENDIX G2 Instructor B's course syllabus

ELT 3104: Thinking through the Culture of film Course Description

Course Description

Welcome! This course is an integrated theme-based course designed for students who want to improve their analytical, discussion, speaking and writing skills. Specifically, it will be focusing on the analysis of linguistic, cultural, thematic and intellectual aspects of films. Course work will include class discussions of assigned films viewed outside of class, written analytical reports and presentations. Since the language of discussion will be in English, this course is particularly suitable for students who would like to gain more confidence in speaking and discussing in English.

Objectives

By the end of this course you should have improved your ability to:

- appreciate film as a source of cultural insight and intellectual stimulation
- analyze and think critically about the message of a film
- analyze and think critically about the elements of a film
- express your ideas orally in English in a discussion
- express your ideas in English through writing
- lead discussions
- work collaboratively

Course Requirements

1. Attend and participate fully in class and be punctual.
2. Prepare for class by doing assigned task(s), when given.
3. Complete all assignments on time.
4. Keep a journal, recording your ideas about the films viewed/studied and phrases/vocabulary items learned from the films.

Course Assessment

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Attendance and Participation | 40% |
| Attendance, Punctuality, Journals, Participation in Discussions | |
| 2. Individual Presentations | 30% |
| Written Assignments – 15% Oral Presentation – 15% | |
| 3. Group Presentations | 30% |
| Discussion leading – 15% Group Presentation – 15% | |

Class Test

In this class there is no written textbook. Our “textbooks” are the films we will watch. It is very important that you carefully watch the film we will discuss in class. All films are available either in the Independent Learning Centre (ILC) or the University Library (UL). Please make sure that you allow yourself enough time to view the film, to re-watch important parts, and to make a journal entry.

Specific Course Policies

1. *Handing in assignments late*

Except where specified otherwise, a student may turn in an out-of-class assignment up to one week after the due date with a penalty of 10% (one grade); any assignment more than one week late without a legitimate reason will be eligible for only half credit.

2. *Honesty policy*

On out-of-class assignments where obvious extensive collaboration has occurred between two (or more) students, each assignment will be worth only half (or the appropriate portion of the allowance points).

3. *Pagers and mobile phones*

As we are working in a classroom situation, for the consideration of everybody, please make sure that your pagers and/or mobile phones are switched to the vibration mode or turned off before you enter the classroom. It is also not acceptable to use pagers and leave the classroom to make telephone calls during the class, except in an emergency.

APPENDIX G3 Assignment sheet

Writing a scene analysis

Submission date: November 15, 2001
Length: 500-800 words.
Audience: Someone who knows the film well.

For written scene analysis, choose a scene from one of the films we have discussed in class, whether assigned, teacher-introduced or student-introduced. In addition to the assigned movies, teacher-introduced movies this term have been/will be *Badlands*, *Blackmail*, *Decalogue Six: Killing*, *Goodfellas*, *Metropolis*, *Notorious*, *Psycho*, *The 39 Steps* and *Young and Innocent*.

In preparing the analysis, you should concentrate on why the scene is effective. Remember the two major elements of a film are:

- pictures
- sound

Use phrases like *We see...*, *we are shown...*, *we hear...*, etc.

Some conventions of writing about films:

- Use italics for film titles, eg *Pulp Fiction*, *American Beauty*.
- As a general rule, when describing events in a film, use the present tense.
- Describe the events as they are perceived by the audience watching the film.
- The first time you refer to a director, actor/actress or character use the whole name (eg Quentin Tarantino, John Travolta, Vincent Vega, Mia Wallace). Subsequently refer to director and actor/actress by their surname only (Tarantino, Travolta) and to character by the name by which he/she is best known in the film (Vince, Mia).
- When using someone else's words (eg from a book, article or the internet), use quotation marks and clearly indicate the source of your quotation.

WARNING: Plagiarism (unattributed copying) is an easy thing for a native speaker like me to spot and will result in the paper being returned unmarked.

APPENDIX G4 Sample lecture handout (1)

Mise en scene vs. Montage

Two concepts to film-making are *mise en scene* (pronounced something like ‘meez on sen’ and derived from a French phrase meaning literally “putting into the scene”), *montage* (pronounced ‘mon tage’ & derived from the French word meaning “putting together”).

Mise en scene covers all that takes part on the set, including the costumes, direction of the actors, placement & movement of cameras, duration of a shot, etc, whereas *montage* at its simplest means editing.

Documentaries or films associated with “Realism” are often more weighted towards *mise en scene*. Characteristics of *mise en scene* are:

- The long take. This refers to any usually long shot. In 1940s Hollywood, average shot duration was 9 seconds. So, any shot longer than 9 seconds could be described as a long take.
- Deep focus photography. This keeps several places within the shot in focus at the same time, not just one part (usually the front).

Some directors who use *montage* believe that adjacent shots A and B should relate to each other in such a way that they combine to produce another meaning, C, which is not actually recorded on the film. Since montage may violate the rules of continuity, it is often thought of as mainly impressionistic. Characteristics of *montage* are:

- Short takes.
- Rapid succession of shots
- The same event shot from different angles

Montage is comparatively rare. Two famous examples are the shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960) and the Odessa steps scene (44.00) from the Russian film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) directed by Sergei Eisenstein.



Pulp Fiction



- Long film occupying both sides of the DVD. Be sure to start with side 1!
- A black comedy with lots of (too much?) bad language, plenty of blood, some sex (!?!) scenes & some drug scenes. But overall mood is playful – a gangster movie in which the two main characters are saved by a miracle. Was loved by critics but only won one oscar (Best Original Screenplay) as it came out in the same year as *Forrest Gump*.
- Narrative is non-linear with 3 inter-locking stories (Vince & Jules doing a job for Marcellus, Vince taking out Marcellus's wife Mia, and Butch double-crossing then saving Marcellus). The film ends with Vince and Jules stuffing guns under their T-shirts and walking out of a breakfast shop. The final chronological event shows Butch and his girl riding off on a motorbike into a new life, Butch having just said, "Zed's dead, baby. Zed's dead."
- Soundtrack features 1960s music.
- Highly allusive. It makes allusions (references) to many other films, eg. *Deliverance* (rapt by the hill-billies), *Psycho* (Marion at the traffic lights in her car and her boss in foot), *The Seven Samurai* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. (Butch selects a weapon to save Marcellus). See if you can spot any others.
- Terrific dialogue (eg on food, massages, religion) in the best traditions of French Wave of the 1960s (eg *Breathless* and *Shoot the Piano Player*).



LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL



ELT 3104B

25th September, 2001.

Prepared by: Liz and Gilbert

Film Name: Life is Beautiful (La Vita E Bella) (1997)

Country: Italy

Director: Roberto Benigni

Major Cast: Roberto Benigni (**Guido**), Nicoletta Braschi (**Dora**),



Giorgio Cantarini (**Joshua**) Horst Buchholz (**Dr. Lessing**)

Genre: Comedy/Romance/ Holocaust

Plot: The film starts in 1939 when Guido comes to the Tuscan town of Arezzo with his poet friend Ferruccio. Guido falls in love with Dora, a beautiful young schoolteacher. Unfortunately, the woman he calls his “Princess” is already engaged to a local Fascist official, but Guido still fights for her. Five years later, Guido and Dora are married and have a son, Joshua, and Guido has finally opened the bookstore of his dreams. During the occupation of Italy by German forces in WWII, Guido and his son were sent to a Nazi concentration camp. Dora devotes her love and departs herself on the same train. Guido uses his bold imagination and unremitting spirit to save those he loves.

Short quizzes

1. Watch the scene (4'08" to 5'26") and answer question 1 and 2. What is the major subject size shot and angle of shot used? How many shots in total?
2. How many eggs did Guido take from Dora?
3. Can you give two examples of filmic devices used in the film?
4. Can you give two examples of "the use of contrast" in the film?
5. What "lies" are told by Guido to his son Joshua? Why does he do so?
6. What habit Joshua saves him from death at the first time?
7. Watch the scene (105'00" to 109'40") and give two examples of the POV shots.
8. Can you remember two examples of the racial discrimination elements?
9. For how many times that Guido changed his hat?
10. In the banquet night, how many times did Guido use willpower in front of For a and what were they?

Discussion

1. What is the main theme of this film?
2. Why is the film called "Life is Beautiful"? Any special meanings behind?
3. What can Joshua learn from his father?
4. What is special about the music, costume and lighting in this film?
5. There are two clear genres in the film, what are they? Why the director has such an arrangement? Do you think this is a successful arrangement?
6. Do you know anything about the Holocaust? Can you briefly describe the historical background of this film?
7. Briefly evaluate the performance of the major characters. Which character do you like most?
8. Do you like this movie? Is it successful? If yes, what is the major element that leads to its success? If not, what are the weaknesses?



Gary Oldman: Good at Bad

Presented by Pete, Hirosaki, & Korey

Gary Oldman is without a doubt one of the best actors of modern times. He has played lots of different parts in a variety of movies, all of them in one way or another quite special. From real funny parts (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*) to the serious and sad part of Ludwig Von Beethoven (*Immortal Beloved*) and from realism as Lee Harvey Oswald (JFK) to fictional horror as Dracula (*Bram stoker's Dracula*). More recently Gary Oldman made his directorial debut with *Nil by Mouth*, a movie he also wrote.

This all shows the versatility in the characters and the work of Gary Oldman, often referred to as the chameleon.

Gary @ Leon The Professional

Leon (aka *The Professional*) is a story of a lone hitman working in New York who saves the life of a 12-year-old girl after her family is murdered. He insists that she leave the next morning but the girl, Mathilda, wants to learn to be a "cleaner" so she can avenge the death of her family.

Leon, the hitman, finds himself oddly drawn to mathilda who gives him a taste of life, but with this young girl comes trouble.

Written and directed by Luc Besson

Cast:

Jean Reno ~~~~~ Leon

Gary Oldman ~~~~~ Norman stansfield

Natalie Portman ~~~~~ Mathilda



Gary @ The Fifth Element

In the 23rd century, Korben Dallas (Bruce Willis), an ex-special forces agent who now practices as a down-and-out cabbie, finds himself caught in a struggle to defy a prophesized Evil from destroying the Earth when a mysterious woman (Milla Jovovich) falls into the back seat of his cab. Pursued by both the government and a powerful magnate enlisted by the forces of Evil (Gary Oldman), the woman is the key to Earth's salvation, known only as the Fifth Element. Auteur Besson's first offering with Hollywood backing. Academy Award Nomination: Best Sound Effects Editing.

Cast:

Bruce Willis Korben Dallas
Gary Oldman Zorg
Milla Jovovich Leeloo
Ian Holm Vito Cornelius
Christ Tucker Dj Ruby Rhod

Q&A

Scene 1: Gary @ Leon

1. How many people were killed in that scene?
2. What do you feel about him from that scene?

Scene 2: Gary @ The Fifth Element

1. List out the functions of the gun?
2. Which one is his favorite function?

Scene 3: Gary @ The Fifth Element and Leon the Professional

1. What is his last word?
2. There is a POV shot. How do you know about that?

Group Discussion

1. Is he GOOD enough to act as a BAD guy?
2. Are there any similarities in these scenes?
3. What are the differences of Gary Oldman in these two movies?
4. Why did the director choose the same actor to act as bad guy in these two movies?

APPENDIX G8 Sample student term paper

ELT 3104 – English through Film Scene Analysis

Name: _____
Film: *Alien*
Scene: Ch 6 Eggs or Something

In the beginning of the scene, one of the crew members Kane is lowered into the alien craft. As Kane flashes his torch around, we see that there are lots of carvings in the surroundings. This scene uses top shot which makes us feel that we are watching Kane being lowered into the aircraft from the top. This is effective in making us more absorbed into the film. While Kane is lowered into the craft, we hear Kane speaking over the microphone and reporting what he sees to the people in the spacecraft: "a cave of some sort...it's like the god-damned tropics in here.". This arouses our attention and we are eager to learn what is Kane going to discover next.

Yes ✓

In the next shot, we are shown a spectacle of the ^{hangar} cave of the craft. There are many rail-like tracks running parallel to each other and there is also blue light along the tracks. The details of the cave, adopting the "layering" technique is a magnificent sight. We hear Kane exclaims: "what the hell is this?" and we also hear a music with an ascending pitch. Apart from the visual stimulus, the use of both external diegetic (exclamation of Kane) and non-diegetic sounds (music) makes us feel that the craft is very impressive indeed. In addition, we see a very small subject with two little lights and we recognize that it is Kane walking down one of the tracks as the two light spots

✓ Good

should be the light on top of his helmet and his torch. This is effective to make us realize that the craft is enormous as Kane appears extremely little in the whole picture.

✓ very good

In the shot that follows, we are shown a pit with rows of objects that look like eggs.

The pit is dark, clouded with bluish mist. This is a point of view shot as we see things as if we are Kane looking through his helmet. We cannot see things clearly because of the mist over our helmets and we see things by moving our heads and looking around.

✓ good

The use of POV shot is effective as we can imagine that we are Kane exploring the cave.

✓

Then we see a long shot of Kane walking above the pit and the blue light around has become more intense. We also see the details of the cave behind Kane which allows us to have a full picture of the environment around Kane. As Kane bends down to inspect the layer of blue mist covering the pit, we hear Kane reports to the spacecraft: "there's a layer of mist just covering the eggs that reacts when broken.". We also hear a strange sound when Kane breaks the mist. The external diegetic sound (sound of mist being broken) is used in this case and we feel interested to know what exactly are the egg-like objects that have to be covered by mist. When Kane inspects the mist more closely, he slips and falls below the layer of mist. This creates suspension as we would like to know if he is injured. And we feel relieved when he says over his

✓

microphone: "I'm okay". ✓

Next, we are shown a close up of an egg while Kane examines one of the eggs. We hear a sudden burst that scares both Kane and us. After a pause, Kane shines his torch at the lower part of the egg. The egg looks slightly transparent and we see a yellowish embryo inside. Suddenly, the embryo flutters and we see that it is pulsating. We hear Kane saying: "Wait a minute, there's movement. It seems to have life, organic life." ✓

This scene is effective because the embryo and its movement look very real. We are getting excited just like Kane as the egg actually has life!

Just as we are wondering what kind of life this is, the egg suddenly opens with a cracking sound and Kane retreats from the egg. Then, we are shown a moist, pulsating mass of pinkish tissue with lots of veins. This is a close up POV shot that allows us to examine the mass of tissue in details from Kane's point of view. It is very silent and we can hear the breathing of Kane. There is no more music. The use of external diegetic sound (Kane breathing heavily) and the absence of non-diegetic sound (no music) are effective in building up tension. ✓ *Good*

Following is a medium shot and we see Kane reaching out towards the petals. Suddenly, pink coils whip up and clamp onto the helmet of Kane. He falls down. The director, Ridley Scott is effective in creating a very frightening scene as the movement of the coil is very sudden. We cannot see clearly how the coil comes up and we are still thinking that Kane is reaching out for the petals. Also, since this is a top shot, the coil whips up as if it is coming towards our face and we feel terribly scared. ✓

A Well done. Very well described (though a bit long). You take us through a series of shots, describing the sets and action, and insert comments on the sound track ~~and~~ while giving us the dialogue, all of which shows your understanding of why this is an effective scene.

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