

Films as a Means of Culture Teaching

**Gloomy Sunday (Szomorú vasárnap) by Rolf Schübel,
The Witness (A tanú) by Péter Bacsó,
Dolly-Birds (Csinibaba) by Péter Tímár
and Ferenc Török's Moscow Square (Moszkva tér)**

Introduction

Language is a double-edged sword. It communicates but it also excommunicates – including only those who possess the ›cultural codes‹ as well. So in order that language-learners can find themselves ›inside the circle‹, they have to get acquainted with the given culture, too, as it is inseparably connected with the language they wish to master.

What is culture? In Brembeck's iceberg analogy the notion of culture is compared to an iceberg only the tip of which is visible (appearance, food, language etc.) whereas a very large part of the iceberg is rather difficult to see or grasp (attitude, communication style, values etc.¹

In the course of my work as a teacher of Hungarian many a times have I experienced how useful and efficient it is to implement some feature films in the classroom repertoire. ›The outstanding feature of movies is their ability to present complete communicative situations. The combination of sound and vision is very dynamic, immediate, and accessible‹². In this paper I would like to show how these video lessons can be planned and carried out. Then step by step I will show what kind of possibilities can be exploited in each of the four films, and how these movies can be ›built on‹ each other.

My experience is based on my work with Polish students studying Hungarian Philology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poz-

¹ Brembeck 1977.

² Lonergan 1984, 4.

nan, Poland, and foreign students of Hungarian origin from different parts of the world (Australia, South America, USA etc.) pursuing one-year Hungarian-studies at Balassi Institute in Budapest, Hungary.

The reason why I have chosen these very films is that – spanning over more than four decades of Hungarian recent past from World War II up to 1989, the year of the transformation – these movies can help our students to a great extent in revealing of the hidden layers of the Hungarian culture.

1. Using Authentic Video in the Classroom with Nonnative Students

1.1 Practical implications of using video in the classroom

Arthur claims that: »Video can

- give students realistic models to imitate for role-play;
- **increase awareness of other cultures by teaching appropriateness and suitability;**
- strengthen **audio/visual linguistic perceptions** simultaneously;
- widen the classroom repertoire and range of activities;
- teach **direct observation of the paralinguistic features** found in association with the target language;
- offer **a visual reinforcement of the target language;**
- can lower anxiety when practicing the skill of listening.«³

1.2 Questions to be answered

Canning underlines that language teachers should ask themselves some questions before implementing a video lesson with their non-native students:

³ Arthur 1999.

- »How will the language learner benefit from the use of video in the classroom?
- Who will select the video?⁴ (The class or the teacher?)
- How do you plan to exploit the 1–15-minute segments of the video?
- Who decides how many times the video is played?
- How will you assess the comprehension of the video by the language learners?
- What is the educational purpose for showing the video?«⁵

1.3 Important criteria

Voller and Widdows underline that

- the actors should speak in an understandable way;
- the film should not contain too many monologues;
- the students should not need too many pieces of background information;
- the story of the film should be followed easily;
- the film should be divided into (about) 15-minute parts;
- questions should be projected to each part (3 would be optimal, not testing but leading questions);
- while-viewing work-sheets should be prepared for the lessons;
- there may be a creative usage of the language: e.g. continuation of the story;
- the follow up work should not go on longer than 3 weeks.⁶

⁴ E.g. in the case of *Gloomy Sunday* it was the students who had seen it first and then asked me to watch it together »thoroughly« and this film has really proved to be a treasury from various points of view.

⁵ Canning 2000.

⁶ Voller/Widdows 1993.

1.4 Active viewing

While viewing the film the students should not divide their attention too much. It is enough to give them one or two tasks as the most important activity is the viewing itself, but it must go on according to special viewing guides that have been settled earlier. These guides are not intended to test comprehension, but to aid comprehension. Viewing guides which are to be completed simultaneously with viewing the video sequence should therefore be so constructed that the reading and the writing load for the learner is kept to a minimum.

Thus the viewing process becomes really active, and gives the students a good stimulus for the further discussion of the film⁷.

1.5 Videos allow nonnative speakers

- to understand stress patterns;
- to see body rhythm and speech rhythm through the use of authentic language and speed of speech in various situations⁸;
- to distinguish the intonation of the Hungarian yes or no and the open ended questions⁹.

1.6 Before using video in the classroom

It should be thoroughly thought over how the tasks before, while, and after viewing (*pre-viewing, while-viewing and post-viewing tasks*) have to be built on each other to make a closely related process with each other¹⁰.

⁷ Lonergan 1984, 11–31.

⁸ Canning 2000.

⁹ Durst 2006.

¹⁰ Köksal 2004, 3–6.

1.7 Great variety of tasks

Sherman's book¹¹ is an extremely rich source for teachers offering more than 150 types of tasks, also for activities with authentic videos: e.g. viewing the pictures without the sound, then with the sound, dictation/gapfill, ›progressive dictation‹ of a small part of the text, role play etc.

2. Four films built on each other to make up an organic unit

2.1 *Gloomy Sunday (Szomorú vasárnap), 1999* (112 minutes – can be divided into 7 parts)

This melodrama is set against the backdrop of World War II, the German invasion of Budapest, and the Holocaust. It is an epic period film with a love triangle in its centre. The title song – which drives lots of its listeners to suicide – continually hangs in the air like a melancholic threat. The melodrama eventually transforms into a tragedy and then a tale of long-term revenge.¹²

2.1.1 Pre-viewing

- **World Heritage in Budapest** (view of the Danube-bank with the Buda Castle)¹³
- http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Budapest_vil%C3%A1g%C3%B6r%C3%B6ks%C3%A9gi_helysz%C3%ADnei
- **Famous Hungarian dishes** (gulyásleves, halászlé, tejfőles csirke etc.)¹⁴

¹¹ Sherman 2003.

¹² More information:
<http://www.contactmusic.com/movie-review/gloomysundayeinliebvonliebeundtod>

¹³ We can bravely show the beginning of this film already in one of the first lessons of beginner level students in order to perform them some parts of the Hungarian capital which are also parts of the world heritage. Two of the students can deliver a brief (max. 5-minute) lecture on this theme.

- Collection of ›culinary **past participles**‹: főtt, sült, rakott, rán-
tott, párolt, töltött, *tűzdelt, vagdalt* etc.; májjal *töltött* kacsá
→ kacsá májjal *töltve* (Milyen kacsá? → Kacsá hogyan/milyen
módon?)
- Short lecture by one of the students: the history of Gundel
Restaurant (The Founder of the Dynasty)
<http://www.gundel.hu/site/index.php?page=hu/Tradicioink>
- **Hungarian inventions** – image film (e.g. dobostorta)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOwkokaybWA&NR=1>
- How do Hungarians celebrate birthdays and name-days? (In
contrast of the Polish custom, men in Hungary are not given
flowers neither on their birthday nor on their nameday, while
the Poles do.)
- German invasion in Hungary – 19 March 1944
- Holocaust, Szálasi’s government

2.1.2 While-viewing

- »**Hadd** játsszon valamit! Kérlek ... A kedvemért ...« (*Let him
play something! Please ... For my sake ...*) – How to use ›hadd‹
- »A dal szerzője gazdaggá vált.« (-vá, -vé endings)
- **Addressing people** – (*Szabó úr, Szabó, Váradi kisasszony,
professzor úr* etc.) – the use of *maga* and *te*; *ön* is used only
once
- The message of the title song¹⁵

¹⁴ We can compare e.g. what the different is in between Hungarian and Polish tomato soups. (The latter is based on broth, while the Hungarian version is sweet what is very weird for Polish people.)

¹⁵ Szomorú vasárnap | száz fehér virággal, | vártalak kedvesem | templomi
imával. || Álmodok kergető | vasárnap délelőtt, | bánatom hintaja | nél-
küled visszajött. || Azóta szomorú | mindig a vasárnap, | könny csak az
italom, | kenyerem a bánat. | Szomorú vasárnap ... || Utolsó vasárnap |
kedvesem, gyere el, | pap is lesz, koporsó, | ravatal, gyászlepel. || Akkor
is virág vár, | virág és koporsó. | Virágos fák alatt | utam az utolsó. ||
Nyitva lesz szemem, hogy | még egyszer lássalak. | Ne félj a szememtől,
| holtan is áldalak ... | utolsó vasárnap.
Sunday is gloomy, | My hours are slumberless. | Dearest the shadows |
I live with are numberless. || Little white flowers | Will never awaken

- The recipe of ›göngyölt hús‹
- **Body language** (What can be read from Ilona's glance when she asks Hans to save László?/What can we see in László's eyes when he – queuing up at the railway station – notices Hans approaching to him?)

2.1.3 After-Viewing 1

- **Hungaricums** (e.g. Zwack Unicum)
- The history of the Gundel Restaurant, Gundel menu card (*rózsaszínűre süttött kacsamell – ördögcsirkemell vasaló alatt sültve*); Gundel palacsinta
- A ›life-saving‹ recipe¹⁶
- The history of the only Hungarian world hit (composed by Dezső Seress = ›Not a musician, a genius‹ (Otto Klemperer), written by László Jávör – translated into 100 languages – sung by Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra, Billie Holiday, Ray Charles etc.)

2.1.4 After-Viewing 2

- **Jokes** (székely-, Móricka-, Arisztid és Tasziló-, Jean-, favicc) – to collect
- The joke in the film (to tell/to write down)¹⁷

you, | Not where the black coach of | Sorrow has taken you. || Angels
have no thought | Of ever returning you, | Would they be angry | If I
thought of joining you? | Gloomy Sunday... || Gloomy is Sunday, | With
shadows I spend it all | My heart and I | Have decided to end it all. ||
Soon there'll be candles | And prayers that are said I know | Let them
not weep | Let them know that I'm glad to go. || Death is no dream |
For in death I'm caressin' you, | With the last breath of my soul | I'll be
blessin' you. | Gloomy Sunday ... || Dreaming, I was only dreaming | I
wake and I find you asleep | In the deep of my heart, dear | Darling I
hope | That my dream never haunted you | My heart is tellin' you | How
much I wanted you | Gloomy Sunday ...

¹⁶ The task is not just to write a simple recipe, but it should be so unique as to be able to save someone's life as it happens in the film. It motivates the students, they usually try do their best.

- Mixed sentences of two short dialogues sheets: a) the recipe of ›göngyölt hús‹ (each sentence on a separate piece of paper to be put in order); b) gap-filling exercise
- **-nyi** (›egy hónapnyi élet nem is kerül többé 2 dollárnál‹),
- **mintsem hogy** (›inkább osztom rajta, mintsem hogy elveszítsem‹)
- Describing the main characters
- **Formal Hungarian (ön, maga, tetszik + infinitive)**

2.2 *The Witness (A tanú), 1968*
(104 min. – can be divided into 5–7 parts)

Banned for over a decade for its outspoken criticism of the post-WWII communist regime in Hungary, Péter Bacsó's film has since then become a cult classic. It is a grotesque account of the Stalinist purge through the eyes of a naive communist, an ordinary dike keeper, József Pelikán.

¹⁷ Egy táborban volt egyszer egy parancsnok, úgy hívták, Müller. Üvegből volt az egyik szeme. Furcsa szokása volt ennek a Müller táborparancsnoknak. Éspedig, amikor jó hangulatban volt, magához hívott egy foglyot, azért, hogy bizonyítsa, milyen az igazi német mestermunka. Ha a fogoly megmondja, hogy a két szeme közül melyik az, amelyik üvegből van, konyhás lehet, de ha nem, kikötteti. És egy nap kiszemelt egy foglyot, bizonyos Jakob Korngoldot, és a kérdést neki is föltette. Akkor az a Jakob Kornhold ránézett, és így szólt:

»A bal szeme van üvegből, táborparancsnok úr.«

»Na és hogy jött rá erre, mondja csak?«

»Jakob Kornhold erre így felelt: Egyszerű, táborparancsnok úr, abban van valami emberi ...«

(Once there was a camp commander, his name was Müller. One of his eyes was made of glass. He had a weird habit of calling a prisoner just to show him what a real German masterpiece looks like. If the prisoner tells him which one of his eyes is made of glass, he can work in the kitchen, if not, he will be tied to a pole. One day he asked the same question to prisoner Jakob Korngold. He looked at him and said: Mr. Commander, your left eye is made of glass. How did you figure it out? It's easy, Mr. Commander, it has something human in it ...) *(Translated by the author.)*

József Pelikán is caught illegally slaughtering his pig, Dezső. Instead of doing hard time for his ›heinous‹ crime, Pelikán is elevated into an important position, generally reserved for the communist elite. Of course, Pelikán has no idea why he deserves it. Even his new benefactor, the mysterious Comrade Virág, is reluctant to reveal the real reason. Thus, begins Pelikán's hilarious career with one failure after another. Nevertheless, Pelikán gets higher and higher on the communist echelon, all the while remaining completely clueless about his promotions. Until one day, when he gets called for to return the ›favour‹ by falsely testifying against his old friend in a mock-up show trial.¹⁸

It is a movie which we very often quote from, and these quotations have been built into our every day life. Here are some of the well-known sayings from ›The Witness‹:

Ez egy komoly, névtelen feljelentés volt, géppel írva.
(Rendőrr)

It was a serious anonymous report, typewritten. (Policeman)

Virág elvtárs – Comrade Virág:

A nemzetközi helyzet egyre fokozódik. – *The international situation is intensifying.*

Az élet nem habostorta. – *Life is not a whipped cream cake.*
Csapásokat adunk, és csapásokat kapunk. – *We give blows and we get blows.*

2.2.1 Pre-viewing 1

- **Customs:** disznóvágás, disznótor: véreshurka, kolbász, töpörtyű, (pig-killing, dinner on pig-killing day, black pudding, sausages, pork crackling etc.)
- Short newspaper-articles about illegal pig-killing, e.g.:

»Gyurján Mihályné, nyíregyházi 52 holdas kulákasszony az-
zal a mesével akart vágási engedélyt szerezni, hogy hízott
disznaja beleszaladt az udvaron feldőlt vasvillába. Az ellen-
őrzés során kiderül, hogy a vasvilla egyik ágát kihajlították,
és úgy vágták a sertés torkába. A sertést elkobozták. A
kulákasszonyt a nyíregyházi járásbíróság egyévi börtönre,

¹⁸ On the basis of
<http://fa.osaarchivum.org/filmlibrary/browse/country?val=32> (2011)

kétezer forint pénzbüntetésre és 10 hold föld elkobzására ítélte.« (Szabad Nép, 1951, dec. 18.)¹⁹

2.2.2 Pre-viewing 2:

- **-lag, -leg** (Politikailag, eszmeileg kell átgyúrni a kérdést.)
- The pioneer-movement in Hungary
- The 6 points of young pioneers (›little drummers‹)
- The 12 points of Pioneers

A kisdobosok 6 pontja

1. A kisdobos hűséges gyermeke a magyar hazának.
2. A kisdobos szereti és tiszteli szüleit, nevelőit, pajtásait.
3. A kisdobos szorgalmasan tanul és dolgozik, segíti társait.
4. A kisdobos igazat mond, és igazságosan cselekszik.
5. A kisdobos edzi testét és óvja egészségét.
6. A kisdobos úgy él, hogy méltó legyen az úttörők vörös nyakkendőjére.²⁰

Az úttörők 12 pontja

1. Az úttörő hű gyermeke hazánknak, a Magyar Népköztársaságnak, felelősséggel dolgozik érte.
2. Az úttörő erősíti a népek barátságát, védi a vörös nyakkendő becsületét.

¹⁹ Mihályné Gyurcsány kulak woman from Nyíregyháza with 20 ›holds‹ of land (1 hold = 1 Hungarian acre = 0,57 hectares of land) wanted to get a permission for pig-killing by telling a tale that her pig had run into a fork which had overturned in her yard. During the control it turned out that the branch of the fork had been bent out, and thus had been cut in the throat of the pig. The pig was confiscated. The kulak woman was sentenced to one year in prison, to pay a 2 000 ft fine, and to be confiscated of 10 ›holds‹ of land. (*Translated by the author*) (From ›Szabad Nép‹ 18th Dec 1951)

²⁰ (Little Drummers: age 7–11) **The 6 points of the Little Drummers** | The Little Drummer is a faithful child of our Hungarian homeland. | The Little Drummer loves and respects his/her parents, teachers, companions. | The Little Drummer studies diligently and helps his/her companions. | The Little Drummer always tells the truth and acts fairly. | The Little Drummer trains his/her body and takes care of his/her health. | The Little Drummer lives so as to be worthy of the Pioneers' red neckerchief.

3. Az úttörő szorgalmasan tanul, a világ és önmaga megismerésére törekszik.
4. Az úttörő gyarapítja és védi a szocialista társadalom értékeit.
5. Az úttörő ahol tud, segít, és önként szolgálja a közösséget.
6. Az úttörő igazat mond és igazságosan cselekszik.
7. Az úttörő szereti, tiszteli szüleit, nevelőit és az idősebbeket.
8. Az úttörő igaz hű barát.
9. Az úttörő bátor és fegyelmezett.
10. Az úttörő szereti és védi és a természetet.
11. Az úttörő edzi testét és óvja egészségét.
12. Az úttörő úgy él, hogy méltó legyen a Magyar Kommunista Ifjúság Szövetség tagságára.²¹

2.2.3 While-viewing:

- Politeness: **tetszik + infinitive** (Pelikán talking to Comrade Virág and Bástya)
- **-va, ve:** Ez egy komoly, névtelen feljelentés volt, géppel írva. (It was a serious anonymous report, typewritten.)

²¹ (Pioneers: age 11–14) Jelszavuk: A dolgozó népért, a hazáért előre, rendületlenül! (Their slogan: For the working people, for the homeland, forward, steadfastly!), **The 12 points of the Pioneers** | 1. The Pioneer is a faithful child of our homeland, the Hungarian People's Republic and works for it with responsibility. | 2. The Pioneer fortifies the friendship of the peoples, protects the honor of the red neckerchief. | 3. The Pioneer studies diligently, strives for getting acquainted with himself/herself and the world. | 4. The Pioneer increases and defends the values of the socialist society. | 5. The Pioneer, where he can, helps, and voluntarily serves the community. | 6. The Pioneer always tells the truth and acts fairly. | 7. The Pioneer loves and honors his/her parents, teachers and respects elders. | 8. The Pioneer is a true and faithful friend. | 9. The Pioneer is brave and disciplined. | 10. The Pioneer loves and protects nature. | 11. The Pioneer trains his/her body and preserves his/her health. | 12. The Pioneer lives so as to be worthy of the Communist Youth Association (KISZ) membership.

- Reference to the leader of the Hungarian Secret Police (Gábor Péter) who used to be a tailor-assistant – »A vállá kicsit túl van tömve« (Shoulders a bit overpadded.)
- Listening to the **language-twisters** in the film (Mit sütsz, kis szűcs? Pista, iszol-e mustot?) – sound off (repeating them)
- The house-search scene (to write down)
- Csetneki²² singing in the pub; szóda (= hungarikum) + bor → fröccs; pogácsa

2.2.4 After-Viewing:

- **Proverbs** (A lónak is négy lába van .../Jó pap holtig tanul.) etc.
- Nyulat nem tudtam csinálni, vadászati tilalom **lévén** = Mivel vadászati tilalom van ...
- Gap-filling exercises (widely-known sayings)
- **Tetszikelés** (respectful formal language – usually who turns to whom using this form)
- Newspapers, magazines etc. in Hungary – The ›Hungarian Orange‹ in The Witness as inspiration of ›MAGYAR NARANCS‹ (Hungarian Orange = pol-cult. weekly paper)

2.3 Csinibaba (Dolly-Birds), 1997

94 minutes (6 parts)

This musical comedy from 1997 is a cut above the average recreation of the sixties. As well as meticulous attention to costume and scenery to evoke the era, Csinibaba has a great soundtrack to transport us back to 1962. The film's musical numbers are so good that the soundtrack album has become a best-seller in Hungary. Exploiting the absurdity of the medium of the musical, Timar gains excel-

²² Reference to ›Szomorú vasárnap‹, to remind the students the scene when the soldiers of Szálasi (nyilasok = arrow cross men, Hungarian Nazis) are looking for László in his house. (Csetneki was one of the so-called ›little arrow cross men‹ (kisnyilas), whose sins were forgiven (mostly if they joined the Communist Party.)

lent comic effects when all characters break into song in the most unlikely places.²³

2.3.1 Pre-viewing

- Consonant-assimilations:
 - d+j (tudja), gy+j (hagyja), t+j (látja), t+c (utca), d+s (szabadság), t+s (feszültség) etc.
- Reference to the famous Kádár-parody of Géza Hofi
- (1972 Microscope Stage ›Clear water into the heads‹ – 3 years' hesitating whether to show it on TV – 1975: Award from the President of Hungarian Radio and Television)
- The polished and official form of the demonstrative pronoun:
 - ez, az = e/eme, ama/ezen, azon (»Én szívesen alszom ama sezlonyon ...«)
- Simple dishes: krumplis tészta (noodles with smashed potatoes), mákos tészta (noodles with poppy seed)

2.3.2 While-viewing 1

- Familiar/formal terms (tegeződés-magázódás) in Hungarian – now and in the sixties:
 - Nem bírom tovább, kimondom. Tegeződjünk!²⁴
 - (I can't stand any longer, I have to ask you. Let's be on familiar terms!)
- Rich variety of addressing forms (Simon bá', Manyi néni, Bajkon úr, Anyuka, Apuka, kiskegyed, magácska, szépasszony, Margitka, Terike etc.)
- Gap-filling in the lyrics (to be filled in with the necessary words and/or endings)

2.3.3 While-viewing 2

- Restricted possibilities Holidays with IBUSZ to Sopot (Poland) or Sochi (Soviet Union) every summer

²³ www.ce-review.org/kinoeye/kinoeye18old2.html

²⁴ This sounds really ridiculous as the informal being on familiar terms is spreading very quickly in Hungary.

- Reference to military service (Ezt neked három év katonaság!²⁵)
- Fashion and hairstyle in the sixties

2.3.4 After-Viewing 1:

- References to 1956:
- Reading the winning lottery numbers (except for the last one: 56)
- »Nyertes lottószámok: 4, 23, 28, 19, ...(56)... Micsoda? Ez hogy lehet? Én ezt nem ... Az ötödik számot, kedves tömbtársak, a Népszabadság közli.« – Kádár utánzása: [d+s] a dupla [ccs] helyett; (Winning lottery numbers: 4, 23, 28, 19, ...(56)... What? How can that be? I just can't ... The fifth number you can find in Népszabadság. – Kádár-imitation: [d+J] instead of double [tJ]
- »A lánc továbbjutott, a versenyző sajnos nem.« (The chain got through the contestant I am afraid not.)

2.3.5 After-Viewing 2

- Uncle Simon's desire is that everything remain unchanged for at least 30 years.
- The scene of the Strong Man's Show proving the chains to be the winner – the reaction of the audience
- Mr Bajkon with the music box playing the tune of »What will be, will be« (Que sera, sera sung by Doris Day) – locking the box in fear of being caught while listening to the tune
- Multiply-choice test²⁶
- Today's fashion and that of the sixties

²⁵ Damn the 3-year military service!

²⁶ Part of the test:

10. Kit dobált meg gyermekkorában Kunó?

- A) Károlyi Mihályt B) Horthy Miklóst C) Kun Bélát

12. Hogy szólítja Kunó Terikét, a kalauznőt?

- A) Hölgy! B) Asszony! C) Szépasszony!

14. Mit csinált az, aki illegálisan elhagyta az országot?

- A) dezertált B) disszidált C) kilépett

2.3.6 After-Viewing 3

- Kuno Pulhar with his most treasured possession: Stalin's index finger from the demolished statue
- Kuno's past – 4 short lectures about Horthy, Szálasi²⁷, Rákosi, Kádár
- »Nem vagyok egy perspektivikus egzisztencia, Teréz. Tudja, én **megdobáltam gyerekként Horthyt, aztán ifjúkoromban Szálasi, aztán megdobáltam Rákosit, és most ezt a Kádárt készülek ...**« (*I'm not a good prospect for you, Teréz. You know, I threw things at Horthy as a kid, then at Szálasi, then I threw things at Rákosi and now I'm planning Kádár ...*)

2.4 Moscow Square (Moszkva tér), 2000 – 88 min (5 parts)

Ferenc Török's graduation film Moscow Square won the audience award at the 2001 Hungarian Film Week Festival and at the same time he was awarded the most admitted film based on Internet votes.

1989 is a landmark in the history of Hungary. However, the main character Petya and his friends – who are just before graduating high school – don't care about it at all. There is a clock in the centre of Moscow Square and old mates always gather around it. It's only parties, girls, and making some easy cash (forging international train tickets) that counts for them. And of course, passing the upcoming exam with the leaked questions. Their way of life can be described with one expression: »muddling through«.

Ferenc Török: »We were not engaged in finding out who Imre Nagy was, or how Kádár died; 1989 meant love, parties and approaching freedom to us ... The film has at least two levels: first of all it's a film for the youth, on the other hand it is a personal approach to the year 1989«.²⁸

²⁷ Reference to »The Witness«.

²⁸ More information:
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0273840/plotsummary?ref_=tt_ov_pl

2.4.1 Pre-viewing 1

- **slang words/expressions** (verda, bejön vmi/vki vkinek, vág vmit etc.)
- the use of **taboo words in Hungarian**
- school-system, final examination (érettségi vizsga)
- **synonyms** of the verb ›**megy**‹ (go) – andalog, ballag etc.

2.4.2 Pre-viewing 2

Special customs in connection with school-leaving:

- **Szalagavató bál** (School-leavers' ball usually held in January (or November /December)
- **Szalagtűzés** (›ribbon-pinning‹ ceremony): The most important ceremony of the school-leavers' ball when the form teacher pins a small (usually light blue) ribbon with the first and last school-year to the dress of the students, thus marking them that they are preparing for the final examination.)
- **Ballagás** (graduating primary/secondary school students' ceremonial farewell to their school when the school-leavers walk slowly, ceremoniously through the entire school-building (classrooms, laboratories etc.), at the same time singing special songs for this occasion) – Gap-filling exercise (A ballagás)²⁹
- **Szerenád** (serenade given by school-leavers for their teachers in front of the teachers' houses usually in the late evening hours of the day preceding ›ballagás‹. The teacher lights a candle in the window as a sign for them to enter his/her home.)

²⁹ A part of the exercise (written by Maria Aldea):
Magyarország ... a középiskolások négy év ... tanulmányaikat egy szép ünneppel _____ (befejez), az úgynevezett ballagással. Egy májusi napon minden iskolában megrendez ... a ballagást. Ez ... a napon a negyedikeseknek csak dél körül szabad bemenni... az iskolába. De a folyosók ..., a tanterekben már reggeltől kezd ... szorgalmas munka folyik. Az alsóbb évesek már hetek _____ készülnek ez..... a nap..... . Tarisznyákat varrnak, fókókat készítenek..., pogácsát sütnek, aprópénz... csomagolnak.

- **Érettségi bankett** (school-leavers' party after graduating)

2.4.3 While-viewing

References to historic events (re-funeral of Imre Nagy, Kádár's death, Gorenje-tourism in Vienna)

- Where is Petya's father? (His father has fled (disszidált)³⁰, lives abroad.)
- What happened to his mother?
- Whom does his Grandma call in order to pull strings in connection with the scandalous graduating examination?
- The relationship of Petya and Zsófi

2.4.4 After-Viewing 1

- Comparing Petya to his mates: Rojal, Kliger and Ságodi
- 6 June 1989: the **re-funeral of** the one-time prime minister and reformer, **Imre Nagy** (executed for crimes against the state in 1958)
- 6 July 1989: **János Kádár's death – the very day of the rehabilitation of Imre Nagy** and his fellows
- Crowds of citizens arriving from the German Democratic Republic refusing to turn back to the Honecker-dictatorship
- To **Hungarian initiation** the **opening of the Hungarian-Austrian border** – The fall of the Berlin Wall – The velvet revolution in Prague
- Political parties and governments in Hungary after the transformation

2.4.5 After-Viewing 2

- **History of ›ballagás‹** (First in the seventies of the 19th century the students of Forestry and Mining College (Erdészeti és Bányászati Akadémia) in Selmecbánya created a tradition of taking leave of their school by singing a song entitled: ›Ballag már a vén diák‹ (Old students are leaving)
- Collection of **quotations for school-leaving** (Ballagási idézetek):

³⁰ Reference to ›Csinibaba‹.

- »Legnagyobb cél pedig itt, e földi létben,
Ember lenni mindig, minden körülményben.« (Arany János)
- »*The biggest goal here, in this earthly existence is*
- *to be always a human being in every circumstances*«. (János Arany)
- Task A/B: to find a video about 'ballagás' or 'szalagavató bál' and describe it in 250 words.

3. Using Video in a Variety of Ways

It is usually intermediate or advanced level students that I watch and discuss these films with, but certain parts of them e.g. the very beginning of *Gloomy Sunday* with the Budapest panorama are shown to the 1st year students as well. Also, the scene from *The Witness*, where Pelikán in fear from the flood is sitting on a tree together with his children and keeps repeating one of the most difficult language twisters (Mit sütsz, kis szűcs?) in a faultless way.

The 1st year students can be shown the scene at the Lake Festival in *Dolly Birds (Csinibaba)* where Attila meets his friends. They can observe how they greet each other (Sze'asz!, Sz'asztok!), whereas from *Moszkva Square* they can watch the school leaving scene as a foretaste from the movie (in Poland e.g. they do not have such a tradition), and it is something entirely new for our Polish students.

Usually 2 x 1,5 hours is necessary to harness a film. This activity should not last longer than 3 weeks, otherwise it would fritter away. After the projected questions or the guides that have been given the students earlier, we discuss the details in points (keywords on the whiteboard).

There can come other methods:

- viewing with sound off (with some viewing guides);
- they can read a given text thus putting words to the mouths of the actors;
- there maybe an improvisation with the text;

- sometimes it can be useful to remove the visual element, just listen with the visuals off, guessing who might be talking to each other, what he/she could be like;
- with visuals back on it is possible to give a description of some characters/places etc.;
- at some points to stop the video and trying to imagine what could possibly be the continuation or to find an alternative ending;
- to give some dialogues to the students and have them fill in the gaps when listening to the film's dialogues for the second time.

Varied tasks from the point of pragmatics (sometimes with the help of some word-cards to decide who will be with whom in pair:

- addressing forms;
- formal/informal language;
- choice in between *ön* or *maga*, or *tetszik* + infinitive (*tetszikelés*) in the most different situations – skipping in the »skin« of one of the characters known from the given film, improvising role play;
- the students can also invent some new roles for themselves;
- Fekete Péter (Black Peter) compound words cut into two parts, one without its half;
- (not too long) dialogues cut into parts sentence by sentence and making them up in the right order (later on they can be played);
- the description of some short scenes e.g. the dialogue in between Ilona and László in *Gloomy Sunday* about the message of the title song at the cemetery in Fiumei út (Fiumei úti Sírkert);
- word-collecting is a frequent task,
- as well as brief lectures delivered by the students (not longer than 5 minutes).

Students could practice lots of things, nevertheless my experience makes me say: ›Less is more‹. In the filling exercises there should not be too many gaps (e.g. the lyrics in *Csinibaba*. In the case of the

given film let us discuss only a few grammatical and pragmatic themes and then these – being closely connected with the films – will be firmly fixed in the students.

It is worth following a certain theme in all the four movies: formal/informal language, usage, food and drinks (from fish-soup through braised beef in a piquant brown sauce and »csopaki« riesling to »pogácsa«), dressing, politeness, respect towards the elderly, honesty etc.

I have compiled a collection in which the most unlike sentences follow each other totally mixed up, not according to a given film, but from all the four ones. The task: to guess who told it whom, when and in which film. The students very willingly recall the situations as if we were remembering our common acquaintances.

The video presentation can be used in a variety of ways for further extended language practice.

Let us not forget that the students need help, guidance and reassurance. The teacher's role is a key one as it is the teacher who is responsible for creating a successful learning environment.

Summary

It is said that Hungarians – a nation having been decimated many a times, having had countless vicissitudes in the course of their history, due to the series of settlings having been mixed with other peoples – make up not as much an ethnic community, but rather a historical-cultural one. »To be a Hungarian is not a matter of fact of origin, but that of a pledge.« (Gyula Illyés)

Due to these four films the students can enter into the possession of such cultural hungaricums by the help of which they can almost become a part of our historical community. As if they were helped by a living cultural dictionary to find their way in the tiny but at the same time very essential ingredients of our Hungarian identity. In the complicated but recognizable system of foods, drinks, scents, names, events, customs and habits, fears and joys, greatnesses and inhibitions, unworthiness and majestic testimonies. As one of the students has put it: he feels as if he has gone through an initiation ceremony.

It needs a lot of time and work to prepare these lessons, but it is worth investing the time and energy.

With this method we can make the cognition of our culture a personal matter of all of our students when we offer them the possibility of the discovery of a (thus far) strange, but likable world.

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