



Title	外国語教育におけるクリティカル・リテラシーの活用-powerful conceptsとメディアリテラシースキルの導入と共に-
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# 外国語教育におけるクリティカル・リテラシーの活用

## - powerful conceptsとメディアリテラシースキルの導入と共に -

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### 【要約】

この論文は実践的な授業に焦点を合わせたもので、メディアのメッセージを分析する中で、組立、比較、一般化などのメディア・リテラシー(Potter, 1998:67-81)とパワフル・コンセプト(Banks, 1999:59-79)を組み合わせることを目的とした授業活動の結果を解説する。様々な授業活動を観察し、そして観察し終えた中で、スペイン語を外国語として勉強している82人の日本人学生は約32のコンセプトを考えだし、それぞれのコンセプトをおのおののメディア・リテラシーの分野から抽出されたモデルと取り組んだ。

その経験の結果、外国語としてスペイン語を学習する授業では上述の組み合わせはクリティカル・リテラシーの発達に効果的であると考えられる。すなわち学生達にメディアのメッセージを考えさせ、分析し、話し合い、そしてそのことについて書く方向に向けることで創造的な方法で学習する言語を使うからである。

### Introduction

This paper aims to describe a classroom activity along which 82 Japanese students of Spanish as a Foreign Language, in a class of Argentine History, received a brief explanation about Juan Manuel de Rosas Government (1829-32, 1835-52), watched a film depicting a real love story that happened during that period, were able to break the film down into meaningful components - powerful concepts: key words that are strong and general enough to organize a great deal of information and allow multiple connections - and worked with them. This paper analyzes which media literacy skills were activated along the classroom activity.

#### This paper contains three parts:

I. - First part: theoretical aspects

Powerful concepts

Media literacy: tools and skills for analyzing a message and work with concepts

II. - Second part: code and content of the class

III. - Third part: classroom work with powerful concepts

Conclusion

### I. - First Part

#### Working with "powerful concepts" (Banks 1994).

Powerful concepts are strong, high-level, organizing concepts that may be specific for a discipline, such as "cultural change" for anthropology, or interdisciplinary, such as "differences". In other words, working with powerful concepts refers to the choice of emotionally laden concepts like "revolution", "culture", "freedom", and others that can lead students to recall, organize, elaborate, explain, question. For example, if we are dealing with Culture of Latin America, specifically History of Argentina, the elicited concepts could be "dictatorship", "censorship", "exile", "intolerance", "oligarchy", and many others of that sort.

### Media literacy: tools and skills

The key idea of media literacy is that "it is a perspective from we expose ourselves to the media and interpret the meanings of the messages we encounter" (Potter 1998). As media literacy promotes access, analysis, evaluation and communication of messages, it implies leading students to understand that there are multiple perspectives for the interpretation of a message. Regarding language learning and media literacy, multiple perspectives for media content analysis and production may confer authenticity to learning. Thus, when learning is authentic (Kubey 1997) the content of classroom discourse is meaningful for students, language skills are not taught in isolation, connections between areas are accentuated and knowledge becomes more holistic.

In order to work with a media message from the point of view of media literacy we need tools (our skills) and raw material (content of media messages).

In order to deal with the information we hold in our minds and information we receive from the environment, we basically activate certain skills and organize it into sets of facts called schemas. Therefore, for the sake of defining a model inside the framework of media literacy and refer to it when analyzing students' response, this paper will specifically consider the notion of "schemas", and "skills".

### Schemas and media messages

Although the notion of schemas has been developed to explain how people interact interpersonally (self schemas, role schemas, person schemas, etc) it can also be useful to explain how we can organize information supplied by media messages.

"Schemas are sets of facts that each of us assembles in order to organize the information we hold in our minds" (Potter 1998). The conception of schemas is useful to deal with media information for it allows the organization of a great deal of information in a simple way. Besides, as not all the receptors of a message, for instance viewers of a film, activate the same schemas, using schemas with media information may report good results in a language class for it leads to an exchange from different points of view.

Basically, schemas activated when, for example viewing a film, are narrative schemas (important events in the plot), setting schemas (characteristics of the context), thematic schemas (the moral of the story), and rhetorical schemas (storyteller's purpose).

### Media literacy and rudimentary skills

Rudimentary skills refer to recognizing symbols, patterns, matching meaning between a symbol and what we have already learned, making sense of information by arranging elements in a story. We are fairly proficient with these rudimentary skills by early adolescence. The reason why they are included in a proposal of work for university students is that being students of a foreign language, they could find it interesting certain special uses of the language. For example: a meaningful intonation, a word used with a especial meaning, connotations, purposeful omissions, and other particular uses of the language, normally emotionally laden.

### Media literacy and advanced skills

Aiming to motivate students to develop critical viewing and critical thinking, speak in class and write reports with at least one interesting idea, this paper proposes using the advanced skills of media literacy so as to analyze the content of media, in this case a film.

The advanced skills refer to focusing the analysis in the message, extending the sense making beyond media messages and appreciation.

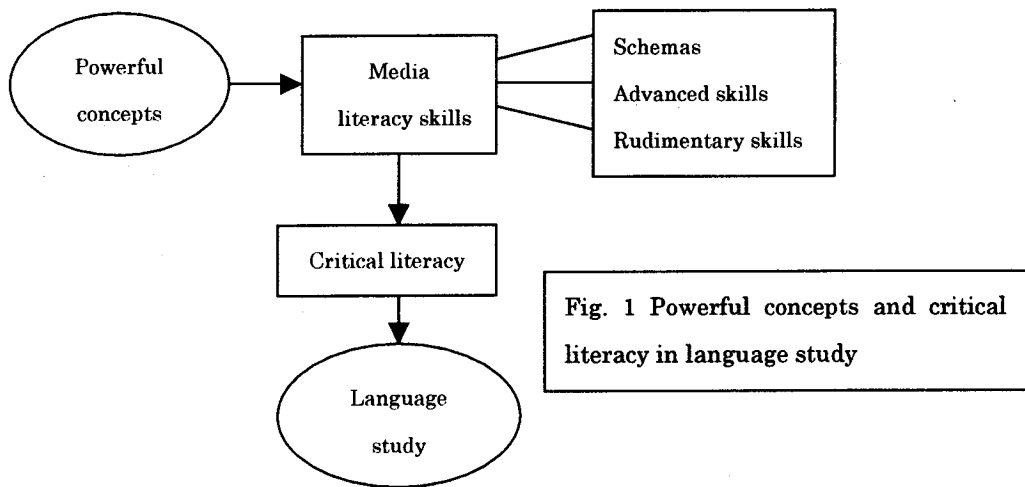
Message-focused skills: analysis, compare and contrast, evaluation and abstraction.

Message-extending skills: generalization and synthesis.

Appreciation.

The basic idea of this paper consists of leading students to activate basic schemas, advanced and rudimentary skills, so as to deal with a profound topic, acquire vocabulary and develop critical thinking while practicing written and oral language.

Working with powerful concepts, from the perspective of media literacy, in the field of language learning tries to responds to Colin Lankshear's idea (1997): "a critical literacy approach to language learning is widely advocated as a means to making learners more powerful/empowered language users."



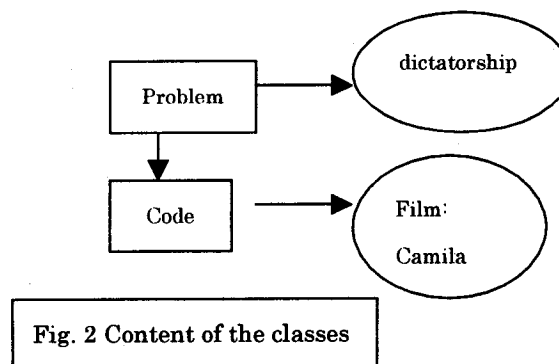
## II. - Second part:

### Code and content of the class

The problem I propose to work with in classes is represented by the powerful concept "dictatorship" and the code chosen to visualize it is the film "Camila" (Argentina, 1984).

### Content: plot of the film

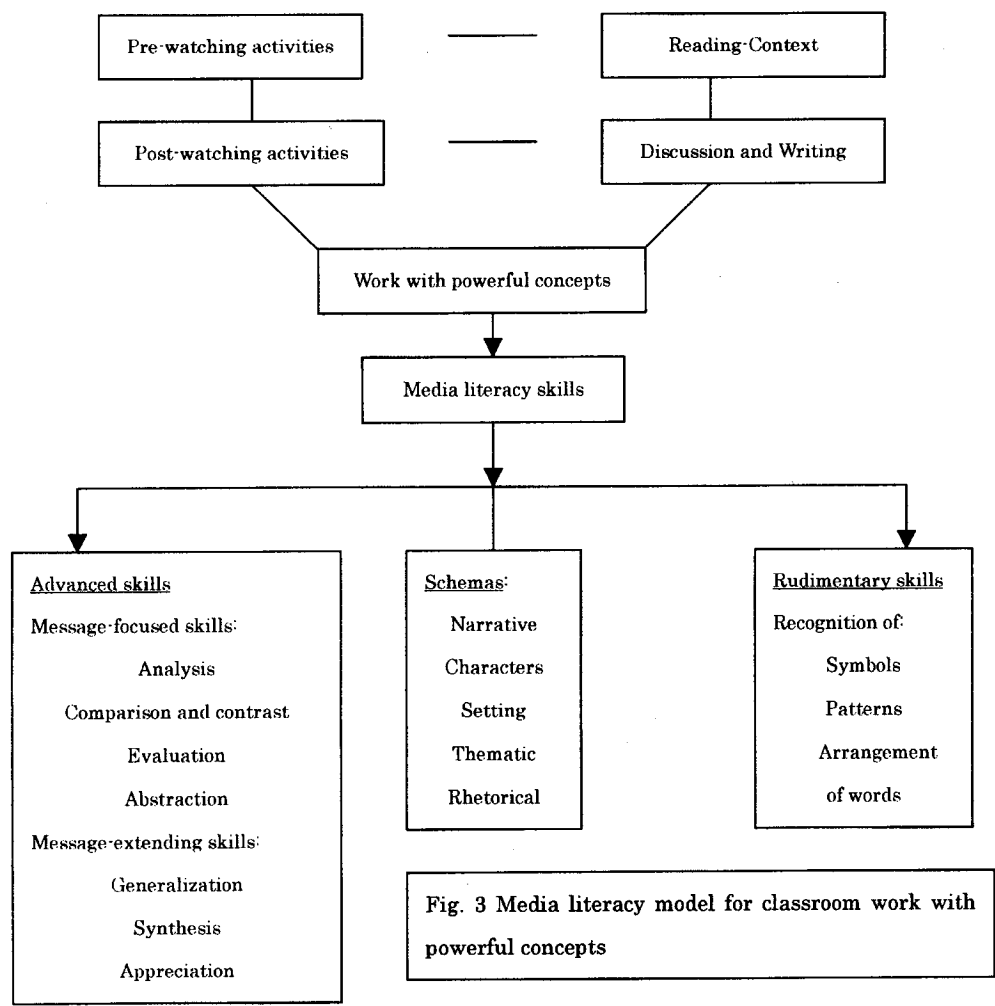
A wealthy young lady falls in love with a Jesuit priest, who attempts to fight his feelings, but ultimately succumbs. The two flee to a small village and set up a rural school. After several months of relative happiness, Camila becomes pregnant, and a local priest discovers the couple's identity. Under moralistic pressure from abroad and from the Church, the authorities apprehend the lovers and put them to death. This was one of the most controversial stories in Argentina, also proved to be one of its most embarrassing episodes. Authorities have suppressed the telling of this story since the first attempts to put the story on screen, in 1912.



III. - Third part:

Elicitation of powerful concepts within the framework of media literacy. Classroom work.

What is expected from the combination of powerful concepts and media literacy skills: construct a critical literacy work in the classroom, by means of tasks that may lead students into critical thinking and later on, into using the second language to express interesting ideas in debates and reports.



Advanced skills

Advanced skills refer to a critical interpretation of the content of the film: having students used those skills; they made profound inferences and interesting connections. Advanced skills include message-focused skills, message-extending skills and appreciation.

**Message-focused skills-** analysis, comparison and contrast, evaluation and abstraction- refer to the interpretation of a message within its boundaries.

### Analysis:

It consists of breaking down a message into meaningful components. In this case, by peer collaborative work, interaction and observation, students broke down the film into 32 powerful concepts.

For example, the first two concepts identified by the students were:

**"Oligarchy"**: the view of a rich house and a landowner, the rich garment of the people.

**"Minorities"**: black people are servants.

### Comparison/Contrast:

Having broken the film into concepts, students compared and contrasted them. Students mentioned the concept **"human attitude"** related to the following scenes:

The commandant paved the way so that Camila and her lover could escape, but they did not do so. The Director of the prison allows the priest to write a letter to Camila.

Soldiers do not dare to shoot Camila.

On the contrary, students mentioned the opposite concept **"inhuman attitude"** referring to the fact that Rosas applied capital punishment so as to defend his power.

Students compared different concepts regarding the attitudes of a character: many students admired Camila's mother and they referred to her behavior in three moments:

**"discrimination"**: Camila's opinions are strongly banned by her father. Her mother also urges her to keep silence.

**"Women's rights are limited"**: Camila's father states that women must either get married or become nuns. He says: Marriage means order. On the other hand, Camila's mother replies: Marriage is a prison.

**"braveness"**: Camila's father refuses to help her and the mother says: Nobody helps my daughter. I hate having met you.

### Evaluation:

This activity tends to assess the value of concepts. Students can compare the concept in the film with their previous knowledge structure about it.

For example, they took the concept **"dictatorship"** and compared its characteristics: those in the film and those in their knowledge structure built as a result of the previous reading, and having done that they can assess its value. Some of the students' expressions were "dictatorship makes people unhappy", "parents should obey the dictator's rules, even if they are harmful for their sons", "the dictator's words decide everybody's lives".

Students gave a high value to **"privacy"** in contrast to **"invasion of privacy"** when they commented the scenes of confession.

### Abstraction:

Out of the 32 concepts, students chose the most meaningful ones and wrote an abstract of the film, detailed enough to convey even feelings and emotions. Students used the concepts **"dictatorship"** and **"love"** in all the reports, which means that they referred to the socio-political context and situated the love story inside it. In addition, each student referred to one or more concepts to convey their ideas, for example, **"censorship"**, **"capital punishment"**, and **"celibacy"**. Finally, students expressed their personal opinions or referred to their own experience.

**Message-extending skills:** generalization and synthesis are skills used to go beyond the media messages. Generalization refers to the perception of examples or particular aspects and uses them for building a general idea. Synthesis refers to reassembling elements into a new structure. Besides, in this stage students are encouraged to go beyond the boundaries of the film and apply the concepts found in the film in other contexts.

### Generalization:

Recognized the characteristics of a dictatorship as they appeared in the film, in this way students could start from particular aspects and derive a general concept.

From particular aspects students derived a general concept:

Image: two people hiding a book

Text: a book may become gunpowder

Sound: (shouts in the night) Long live the Saint Federation!

Image: the librarian has been beheaded

Text: What was the librarian's guilt? Just to sell books!

From those five scenes students inferred the concept **"Censorship"**

### Synthesis:

This skills means reassembling all the valuable elements and produce a new knowledge structure, opinion or perspective. The use of this skill is quite fruitful for it leads students into constructing a fresh structure.

Before watching the end, students were asked to produce an end by themselves. Although almost all the students supplied a different end (a happy one) they agreed in the fact that the tragic end was suitable in the oppressive socio-political context of a dictatorship. One student -female one- provided a personal completely different version: "If I were Camila, I would not try to keep the beloved priest by my side, because I know that it means his death". The other students commented that they would fight for the beloved just as Camila and the priest did: "Love is beyond rationality". One student proposed a naïve end: "In the last scene, if I were Camila, I would I said: what is wrong about falling in love with a priest?"

The concepts related to an original end were: **"braveness", "love", and "language awareness"**

Having watched the whole film, students can be asked to supply a different title. Some of the titles suggested by students were beautifully revealing: "When we meet in the other world", "Black Age", "Something sad during the dictatorship", "Love of God", "Everlasting love", "Together", "Tempestuous night", "The violet under the Rose".

Thus, by means of "introducing changes" in the message and providing a fresh version, students can become authors of the message they are analyzing.

### Appreciation:

Students were also required to react in an emotional, moral and aesthetic way, and not only intellectually, to a media content. In this sense, we can lead students into considering aspects such as:

**Clothes:** students were impressed at the expensive costume worn by the landowner and his family. Also, some of the students expressed their surprise at the clothes of the priest at the Church (they saw a Catholic mass for the first time).

Regarding the edition of the film, all the students were amazed at the close-up of the beheaded librarian. On the other hand, they particularly enjoyed two romantic scenes:

- The close-up of Camila confessing her love to the priest through the wooden wall of the confession room.
- The opposite setting in the scene where Camila and the priest escape: the bright sun of the early afternoon and the dark atmosphere inside the horse carriage where the lovers escaped.

Naturally, everybody was moved by the last scenes, where the lovers are executed, and by the priest's last words: "I am by your side, Camila".

In addition, students appreciated many cultural aspects such as having a bath about once a week, and the view of the "crying women" hired to cry at the funeral.

Setting: students understood the rich context of landowners in Latin America when they saw the house and the land of Camila's father.

### Rudimentary skills

These skills refer to the recognition of symbols, patterns, arrangement of words in sentences in such a way to evoke a particular meaning in all readers.

Naturally, students of a foreign language should resort as little as possible to the mother tongue. However, it is interesting to ask students to write the Japanese characters corresponding to the principal concepts and have them explain the meaning of those kanji. When students resort to their language, they may feel reassured, a bit relax, and we can check that they have understood properly.

When dealing with the concept "censorship", students pointed out an interesting metaphor: "Books may become gunpowder". It refers to books banned during a dictatorial period.

Besides, they referred to the sentence "Immigration is like death". Having found the equivalent of "immigration" in Japanese and in their previous knowledge structure, they asked why it was compared to death, and they learned the concept "exile".

### Schemas

Activities tending to activate schemas are normally post-watching ones:

Narrative schemas: consists of the ability of writing down the important points and events in the plot. The common structure of reports was: reference to the socio-political context, main points of the plot and personal views. In accordance with this structure, the concepts to which they made reference were: "dictatorship" for the first part, "love" for the second one, and "intolerance", "human attitude", "censorship" for the third one. Naturally, the choice of concepts varied in each student.

Characters schemas: this schema is due to produce a list of the most important characters and describe them. So strong was the impression of Rosas' government over students that they tended to consider Rosas as one of the characters of the film, although Rosas is shown only in pictures. Perhaps, due to the fact that students understood quite properly the characteristics of the social context, they did not make the common classification of "the good guys" and the "bad guys". Students mentioned negative aspects related to Camila's father but considered that he behaved in that cruel way as a result of circumstances. Besides, students did not identified Camilla and her lover as "the hero and the heroine" and either recognized that they were executed so that the dictator should demonstrate his power, or reacted against the execution on the grounds that it was unfair to kill a pregnant woman and her lover. So, as regards characters, students left aside the myth of the "hero-worship".

Setting schemas: Students recognized the characteristics of a dictatorial period along the film, so that in all their reports they mentioned the socio-political context as a determinant aspect of the destiny and behavior of characters.

Thematic schemas: Regarding the enunciation of a moral underlying the message, students referred particularly to the concepts "dictatorship" (this regime destroys human rights and makes people unhappy, a dictator has the "right" to control the people) and love (love is beyond rationality, love is beyond religion and politics).

Rhetorical schema: many students referred to the purpose of the producer and expressed that such purpose consisted of showing a fight of interests among groups:

The Church defends its good name



Camila's father -as a representative of the oligarchy- defends his honor

Rosas defends his power

Unitarian Party tries to overthrow Rosas

Students mentioned those interests when dealing with the concept "**inhuman attitudes**". Besides, when referring to "**censorship**" and "**power of the press**", some students mentioned that the press was really strong, not only because newspapers could exercise pressure over the Government but also because despite of being censored, foreign newspaper managed to enter the country.

Besides, all the students agreed that the film had a remarkable "feminist position", as it depicted Camila as a strong woman who challenged traditions, the Church and even a dictator's rules.

## Conclusion

Having analyzed students' response in debates and reports, their ideas, analysis and evaluation of the content of a media message -a film- fit into the frames of media literacy. Along three classes, students watched a film, extracted powerful concepts and worked with them along the analysis of it. The combination of powerful and media literacy skills proved to be an optimum road for leading students to speak, write and use the target language in an interesting and profound way. Besides, the critical reading of texts strongly grounded in the social and cultural context results in the development of critical literacy. Basically, critical literacy makes reference to an experience wherein students and facilitators are aware of the fact that messages are not "innocent", that they are rooted in ideological, political, social, economical positions. Discovering the history of the text, i.e. the circumstances under which it was produced, or the particular situation it represents, or identifying the links between the textual and visual symbols and reality, makes the combination of media literacy and powerful concepts an effective instrument for the study of language, for it explores the social context of social practices.

Therefore, if we want students to develop a critical version, it is necessary to furnish them with the adequate tools, that is, information about the context and a guide so that they can search what we expect from them to find. In the case herein described, students read a two-page explanation, the basic concept -dictatorship- was clarified, and debates and written exercises were meant to help them into reaching the aims.

Components of knowledge	Concept	Situation in the film. Comments by students.
Social and political domain	Dictatorship Intolerance Social prestige	Camila's father writes a letter to the Governor and denounces Camila's wrongdoing.
Social and political domain	Dictatorship	The Governor, Rosas, writes a letter stating that both lovers would be strongly punished so as to comply with the Law and the Church.
Personal and political domain	Dictatorship Identity	Camila and her lover, the priest, are constantly afraid of being chased. They adopt new identities.
Social domain	Social service	Camila and her lover contribute to education (they set up a school).
Technological domain	Identity	As there are no pictures, Camila and her lover can live during a certain period without being recognized.
Religious and spiritual domain	Intolerance Sense of sin	The priest cannot forget that he has committed a sin and cannot get rid of God and the Church's power. The priest shouts: "Let mi live in peace!"
Human domain	Human attitudes	The commandant paved the way so that Camila and her lover could escape, but they did not do so.
Spiritual and religious domain	Sense of sin	The priest says: "I cannot defeat Him".
Social and political domain	Power of the press	Opponents to Rosas who are abroad write bitter articles in several newspapers and take advantage of the scandal so as to criticize Rosas' regime. Opponents write cruel things like: "High society girls escape with Jesuit priests".
Social and political domain	Capital punishment Sacrilege	Unitarian party, opposite to Rosas' party, bitterly attack Rosas' regime in newspapers due to Camila's affair. So that, Camila's affair is considered a sacrilege, which is punished with capital punishment.

Table 1 12 out of 32 powerful concepts produced by students

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## **Strategies of Critical Literacy in Foreign Language Learning – Work with Powerful Concepts and Media Literacy Skills –**

SILVA, Cecilia

### **Abstract**

The present paper is a practical classroom-focused one which comments on the results of activities aiming to combine powerful concepts (Banks, 1999:59-79) and media literacy skills (Potter, 1998:67-81) -synthesis, comparison, generalization, and others- throughout the analysis of a media message. Along while-watching and post-watching activities, out of observation, collaboration and interaction, 82 Japanese students of Spanish as a Foreign Language produced about 32 concepts and worked with them in accordance with a model taken from the field of media literacy.

The results of the experience indicate that the above-mentioned combination in a class of Spanish as a Foreign Language may be an effective road towards the development of critical literacy, i.e. leading students to think about and analyze a media message, speak and write about it, thus using the target language in a creative way.