Film Analysis I

Shots

Extreme long shot (ELS) / panoramic shot (*Panoramaeinstellung*): The camera is far away from the subject, emphasising the surroundings (*Umgebung*) e.g. a tiny group of riders in a vast landscape in a western.

Long shot (LS) (*Totale*): A human usually takes up less than half the height of the frame (*Bild*), often used to show the setting of a scene.

Medium shot (MS) [ˈmiːdiəm] (*Halbnah*): The subject and the surroundings have about equal importance. The picture shows e.g. the upper body of a person.

Close-up (CU) [ˈ--] (*Großaufnahme*): The subject fills most of the frame (e.g. the entire head) and little of the surroundings is shown. Close-ups are often used to show a character's feelings.

Extreme close-up (ECU) (*Detailaufnahme*): For example only the eyes or a certain object (like a knife or a gun) are shown.

Establishing shot (*Anfangseinstellung*): Usually a long shot or an extreme long shot, which "establishes", i.e. shows the **setting** (*Schauplatz*) often at the beginning of a film.

POV shot (point-of-view) [pɒf] (*subjektive Kamera*): The camera adopts (*übernehmen*) the perspective of a character. We see what a character sees and therefore often identify with him/her.

Reaction shot: Someone's face reacting to an event, for example when a villain (*Bösewicht*) comes into a saloon. Before we see him we see the fearful expression on the faces of some of the guests.

Camera Positions

Top shot: The camera looks down at a 90° angle, you can see only head and shoulders of a person.

Aerial shot / Bird's-eye view (*Vogelperspektive*): The camera looks down from a great height (e.g. from a helicopter), frequently used in an establishing shot to give the viewer an overall impression of the setting.

High angle [ˈæŋgl] **shot** (*Aufsicht*): The camera looks down at a character, making the character smaller e.g. to reduce his importance or convey loneliness.

Eye-level shot (*Normalsicht*): The camera is on the same level as the character.

Low angle shot (*Untersicht*): The camera looks up. A director may use a low angle shot to show a scene from a child's perspective to convey fear and inferiority (*Unterlegenheit*).

Worm's eye view (*Froschperspektive*): The camera looks up from an extremely low angle e.g. to emphasize a character's importance and/or power.

Camera Movements

Panning shot (*Horizontaler Schwenk*): A horizontal movement of a stationary (*feststehend*) camera. It corresponds to the turning of our head from one side to the other, used e.g. to present a panoramic view of a wide landscape in a western.

Swish pan (*Reißschwenk*): A very fast panning shot which produces blurred images, often used to convey great speed.

Tilting shot (*Vertikaler Schwenk*): A vertical movement of a stationary camera, corresponding to moving our head up and down.

Film Analysis II

Mobile camera: There are different ways to move the camera. One way is to move a platform with the camera and its operator on **tracks** (*Schienen*).

Tracking / Traveling shot: A shot in which the camera moves from one point to another, either sideways, in, or out.

Forward tracking shot (*Vorwärtsfahrt*): The camera follows a person from behind, e.g. during a chase.

Reverse tracking shot (*Rückwärtsfahrt*): The camera moves backwards (= reverse), a character moves towards the camera, e.g. a man tries to escape and runs towards the viewer.

Parallel tracking shot (*Parallelfahrt*): The camera moves parallel e.g. to a driving car or a group of riders.

Dolly (*Kamerawagen*): A platform on wheels used to move the camera and its operator around while filming.

Crane (*Kran*): Mechanical device to position the camera in the air or to move it above the ground; mostly used for high angle shots.

Hand-held camera: Sometimes used to produce a deliberately **jerky** [ˈdʒɜːkɪ] (*verwackelt*) picture, e.g. to convey emotional turmoil (*seelische Qualen*).

Zoom: A special lens (*Linse*) gives the camera the apparent power to vary its distance from any subject. It creates the effect of smooth and fluid movement toward or away from the subject without actually requiring any movement of the camera. You **zoom in** on a character or an object.

Focus

When **a film is shot** (*Film drehen*) the **director** (*Regisseur*) and the **cinematographer / cameraman** (*Kameramann*) must decide which of the actors and/or **props** (*Requisiten*) must later be **sharp / in focus** (*scharf*) and which **blurred** [blɜːd] / **out of focus** (*unscharf, verschwommen*). As the human eye is automatically drawn to the object which is in focus, the director may guide the viewer's attention by **focussing on** (*scharf stellen*) e.g. a certain character or object.

Deep focus (*Tiefenschärfe*): The photographic technique of keeping the entire image, no matter how far from the camera, in sharp focus. This allows action to occur at the same time in the foreground (*Vordergrund*), middleground and background.

Shallow focus (*geringe Tiefenschärfe*): Only people or objects in the foreground are in focus, whereas the background is blurred; thus the importance e.g. of a dialogue can be visualized.

Soft focus (*Weichzeichner*): A special lens creates a "soft", dream-like picture, which often conveys that a character remembers e.g. his wonderful youth.

Editing

The smallest structural unit of film is a **shot** (*Einstellung*). A group of several interrelated shots form a **scene** (*Szene*). A group of consecutive (*aufeinander folgend*) and interrelated scenes which form a narrative unit (*Einheit*) are called **sequence** (*Sequenz*).

Editing (*schneiden*) is the creative process of assembling (*zusammenfügen*) a meaningful film. The person who does this is called **editor** (*Cutter*).

Cut (*Schnitt*): The most common transition (*Übergang*) between shots, made by joining the end of one shot to the beginning of the following shot.

Film Analysis III

Fade-in (*Aufblende*): An image that appears out of a black field. It is frequently used at the beginning of a film.

Fade-out (*Abblende*): A picture fades (*langsam verschwinden*) into black, used e.g. at the end of a film as a gradual exit from its world.

Dissolve (*Überblende*) also: lap dissolve: A transition between shots in which one shot begins to fade out as the next shot fades in, overlapping the first shot before replacing it.

Wipe (*Wischblende*): One shot is "pushed off" the screen by the next shot. The most common wipe is a vertical line, moving across the screen from one side to the other.

Cross-cutting: Alternating (*abwechseln*) between subjects or events occurring at the same time at different places; often used to create suspense. Example: Cross-cutting between a murderer threatening to kill his female victim and the detective coming to save her.

Visual Effects

Slow motion / slomo (*Zeitlupe*): Movements on the screen are slower than in real-life. Slow motion is used e.g. to increase the impact of a dramatic fight like in *Matrix*. The opposite is **fast motion** (*Zeitraffer*): Movements on the screen are faster than in reality, often used for comic effects.

Freeze frame (*Standbild*): An unmoving picture, that is used e.g. to create the impression that all action has suddenly stopped.

Morphing: Changing an image with the help of **CGI** (Computer Generated Image) software, e.g. robots changing into humans in the *Terminator* movies.

Miscellaneous

Subjective sound: "Unreal" sound, i.e. we hear something the way a character perceives (*wahrnehmen*) something.

Voice-over ['-] (*Erzählerkommentar*): The voice of a narrator who speaks and comments on the story but is not shown.

Flashback ['--] (*Rückblende*): A scene that interrupts the chronological order to show earlier events, its opposite is a **flashforward** [-'--] (*Vorausschau*).

Parody (*Parodie*): An amusing imitation of a well-known genre (*Gattung*) or specific movie. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* is a parody of horror movies.

Product placement: "Placing" (= showing) products in a film so that viewers notice them. A character drinks e.g. from a Coca-Cola can and emphasizes how good it tastes.

Critic (*Kritiker*): Somebody who publishes a **review** (*Besprechung, Kritik*) of a movie e.g. in a newspaper.

Sequel ['siːkwəl] (*Fortsetzung*): A film that shows a story that happens *after* the story of an earlier film. Its opposite is called **prequel**, a story that happened *before* (= "pre") the story of an earlier film (cf. *Star Wars*)

Screenplay (*Drehbuch*): The earliest version of a script, written before filming begins. The **shooting script** is the version of the script that is used during filming. The **storyboard** is a series of drawings of each shot of a planned film.

Credits (*Vor- und Nachspann*): A list of all the people who were involved in the making of a film.