



**The Syntax of Film – A Glossary**



**The Syntax of Film**  
**A Glossary**

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Note to the digital edition:

The references in brackets (↗) are linked to

- enlarged views of movie stills (↗ enlarge),
- production stills (↗ still),
- diagrams that explain/illustrate certain terms (↗ diagram),
- samples from actual productions (↗ sample), or
- extracts from movies (↗ title).

Intradocument links are set in small caps.

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## Signs [Zeichen]

Even though the title of this glossary foregrounds the relation of signs to one another (*syntax*) rather than the study of signs themselves (*semiotics*), they are not excluded entirely because they are an essential part of communication. However, the following definitions merely provide a very rudimentary introduction that tries to combine Ferdinand de Saussure's and Charles Sanders Peirce's ideas.

**sign [Zeichen].** In Saussure's terminology, the basic unit of signification composed of the *signifier*, which carries the meaning, and the *signified*, which is the concept or idea of what is signified in a given context. In written language, for example, the word "tree" is the signifier, the idea of the tree the signified; the whole sign is composed of both elements, and the actual tree is called the *referent*, which is not part of the sign itself. In cinema the signified, the idea of the tree, may remain the same, but the signifier, the image (or even the sound) of the tree is much more complex. (↗ diagram)

**connotation [Konnotation].** The suggestive or associative sense of an expression that extends beyond its strict literal definition.

**denotation [Denotation].** The strict literal definition of an expression as opposed to CONNOTATION.

**icon [Icon].** In the semiotic categories first formulated by Peirce and adapted by Peter Wollen, a SIGN whose signifier represents the signified/referent mainly by its similarity to it. (↗ diagram) (↗ *Waking Life*)

**index [Index].** In the Peirce/Wollen system, a SIGN whose signifier represents its signified/referent by virtue of an existential bond. For example, a thermometer or a weathercock "point to" what they signify. (↗ diagram) (↗ *Midnight Cowboy*)

**symbol [Symbol].** (1) In the Peirce/Wollen system, an arbitrary SIGN that demands neither resemblance between its signifier and its signified nor any existential bond between the two, but operates by pure convention. Iconic, indexical or symbolic qualities are not mutually exclusive and can coexist in a sign. However, one mode may dominate in a given context. (↗ diagram) (2) More generally, something that represents something else by resemblance, association, or convention.

## Communication [Kommunikation]

**diegesis [Diegese].** The spatiotemporal universe created by a (filmic) narration, also called "narrated world." In a communication model it constitutes the *intradiegetic* (also called *diegetic*) level of communication, produced by the narration on the *extradiegetic* (also called *non-diegetic*) level in which it is embedded. The top level of this hierarchy is the *extratextual* level of communication, the one that exists "outside the film" and on which a real audience would watch a real movie. (↗ diagram) (↗ *La Nuit américaine*) (↗ *The Purple Rose of Cairo*)

**story|discourse [Geschichte] Text der Geschichte.** Structuralist theory argues that each narrative has two parts: a story, the content or chain of *events* (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the *existents* (characters, items of setting); and a discourse, that is, the expression, the means by which the content is communicated. In simple terms, the story is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the *how*. (↗ diagram)

**diegetic break [Fiktionsbruch].** The destruction of the audience's illusion of witnessing a quasi-unmediated STORY unfold in front of their eyes, often achieved by having characters cross the threshold of the intradiegetic communication system. See also DIEGESIS and HYPERMEDIACY. (↗ *Annie Hall*)

**hypermediacy [ausgestellte Mittelbarkeit].** In Jay David Bolter's and Richard Grusin's theory, the epistemological meaning of hypermediacy is opacity: The fact that knowledge of the world comes to us through media. The viewer acknowledges that they are in the presence of a medium and learns through acts of mediation or indeed about mediation itself.

**immediacy [Unmittelbarkeit].** In Bolter's and Grusin's theory, the epistemological sense of immediacy is transparency: The absence of mediation or representation. It is the notion that a medium could erase itself and leave the viewer in the presence of the objects represented, so that they could know the objects directly and forget the presence of the medium.

## Units [Einheiten]

**frame [Einzelbild].** One of the successive individual images that comprise a motion picture, or the space such an image occupies. On celluloid each frame is separated from the others by a horizontal border called a *frame line*. The frame is the smallest coherent unit of a film. Like a still photograph, it may contain all the elements of a SHOT as far as composition is concerned, but it cannot convey motion unless it is shown in conjunction with preceding and following frames at a determined rate of frames per second (24 f.p.s. for 35 mm sound film). (↗ sample)

**shot [Einstellung].** A single continuous *take*, filmed in a single session from one camera setup. The basic grammatical unit of the language of film, a shot may range from a single FRAME taken from a fixed position to a setup involving complex camera MOVEMENT.

**scene [Szene].** In the strictest sense, a section of a motion picture which is unified as to time and place. It is made up from a series of SHOTS of varying ANGLES and is usually filmed in one session. As a unit of film language, the scene is larger than a shot and smaller than a SEQUENCE. The term scene is also often used broadly and loosely to describe any distinct unit of a film, such as a take, a shot, or a sequence.

**sequence [Sequenz].** A number of SCENES linked together by time, location, or narrative continuity to form a unified episode in a motion picture. It is often likened to a chapter in a book, the scene being the equivalent of a paragraph and the SHOT the equivalent of a sentence. Traditionally, but not necessarily, a sequence begins with a FADE-IN and ends with a FADE-OUT or some other optical PUNCTUATION device.

**sequence shot, also plan-séquence, long take [Plansequenz].** A long, usually complex shot, often including complicated camera MOVEMENTS and action. (↗ *Touch of Evil*)



## Distance [Einstellungsgröße]



**extreme long shot [weit].** (abbreviated ELS or XLS) A wide-angle SHOT providing a bird's-eye view of a vast area. Usually a static shot filmed from a high vantage point, it is most often used to establish the geography of an area or to suggest wide open spaces. (↗ enlarge)



**long shot [Totale].** (abbreviated LS) A broad view of objects or action of principal interest. The SHOT requires a wide angle of photography and a SCENE in depth. The camera is positioned at a distance that allows general recognition of the subject matter at the expense of detail. When used to identify a setting and establish the background for subsequent detail it is known as an ESTABLISHING SHOT. (↗ enlarge)



**medium shot [Halbtotale].** (abbreviated MS) An intermediate SHOT between a CLOSE-UP and a LONG SHOT. AS with most camera ANGLES, this shot cannot be described with mathematical precision. Generally speaking, it would cover the full figure of a man or a small group of men with a small portion of background showing. (↗ enlarge)



**two shot [Zweier-Einstellung].** A close camera SHOT just wide enough to keep two persons within the limits of the FRAME. (↗ enlarge)



**close shot [nah].** (abbreviated CS) A SHOT closer than a MEDIUM SHOT but not as tight as a CLOSE-UP. When the subject is a person, they are framed from the top of the head to the waist. When it is an object, the shot is relative to the size of that object. (↗ enlarge)



**close-up [groß].** (abbreviated CU) A SHOT taken from a short distance or through a telephoto lens which brings to the screen a magnified, detailed part of a person or an object. A close-up of a person, for example, might show only their head, a shot of a car's interior might reveal just the steering wheel. A close-up is used to draw attention to a significant detail to clarify a point, designate a meaning, or heighten the dramatic impact of a film's plot. (↗ enlarge)



**extreme close-up, also detail shot, big close-up [Detail].** (abbreviated ECU or XCU) A very tight CLOSE-UP shot that greatly magnifies a tiny object or shows a magnified view of part of an object or a person, such as a SHOT of a face featuring only the eyes, nose, and mouth. Extreme close-ups are useful for showing small objects in detail, but beyond this obvious utility they may be used effectively for dramatic impact or meaningful emphasis. (↗ enlarge)



## Focus [Schärfe]

**depth of field [Schärfentiefe].** The range of distances from the camera at which the subject is acceptably sharp. Since movies reproduce three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface, depth of field plays a crucial role in the creation of the cinematic image. Note that even in so-called 3-D movies, the eye still has to focus on one plane, the screen on which the image is projected. (↗ diagram)

**focus plane [Schärfenebene].** The plane in the SCENE being photographed upon which the lens is focused. See also DEPTH OF FIELD.

## Angle [Kameraperspektive]



### deep focus [weiter Schärfentiefebereich].

Sharp definition of all objects in front of a camera, both far and near, in the same SHOT, made possible by the development of a deep focus lens in the late 1930s. (↗ enlarge) (↗ diagram)



### shallow focus [enger Schärfentiefebereich]. A

technique that is used to create a shallow FOCUS PLANE, usually to direct the attention of the viewer to the subject or action in that plane. (↗ enlarge) (↗ diagram)

**follow focus [Schärfenanpassung].** Focus is continuously adjusted during a SHOT in order to keep a subject in focus. This becomes necessary whenever camera MOVEMENT or subject movement causes a subject to move out of the FOCUS PLANE. (↗ *In the Mood for Love*)

**rack focus [Schärfeverlagerung].** A technique that uses SHALLOW FOCUS to direct the attention of the viewer forcibly from one subject to another. Focus is *pulled*, or changed, to shift the FOCUS PLANE, often rapidly, sometimes several times within the SHOT. (↗ "Day 6: 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM") (↗ *The Color of Money*)

## Angle [Kameraperspektive]

(1) *Angle* or *camera angle* often serve as umbrella terms to describe anything that concerns the positioning of the camera in relation to what is being filmed, ranging from DISTANCE to POINT OF VIEW. (2) The following definitions focus on the actual angle by which the camera is tilted in a vertical plane. (↗ diagram)

**eye-level shot [Normalsicht].** Provides a normal viewpoint and is usually shot from a height of four to six feet, with no distortion of vertical lines. The eye level of the performer, not the cameraman, determines camera height, and is especially crucial in CLOSE-UP shots. Because of normal viewpoint, the eye-level shot is considered useful in establishing situations and providing audiences with a frame of reference. (↗ enlarge)



**high-angle shot [Obersicht, auch extreme O.: Vogelperspektive].** A SHOT taken from an elevated position looking down on the subject or the action. (↗ enlarge)



**low-angle shot [Untersicht, auch extreme U.: Froschperspektive].** A SHOT taken from a low camera setup with the camera tilted upward. Often used for dramatic impact because it makes people and objects seem tall and overpowering. (↗ enlarge)



## Movement [Kamerabewegung]

**pan [horizontaler Schwenk].** A camera movement on a horizontal plane from one part of a SCENE to another. A contraction of *panorama* or *panoramic*, the term is sometimes used to describe any pivotal movement of the camera. (↗ diagram) (↗ *The Straight Story*)

**roll [Rollen].** Movement of the camera around the axis that runs longitudinally from the lens to the subject. (↗ diagram) (↗ *Apocalypse Now*) (↗ *The Talented Mr. Ripley*)

**tilt [vertikaler Schwenk].** The pivotal movement of a camera in a vertical plane. In a tilt shot, the camera is moved up (*tilt up*) or down (*tilt down*), in contrast to a PAN shot, in which the camera is moved horizontally. (↗ diagram) (↗ *Gladiator*) (↗ *12 Angry Men*)

**tracking shot, also trucking shot, traveling shot, dolly shot [Kamerafahrt].** A SHOT in which a camera—mounted on tracks, on a vehicle, or on a dolly—moves forward, backward, or

## Point of View [Szenenauflösung]

sideways, often to follow the action and the movements of performers. The camera is said to *track in* when moving closer to the subject and to *track out* when moving away from the subject. (↗ *GoodFellas*)

**zoom [Zoom].** The real or apparent effect of camera movement toward or away from a subject during a single continuous SHOT. In animation, the effect is achieved by moving the camera in relation to the animation stand. In live-action cinematography, however, it is usually achieved by means of the zoom lens, with the camera remaining stationary. The camera operator is said to be *zooming in* when they bring the subject closer to view and to be *zooming out* or *zooming back* when they withdraw farther from the image. In its broadest sense, the term *zoom shot* is used interchangeably with a TRACKING SHOT or DOLLY SHOT. (↗ *Don't Look Now*)

## Point of View [Szenenauflösung]

The term *point of view* is used in many contexts with many, sometimes metaphorical, meanings. This part of the glossary focuses on visual perception and the transmission of information via the visual channel, whereas auditory perception is treated separately in the SOUND section. The fact that films use the visual and the auditory channel simultaneously means that both can contain narratives that have their own distinct features.

**establishing shot [einführende Einstellung].** A SHOT, usually a LONG SHOT or a full shot at the beginning of a SEQUENCE, which establishes the location, setting, and mood of the action. It provides the audience with an initial visual orientation, enabling it to see the interrelationship between the general setting and the detailed action in subsequent SCENES. (↗ *Carrie*)

**eyeline match [Blickachsenanschluss].** An EDITING technique that combines two shots, the first showing a character looking off screen, the second showing what they are looking at. Typically, the first shot would be a REACTION SHOT followed by a REVERSE SHOT. (↗ *Jaws*)



**over-the-shoulder shot [Über-die-Schulter].** A common SHOT in dialogue scenes in which the subject is viewed from an ANGLE just over the shoulder of another performer. (↗ enlarge)

**reverse shot, also reverse angle [Gegenschuss, auch Gegen-Einstellung].** A SHOT taken from an ANGLE opposite the one from which the preceding shot has been taken. The reverse angle technique is frequently employed in dialogue scenes to provide the editor with alternate facial shots of the actors speaking. See also SHOT/REVERSE SHOT and EYELINE MATCH. (↗ enlarge)



**reaction shot [Reaktions-Einstellung].** A CLOSE SHOT of a person (or persons) reacting to something that is said or done off scene or in a previous SHOT. A reaction shot may be used as a standard CONTINUITY device, such as cutting from one player speaking to another who is reacting to the former's words, or as a CUTAWAY device, such as cutting from the main action in a boxing ring to the reaction of a spectator in the audience, then returning to the main action. See also SHOT/REVERSE SHOT and EYELINE MATCH. (↗ *Jaws*)

**ocularization [Okularisierung].** In François Jost's terminology ocularization describes the relation between a character's field of vision and that of the viewer. It can be subdivided into *internal ocularization*, in which the viewer's visual perception equals that of a character (e.g. in a POINT-OF-VIEW SHOT or an EYELINE MATCH) and *zero ocularization*, which means that the point of view cannot be ascribed to an intradiegetic entity (also called *nobody's shot*). See also DIEGESIS and AURICULARIZATION.

**point-of-view shot [subjektive Kamera].** (abbreviated POV) A SHOT filmed at such a camera ANGLE that an object or an action appears to be seen from a particular actor's viewpoint. This is usually accomplished by placing the camera alongside the player (or at a spot they would have occupied if they were present on the set) from whose viewpoint the SCENE is shot. Other players look at the point designated as the player's position (or at the player, if present). Looking directly into the camera lens and thus addressing the audience could destroy the illusory power of the narrative and result in a DIEGETIC BREAK. (↗ *Strange Days*)

**split screen [geteilter Bildschirm].** An effect SHOT in which two or more different images appear on the same FRAME, producing multiple narratives or points of view. (↗ *Timecode*)

## Editing [Montage]

*Editing* is the process of selecting, assembling, and arranging motion picture SHOTS and corresponding SOUND TRACKS in coherent sequence and flowing CONTINUITY. Since editing is a very complex concept that cannot be described exhaustively in a glossary, the following section only contains a few definitions of typical editing techniques, unless already mentioned in the POINT OF VIEW chapter.

**continuity [Kontinuität].** The uninterrupted progression of related SHOTS, SCENES, and SEQUENCES necessary to maintain a logical development of theme or STORY in a film. Since motion pictures are frequently shot out of sequence, care must be taken to avoid breaks in the flow of action and DIALOGUE as well as discrepancies in the minutest details. The appearance of performers, props, costumes, and backgrounds must match exactly from one

## Editing [Montage]

shot to the next so that the illusion of sequential filming is maintained. See also CONTINUITY EDITING.

**continuity editing [Kontinuitätsmontage, auch unsichtbarer Schnitt].** Classical Hollywood editing technique that requires a film to be cut according to the rules of CONTINUITY or "invisible" editing, so that the viewer is unaware of SHOT transitions. This type of editing optimizes the illusory power of cinema and allows the viewer to become absorbed by the narrative (see also IMMEDIACY). Continuity editing can work only if the director shoots the original SEQUENCE according to certain rules. These rules include the 180-DEGREE RULE and the 30-DEGREE RULE. Continuity editing in narrative filmmaking is used to condense time and space as well as to emphasize STORY elements, structuring the narrative material so that patterns of meaning are created. The development of this type of editing is credited to Edwin Stanton Porter and David Wark Griffith.

**cross-cutting [Parallelmontage].** The technique of intercutting two independent SEQUENCES to and fro in the course of editing so that a relationship is established between the parallel actions. Cross cutting is the key to tension building in chase scenes, with emphasis shifting back and forth from pursuer to pursued. (↗ *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud*)

**cutaway [Zwischenschnitt].** A SHOT of an action or object related to but not an immediate part of a principal SCENE. It is designed to draw attention from the main action temporarily or to comment on it as an aside. Technically, it is a useful device for the editor in bridging a time lapse or in avoiding a JUMP CUT. (↗ *Clerks*)

**insert [Insert].** A SHOT, usually a CLOSE-UP or EXTREME CLOSE-UP, intercut within a SCENE to help explain the action, emphasize a point, or facilitate CONTINUITY. A typical insert may consist of a close-up shot of a newspaper item, a hand holding a gun, or a clock on a wall. (↗ *The Jazz Singer*)

**flashback, also analepsis [Rückblende].** A SCENE in a motion picture representing an earlier event than the one currently being depicted. The flashback is a useful narrative device that allows a screenwriter a degree of flexibility in the temporal structure of the DISCOURSE. It may relate an event that occurred before the main STORY began or retrogress in time to depict a portion of the main story not previously shown or repeat an event. (↗ *Titanic*) (↗ *Marathon Man*)

**flashforward, also prolepsis [Vorausblende].** The opposite of FLASHBACK. A SCENE in a motion picture representing an event that is expected, projected, or imagined to occur later than the one currently depicted. This narrative device has been employed less frequently than the FLASHBACK but can be quite useful in the futuristic structure of science fiction stories or in depicting the hopes, dreams, or fears of a character. (↗ *Gladiator*) (↗ *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*)

**jump cut [Sprungschnitt].** A noticeable abrupt movement of a subject on the screen, resulting either from cutting out a section of film from the middle of a SHOT and joining the remaining ends together, or from stopping the camera, moving closer to the subject, and beginning to film again without changing the ANGLE. Either way, a man seen walking across a room would seem to be jumping abruptly from one position to another rather than walking smoothly. Traditionally, such breaks in CONTINUITY and smooth transition have been considered intolerable, but some modern filmmakers employ jump cuts freely and



deliberately, thus foregrounding the act of mediation, or even creating DIEGETIC BREAKS. See also 30-DEGREE RULE and HYPERMEDIACY. (↗ *A bout de souffle*)

**match cut.** A CUT in which two disparate SCENES are linked by the repetition or continuation of an action, a movement, or a form. (↗ *2001: A Space Odyssey*) (↗ *M*)

**overlap [Überlappen].** The extension of action, DIALOGUE, music, or SOUND EFFECTS from one SCENE into the next (or vice versa) to allow smooth transition and uninterrupted CONTINUITY. (↗ *Traffic*)

**shot/reverse shot, also angle/reverse angle [Schuss-Gegenschuss-Verfahren].** Editing SHOTS of two people in conversation to conform to the 180-DEGREE RULE. See also REVERSE SHOT (↗ *Heat*)

**180-degree rule [180-Grad-Regel].** An editing rule dictating that the camera must remain on one side of the subject(s)' *eyeline* or *line-of-action* when shooting a SCENE. This allows smooth cutting between SHOTS because spatial relationships and directions of movement are consistent. (↗ diagram)

**30-degree rule [30-Grad-Regel].** A basic guideline for CONTINUITY EDITING that requires that the camera ANGLES vary between SHOTS by at least thirty degrees in order to suggest that the CUT has narrative purpose. Conversely, shots whose camera angles vary less than this amount are noticed simply as breaks and call attention to themselves. See also JUMP CUT. (↗ "The Diplomatic Corpse")

## Duration [Dauer]

In adapted versions of Gérard Genette's theoretical framework *duration* describes the relation between *DISCOURSE time* (the actual running time of an entire movie or one of its UNITS) and *STORY time* (also called *diegetic time*, the time that passes in the narrated world of the entire movie or one of the respective units). Discourse time can be longer than, shorter than, or as long as story time. These variations are usually achieved through EDITING (e.g. by ellipses or repetitions), there are however some technical procedures that can manipulate this relationship even within one SHOT. Here again things may be complicated by the fact that films use the visual and the auditory channel simultaneously and thus are capable of producing more than one narrative at the same time. See also DIEGESIS. (↗ diagram)

**accelerated motion, also fast motion [Zeitraffer].** A technical effect that makes people or objects appear to be moving at a faster-than-normal rate during projection, shortening DISCOURSE time in relation to STORY time. It is achieved by running the camera at a slower rate than the standard 24 FRAMES per second. Accelerated motion has been used for comic effect since the early days of film but it also has been used to speed up the pace of action and adventure films. (↗ *Zazie dans le métro*) (↗ *Koyaanisqatsi*)

**slow motion [Zeitlupe].** An effect resulting from running film through a camera at faster-than-normal speed. When the film is projected at the standard rate of speed, action on the screen seems slowed down, lengthening DISCOURSE time in relation to STORY time. Slow motion has been widely used for artistic effect, to create a romantic aura, or stress a moment in time. (↗ *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*) (↗ *Powaqqatsi*)

**freeze frame [Standbild].** The effect of repeatedly printing a single FRAME so that the action seems to freeze on the screen into still-like motionlessness. DISCOURSE time continues but STORY time, at least with regard to the visually depicted event, does not, resulting in what is called a *pause*. The process can be used to lengthen a SCENE, to highlight a point, or for sheer dramatic effect. In its broadest sense it can be seen as a PUNCTUATION device. (↗ *Les Choses de la vie*)

**frozen time [Standbildfahrt].** A special effects shot that uses a combination of conventional camerawork and COMPUTER-GENERATED IMAGERY. A SCENE is initially shot using conventional still cameras, with the path of the camera movement mapped out using computers. More than 100 cameras may be rigged up in a line along the path of the camera movement. These take series of still images that can then be animated, allowing the filmmakers the freedom to vary the speed of the camera movement independently of the event taking place. Thus, during frozen time, while an event plays out in SLOW MOTION or even freezes entirely, the camera can move around the action at a higher speed and in a different direction, calling attention to the mediation of the event and thus possibly resulting in HYPERMEDIACY. (↗ still) (↗ *The Matrix*)

## Digital Cinematography [Digitale Kinematographie]

**digital effects [Digitaleffekte].** Special visual effects produced by manipulating images that are stored in a computer in *binary digital form* (as a string of 1s and 0s). The images can be movie FRAMES or artwork scanned into a computer or pictures generated by the computer. The effects artist uses the computer to *composite* the images (put different elements together in one frame) and manipulate them in various ways. A COMPUTER-GENERATED IMAGE of a charging dinosaur, for example, can be placed behind a filmed image of a man running away. In MORPHING, one image (such as a woman) is transformed into another (such as a panther). Digital effects can also be used to enhance filmed SCENES (for example, adding computer-generated snow to make a blizzard out of a flurry) and to remove elements the audience is not supposed to see (such as the wires holding up a flying superhero). Digital effects are increasingly taking the place of more traditional techniques of *optical compositing*, in which two or more filmed, drawn, or painted images are combined on an optical printer. In a very broad sense, any kind of visual effect can be said to either increase the verisimilitude of a movie and thus create the impression of IMMEDIACY or make the audience marvel at the employed technologies and create HYPERMEDIACY.

**computer animation [Computeranimation].** A technique in which special effects artists use a computer to manipulate images that are digitally stored. The images can be live-action footage or artwork that have been scanned into the computer, or they can be COMPUTER-GENERATED IMAGERY. To produce the illusion of movement, the animator can specify the position of the moving objects in each FRAME, or they can specify their positions at key points, allowing the computer to trace their movements from point to point according to programmed procedures. The computer can also be used to embellish the image by distorting, coloring, or shading. Computer animation is increasingly being used to replace or enhance more laborious traditional techniques, such as *stop-motion* and *cartoon animation*, which rely on frame-by-frame filming of objects or drawings that have been slightly altered in the interval between frames.

**computer-generated imagery [computergenerierte Bilder].** (abbreviated CGI) In movie special effects, images created directly on a computer (without first being photographed or

painted elsewhere). They are often combined digitally with live action, as when a computer-generated mountain range is added as a background or a computer-generated dinosaur chases after an actor. (↗ *Jurassic Park*)

**morphing [Morphen].** A special effects technique in which COMPUTER ANIMATION is used to transform one digitally stored image into another. The computer uses a grid of control points on the start and end images to determine what points are analogous (the top of the head, the base of the feet, etc.), then calculates a series of intermediate steps to convert one into the other. Developed at Industrial Light & Magic, the technique was first introduced in the Film *Willow* (1988) and exploited fully in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991) in which the android villain changes shape at will. The technique has since become a staple of fantasy features, music videos, and commercials. (↗ *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*) (↗ *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*)

## Punctuation [Übergänge]

*Punctuation devices* (also called *transitional devices* or *transition effects*) provide different ways of linking SHOTS:

**cut [Schnitt].** Abrupt transition from one SCENE to another without using an optical effect such as a DISSOLVE, a WIPE, OR A FADE.

**dissolve [Überblendung].** A screen effect of gradually fusing one SHOT into another. It is achieved by the overlapping of two lengths of film so that, as the last FRAMES of the first shot gradually darken or *fade out*, they are blended with the opening frames of the next SCENE which gradually brighten or *fade in*. The effect on the screen is that of one scene seeming to melt into another. (↗ *The Man Who Knew Too Much*)

**fade-in/fade-out [Aufblende/Abblende].** An optical effect that causes a SCENE to emerge gradually on the screen from complete blackness (fade-in), or a bright image to dim gradually into blackness (fade-out). The fade is a transitional device that usually signifies a distinct break in a film's CONTINUITY, indicating a change in time, location, or subject matter. (↗ *Sunset Blvd.*)

**focus-in/focus-out [Fokussieren/Defokussieren].** A punctuation device that makes the image gradually come into or go out of FOCUS. (↗ *Les Choses de la vie*) (↗ *Father of the Bride*)

**iris-in/iris-out, also circle-in/circle-out [Irisblende].** A transition effect, now seldom used, made in the camera by varying the aperture to or from zero, or by an optical printer, if not achieved digitally. In the iris-in, the image first appears in the middle of the screen as a pinpoint circle of light surrounded by black. The circle increases gradually in size until the picture fills the entire screen. The iris-out reverses the procedure; the picture, at first occupying the entire screen, diminishes in size until it becomes a pinpoint circle and the FRAME is turned completely black. (↗ *A bout de souffle*)

**wipe [Wischblende].** A transition effect in which a SCENE gradually erases and replaces another as if it were wiping it off the screen. Wipes are achieved optically and may appear in a variety of forms. The edge line may be straight or jagged, sharp or soft, and may proceed horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. A wipe of an irregular geometric shape is known as an *explosion wipe* or *burst wipe*. Wipes were used abundantly in silent films, but because of their

## Lighting [Lichtführung]

overly dramatic impact they lost much of their attraction as film audiences became more sophisticated. (↗ *The Man Who Knew Too Much*)

### Lighting [Lichtführung]

In film production *lighting* is the art and craft of artificially illuminating a set to achieve a desired photographic image. The choice and pattern of lighting setups are crucial in determining the texture, "look," and mood of a particular film.

**key light [Führungslight]**. The principal and dominant source of light used in illuminating a motion picture set. It determines the tone and mood of a SCENE and is therefore established first by the director of photography, who later builds around it the *fill light* and other compensating sources of illumination, such as the *cross light* and *back light*. (↗ diagram)



#### high key lighting [starke Grundausleuchtung].

A lighting arrangement designed to produce an overall light tone in a SCENE. The use of a high level of illumination emphasizes the lighter tones of the gray scale at the expense of the darker ones and results in a picture with a low lighting contrast, often suggesting brightness or cheerfulness. (↗ enlarge)



#### low key lighting [geringe Grundausleuchtung].

The effect of keeping a SCENE or the tonal range of the subjects in a scene predominantly at the dark end of the gray scale. Low-key lighting utilizes dim illumination and deep shadows to produce a "dense" atmosphere and mysterious, dramatic effects. (↗ enlarge)

## Color [Farbgebung]

*Color* has its own inherent value of weight and direction that influences the perception of the image.

**black and white [schwarzweiß]**. Type of film that was mainly used before COLOR film stock became widely available in the 1950s. Since the '60s it has almost exclusively been used for artistic effect. In *post-celluloid* (digital) filmmaking the choice of film stock has become obsolete.

**color [Farbe]**. Film stock that has almost entirely replaced BLACK AND WHITE since the 1960s, with a few exceptions for artistic effect.

**color dominance [Farbdominanz].** A technique in COLOR cinematography that highlights certain objects or entire SCENES by means of changing color values. (↗ *Traffic*)

## Sound [Ton]

The *sound* information carried by the auditory channel can be classified as SPEECH, NOISE, or music.

**auricularization [Aurikularisierung].** In Jost's theory auricularization designates whose "point of hearing" (as opposed to a strictly visual POINT OF VIEW) is assumed. It can be subdivided into *internal auricularization*, in which the viewer's auditory perception equals that of a character and *zero auricularization*, which means that the point of hearing cannot be ascribed to an intradiegetic entity. Note that the term *viewer*, understood in its strictest sense, seems to favor the visual channel. This terminological problem can be avoided by referring to the receiver on the extradiegetic level, the *narratee*. However, one should keep in mind that the two terms do not refer to the same level of communication. See also DIEGESIS and OCULARIZATION. (↗ "La Muette")

**sound image relations [Bild-Ton-Verhältnis].** Sound (SPEECH, NOISE, music) can be of intradiegetic or extradiegetic origin and its source may be visible (*on screen*) or invisible (*off screen*). See also DIEGESIS. (↗ *Weekend*)

**parallel sound [parallele Anordnung von Bild- und Tonelementen].** Sound that matches its accompanying image. (↗ "Metzengerstein")

**contrapuntal sound [kontrapunktische Anordnung von Bild- und Tonelementen].** Sound that is used in counterpoint to the image. (↗ "Metzengerstein")

**dialogue, also speech [Dialog, auch Sprache].** In a film, all spoken lines. Since films are often regarded as a predominantly visual medium, some filmmakers think that dialogue should be used more sparingly than in the theater, supplementing action rather than substituting for it. In 1928 the first "all-talking" picture *Lights of New York* premiered, one year after *The Jazz Singer* which was basically a silent picture with occasional awkwardly synchronized musical passages and several sentences of spoken words.

**voice over [Off-Stimme].** (abbreviated V.O. or v/o) Narration or DIALOGUE spoken by a person not speaking (or not even present) in the SCENE depicted at the time their voice is heard. See also SOUND IMAGE RELATIONS. (↗ diagram)

**dialogue track [Dialogspur, auch Dialogaufnahme].** Sound track carrying the DIALOGUE portion of a film, as distinguished from music or SOUND EFFECTS. The separate tracks are eventually combined in the mix.

**sound effects, also noise [Toneffekte, auch Geräusche].** Natural or artificially created sounds, other than SPEECH or music, that become part of a motion picture's SOUND TRACK. Such sounds (a gun popping, a door slamming, a glass breaking, thunder rolling, etc.) are recorded during filming or separately (sound not recorded synchronously with film is known as *wild sound*) or borrowed from a library of stock sound effects.

**effects track [Effektspur, auch Effektaufnahme].** Sound track containing sounds other than DIALOGUE or music. The effects track is combined with the DIALOGUE and MUSIC TRACKS during the mix.

## Pre-Production [Vorproduktion]

**score [Partitur].** A musical composition written as an accompaniment to a motion picture or another dramatic presentation. Even before films acquired a voice, producers recognized the potential power of music to change the mood of a SCENE and enhance the emotional impact of an entire production.

**theme [Thema].** A musical passage associated with a character or a place in a film, such as "Tara's Theme" in *Gone with the Wind*. (↗ *Gone with the Wind*)

**music track [Musikspur, auch Musikaufnahme].** A sound track containing the musical SCORE of a film, as distinguished from the tracks for DIALOGUE and SOUND EFFECTS. All tracks are eventually blended into a single sound track in the process of the mix.

**sound track [Tonspur].** The combination of all separate audio tracks such as the DIALOGUE TRACK, the EFFECTS TRACK, and the MUSIC TRACK. Not to be confused with SOUNDTRACK even though the different spelling is not necessarily observed. (↗ sample)

**soundtrack [Soundtrack].** A recording of an original SCORE or a collection of songs from a film. While virtually always a part of moviemaking, soundtracks became increasingly popular in the late 1980s and early '90s as another form of film marketing.

## Pre-Production [Vorproduktion]

**screenplay, also script, scenario [Drehbuch].** The written text upon which a film production is based. Screenplays are usually presented in a format similar to that of a stage play, with DIALOGUE and directions alternating. Documentary and industrial films are presented in a two-column format, with the left column containing camera directions and the right column dialogue, narration, music, and SOUND EFFECTS. The latter format is preferred by most European filmmakers for feature films as well as for documentaries. (↗ sample)

**shooting script [Drehfassung].** The approved final SCREENPLAY, with full DIALOGUE and detailed camera setups and other instructions, which is used by the director in the production of a film. (↗ sample)

**storyboard [Aufnahmeplan].** A layout of sketches, drawings, or still photographs in CONTINUITY which outlines the main action and the narrative progression of a SEQUENCE or an entire film. Storyboards are widely used in planning animation films and in the presentation of proposed TV commercials to prospective clients. Some feature film directors who like to prepare their SCENES carefully in advance of production also use this technique. (↗ sample)



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