

Special Extended Teaching Note

Whole Movies and Clips to Promote Focused Listening

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Abstract:

Listening is the skill that learners commonly report feeling most insecure about (Graham, 2006). When films are utilized as classroom texts, learning opportunities flourish and teachers have treasure troves of rich material from which to develop listening and all the other skills for every level of adult learners, and to create engaging projects in even the tightest of curricula. Motion pictures are formidable educational resources, not only in their authenticity and intrinsic appeal to both native and non-native speakers, but also in the amount and quality of linguistic input they provide and output they inspire.

This article explores five tested ways to use whole movies and five more to incorporate film clips to create engaging, pedagogically sound lessons that give our students necessary listening practice that is contextualized and authentic, and serve as springboards for adaptable follow-up projects.

Key terms: *listening skills, films, film clips*

Borrowing from the classic film *Casablanca* (1942), we have found that *of all the authentic materials from all the resources in all the world*, using movies has been our single favorite to use with students in our classes. Over the more than three decades we have been developing materials and exploring films for use with our language students, film remains the one resource in particular that seems to resonate and attract the most students with whom we work, and which continue to inspire us as teachers. Whole films and clips provide some of the richest material from which we explore every aspect of the language,

and teachers can make use of this endless resource in more ways than any curriculum would ever have time to address. Films and clips can be used to practice and explore every skill and subskill, issues of culture and pragmatics, fluency and accuracy. Themes and select scenes serve as springboards for discussions, student-made audio recordings, and written papers. Transcripts from the films provide useful texts for further language exploration and practice, including pronunciation drills and chants. Films can also be adapted to any teaching setting, whether academic, adult

education or almost any other context, and we have used them as a rich source of input leading to successful student language output in all these settings. “Movie events” can bring multiple classes together for in-house “field trips” that shake up the routine. This past year we both have focused in particular on using films to help develop our students’ listening skills and strategies both in and out of the classroom. For the purposes of this article we will share some of the activities we use in order to focus specifically on this key skill area of listening.

Research over the last three decades confirms what teachers who use films have known instinctively and experientially all along: incorporating films and clips effectively is good practice. We have used them with our students for a range of skill areas. With regard to listening skills and strategies, our goal is to give our students the tools they need to navigate the new language both in and especially *out* of the classroom. In other words, we can deploy this tool for in-class language exploration and independent study as well, giving our students critical practice with authentic language found outside of textbooks and classrooms. Field states, “We should not just be training learners to meet the requirements of the curriculum; we should also be providing them with the listening skills which enable them to continue acquiring L2 once they have left our care. For this reason, it makes sense to ensure that learners have experience of authentic speech from an early stage” (Field, 2008, p. 277).

The reasons for using films as language texts are many. Authentic language texts—and films, in

particular—tend to generate a high level of interest for language learners (Stempleski, 1987, Vandergrift & Goh, 2012) and with a higher level of interest comes the potential for engagement and higher motivation levels on the part of our students. In contrast to most commercially produced language textbooks, films present the language of everyday life – realistic and authentic (Sherman, 2003) – and in this way, become more useful resources to use in contrast to the potentially limited or inauthentic language found in textbooks. Films also frame meaning in a way that is highly contextualized, in the sense that all spoken language takes place in the context of simultaneously occurring onscreen action (Stempleski, 1987; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Sherman adds that cinematic language tends to feature the critical quality of “interaction” between interlocutors—one of the four major areas of language competence assessed by the European Language Framework (Sherman, 2003). Many students will get a better feel for the language having this “up close” look at the language in action, and the ability to hear and absorb the many ways we use it to communicate our messages. For those linguists who might argue that the nature of the rehearsed and scripted language in films renders the language *inauthentic*, we counter-argue that it is the actor’s job to breathe life back into the script, infusing it with meaning and authenticity. Most film directors encourage their actors to improvise and ad lib in order to bring their characters to life; with this animation comes the authenticity. One only need to compare the original scripts with transcripts of what ended up on the screen to see that animation in effect.

Another essential virtue of films—or even film clips—is their length; longer listening passages are ideal for students who need to practice implementing the listening strategies they have learned in oral skills classes (King, 2003). Most of the listening passages students encounter in textbooks are very brief and do not provide the sustained listening practice necessary for forward improvement. Moreover films, in comparison to shorter listening texts, provide ample time for students to “tune in” to speakers’ respective accents (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012), and we would add, ample time to get oriented and then grounded with the language and events happening on the screen in general. This is critical, in our experience, and allows students multiple opportunities to engage with the material while it is still playing and catch on and adjust to the narrative threads and linguistic elements they encounter, giving practice in real time but without the necessity of producing return communication at that moment.

Transcripts from the scenes we show become useful texts from which to explore all skill areas and serve as springboards for a wealth of follow-up activities and projects.

In their 2009 book *Teaching ESL/EFL Listening and Speaking*, Nation and Newton present a variety of resources and techniques that can be adapted to working with films and clips to develop listening skills and strategies. We found several of them to be of particular use and have been experimenting by using them with our beginning-intermediate level IEP and matriculated university students in order to propel their listening skills forward. The videos and clips are used to provide necessary practice, both in and out of class, that will be key for

their continued language development. Below, we share some of the activities we have developed for these films, incorporating a few of their suggested tools, but we encourage interested readers to explore this excellent resource to see what might best suit their particular teaching contexts and students.

Finally, as Sherman (2003) puts it, “drama provides not only interactive language input, but also a stimulus for activities that exercise interactive language *output*...the virtue of such activities is that they are constrained in language terms by the context, but are also highly creative and enjoyable” (pp. 13-14). Our students have consistently reported that the enjoyment factor raised their level of motivation to tune in and get involved with both the language and the pragmatic cultural information they were encountering in the films, noting them as one of the most useful and engaging tools for their language learning. Teachers we work with at the conferences and professional development workshops we facilitate enthusiastically share their success stories using films. We presented a version of this material at the ORTESOL Conference last fall, and it was a request from several participants in our session to “write this up” that led this article to be born.

Intended Audience for the Activities

The activities included here have been designed and piloted most recently with students in an Intensive English Program at a state university, but many have also been explored over a number of years with students in adult education, an immigrant and refugee education program in the east, and a content-based

IEP in the Midwest. They are highly adaptable to a wide range of settings and levels, and we encourage teachers to adapt and adjust the activities to suit the particular needs of their students.

With the above in mind, we now share our criteria for choosing movies for our classes and several *adaptable* concrete activities and procedures for six whole movies and five movie clips we have developed. For each film or clip, we present the title followed by some of the most salient themes they contain that teachers might work with, followed by a few representative activities for each film. Most of the films and clips were designed for advanced beginner to intermediate-level adult learners, in both university and adult education settings, but can certainly be used with students at higher levels and other teaching environments. The activities we present are as we have used them in our classes, but teachers should feel free to adapt and tweak to suit the objectives of their courses, the needs of their students and the context in which they are teaching.

One tip we have found that works well to amplify the listening component is to have students write down or otherwise represent what the *others* in their groups have shared, in order to build in more opportunities to listen and discern. We encourage teachers to add this to their toolbox of ideas to use with films and clips. It is a simple tip we have found enormously beneficial.

Criteria for Choosing Movies

Nation and Newton have developed the useful acronym MINUS (p. 43) to note what needs to be included in the selection of listening materials with our students, saying it needs to be

Meaningful, Interesting, contain New Items, lead to Understanding, and be Stress-free.

We agree these criteria are critical for our students and have found that whole films as well as clips will, by definition, contain material and language that is new to the viewer, but because of the high contextualization, will also likely be more comprehensible to students. To Nation and Newton's criteria, we add a few of our own below:

- Enables comprehension through clarity of language (does not have to be 95% comprehensible but it must not cause frustration). Use subtitles selectively.
- Grabs students' interest through compelling scenes
- Illustrates clearly a grammar point and why a native speaker would choose that particular form to express their message
- Promotes discussion *in some way* and lends itself to discussion topics that encourage students to tell *their* stories, share *their* knowledge, and to put what they know into English in a safe environment
- Able to be used for "paused transcriptions" and other listening and prediction exercises.
- Appeals to students. We call this the "pandering" question. There have been times we have chosen films not for their virtues necessarily (i.e. positive social message, etc.), but rather because students really want to see it and it suits the above criteria. The

film *San Andreas* is an excellent example of this “pandering.”

- When possible, shows a variety of English language populations, cultures and social classes.

How to read the activities

In most cases, the activity directions below are written directly to the teacher; usually, however, they also include example questions to pose to students so teachers do not have to rewrite them.

Activities may be designed for “pre-” (before watching), “during” (while watching), and “post-” (after watching). “Pre” activities can be used as warm-ups in the preceding days or immediately before viewing the films, to activate the student schema on the topic. In several cases, there are options for implementing the activities, for example both During, and Post as possibilities. We have tried a few of the “Pre” activities both before viewing and then again after viewing to see if students have changed their opinions on any of the questions they had previously answered. As always, materials should be adapted by teachers to best suit the needs of their students and curriculum.

In the activities where we ask students to “discuss/draw/chart/write” we deploy a variety of possibilities for students to produce as a result of their listening. After viewing a scene, students can discuss using the guided questions provided. Alternately, we might ask them to *draw* what they heard/saw in the films in any way they are able. This works very well with learners newer to the language. Often a *mind map* or other *chart* might be just the tool for us to try that day. Academic teachers in higher education for example, might use a film

clip to introduce their students’ first practice at, for example, a compare-and-contrast paper, using this more accessible material as the first scaffolded step to initiating this academic skill. Balance is often key to ensuring that many different students’ learning strategies and styles are met, so employing a range of options can be helpful in that way. Therefore, in the sections that say “discuss/draw/chart/write” these are a few options we have in mind, but these are just options that should be adapted to fit the learning context as necessary.

We now present the films and activities below.

Whole Movies

Movie 1. Witness

Themes: cultures coming into contact/conflict; communities; laws and expectations; community efforts such as barn raisings

Link to trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSljRCsuKw4>

Activity 1a. We learned this technique for “Paused Transcription” from our colleagues Beth Sheppard and Brian Butler, who adapted it from Field, 2008. Field, however, used this as a research tool whereas Sheppard and Butler use it in the classroom, which we tested as well. They describe it in a paper currently under review with the CATESOL Journal. The following two activities come from this paper.

- (During) Play any clip you like from the film. Pause the film at 15-second intervals and ask the students to write down the last phrase (4-5 words) they hear.

Varying the length of intervals between your pauses is preferred in order to mimic more natural language interaction and so that the task does not become too predictable. Choose your lines carefully so they are challenging without being overwhelming. Vary for the level you are teaching in terms of length and difficulty. Sheppard and Butler suggest teachers can then compare the resulting written phrases to a complete transcript of the audio recording.

- (Post) Teachers who wish to take this a step further can try the following: Conduct a simple analysis of student results to decide what kinds of activities would be helpful, for example by checking for a few common categories of transcription errors. Students can analyze their own results to build awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, and to report their analysis to the teacher and receive advice.

Activity 1b. (During or Post) Teachers create small groups to discuss and then describe the two different cultures coming into conflict in this film, answering the following questions:

- What are some of the differences between them? What do you notice?
- What traits do they share?
- Draw/chart/record your group's findings in any way that represents what each person said, even if you do not all agree.

The key is to be sure that everyone contributes something to the discussion.

The task of representing what each member says highlights the listening skill, as does the actual gleaning of spoken content from the film.

Activity 1c. (During, Post) Teachers, ask students to discuss with their partners situations they have noticed where different cultural groups come into contact and/or conflict:

- Briefly describe the situation to your group mates, giving enough detail for them to understand. What might be some of the benefits of these groups coming together? What about the challenges?
- Discuss possible solutions with your group, making sure every group member's ideas are represented.

Activity 1d. (Pre, Post, possibly During) Teachers tell students to think and share with their groups:

- At home or in class, think about some of the laws and expectations your community/culture have for you. For example, would it be OK for you to date or marry someone from a different culture from yours? A different religion? The same gender? Is it the same if it's just friendship and not romance/marriage?
- Listen to each other, discuss and come up with some chart/drawing or other way of representing each person's ideas.

Activity 1e. (Post) The "Barn Raising" scene is about 7.5 minutes long if you watch the entire scene (Scene 11—1:10:33-1:18:11). The first 5 minutes is

set to music and there is little language spoken so it is quite accessible to newer learners. What is spoken is often in Pennsylvania German, the language of the Amish and Old Order Mennonites. There is, however, a lot being communicated and students can be encouraged to “listen” for what is being spoken without words or to “read” the situation to figure out what is going on. Students can also try to distinguish what is in English and what is Pennsylvania German.

After watching the Barn-raising scene, students respond to the following:

- This community works together to “raise a barn” for a newly married couple. What are examples *you* have seen where a community works together in some way to help its members?
- Brainstorm with your group a project you might suggest for the community you are living in here in the US *or* your own community or other part of the world. Make sure each person shares some ideas and that everyone’s ideas are represented.
- In the middle of the scene there is a short exchange between the lead character Rachel and an elder woman from the community transcribed below. Draw/discuss/write what you think is going on in the scene and describe in words what Rachel’s reaction in line 4 is. Listen to your group mates to see if they agree. Note that “Book” is the character John Book, played by Harrison Ford.

(Scene 11—1:16:53-1:17:15—Quilting scene)

1. Older Amish woman: Everyone has an idea about you and the Englishman Book.
2. Rachel: All of them charitable, I’m sure.
3. Older Woman: (shakes head) Hardly any of them.
4. Rachel: (reacts)

Activity 1f. (Pre or Post) Teachers: set this scenario up orally to promote listening skills, but with some visual support to aid in comprehension and to help make the connection between spoken and written language. Ask students to discuss/draw/list answers to the questions below. The scene in the film that corresponds with this is Scene 13 found at 1:24:20-1:26:58.

Scenario: You witness someone being harassed by another person in the street or on the train/bus.

- What do you do?
- What do you *think* you should do?
- Give examples of different scenarios in which you might or might not get involved and what you would or would not do.
- (optional follow up) Find videos on this topic on YouTube. Share them with the class and present why this may or may not be a good idea to try. Note the reasons your group shares.
- (optional follow up) Make a poster of the various ideas presented.

Note what each person in your group discusses. All groups walk around

gallery style and view/discuss with members of other groups. Compare and contrast the ideas from each group.

Activity 1g. (Pre or Post) Teachers ask students to think and share with their groups:

- What can we do when the authorities who are responsible for the safety and well-being of our citizens are corrupt, as the Police Detective Lieutenant McFee is? With your group, make a list of at least 3 ideas to share with your partners. Each student should be writing down what a different student has contributed.

Activity 1h. (Post) Teachers, give this assignment to your students:

After researching more about Amish culture, discuss or record with your group:

- several Amish customs that you appreciate especially and why
- any customs or practices that you would find too challenging to be able to keep and why

Note: The above questions ask for opinions and as such have no right or wrong answers, but students need to explain *why* they think what they do.

These are just a very few ideas of follow-up activities, to be used or adapted as appropriate. Teachers can also use the pause function to create “discussion breaks” so that students can discuss *during* the film. In some cases, we have then rewound the film a bit to launch into the next part of it, but with more familiarity than on the first viewing. This is particularly useful when

working with students newer to the language.

Movie 2. The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

Themes: inner life; dreams; breaking out of your mold/rut; compare/contrast Thurber story and movie

Link to trailer:

<http://www.imdb.com/video/imdb/vi3628050457>

Nation and Newton (2009) share several varieties of what they call “Information Transfer” (p. 47-52) that we have explored and find to be highly adaptable to use with films. They also share several other forms of “meaning-focused listening” (pp. 42-46) that easily transfer to working with films. We supply a very few examples of each below, but the possibilities are practically limitless and we encourage teachers to see Nation and Newton (2009) for many more useful possibilities that can be adapted to help us focus particularly on developing listening skills. For the ideas that ask students to draw, stick figures are allowed and even encouraged!

Activity 2a. (During or Post) Ask students to listen and draw the following:

- your favorite part of the film
- five aspects of Walter Mitty’s life before his trip and five from his travels
- specific vocabulary or interactions, for example, between Walter Mitty and his new boss or Walter and Cheryl Melhoff
- a cartoon strip of what happens *after* the ending

Activity 2b. (During or Post) Teachers choose a section of the film and ask students to listen and identify...

- the verb form employed by the speaker
- differences between two vocabulary words that sound similar
- the best solution to a problem

Students can use teacher-made transcripts to self-correct.

Activity 2c. (Post) Teachers choose a section of the film ask students to listen and put the following in rank order:

- Your favorite places that Walter Mitty traveled in order from most favorite to least. Teachers can provide a full list for reference.
- Your favorite characters in the film, starting with favorite. Compare with your group. Do you share any favorites with others?

Activity 2d. (Pre, During or Post) Employ “Padded questions”, a technique described by Nation and Newton (2009, p. 42) where the teacher reads or otherwise orally presents a paragraph, and students respond with a brief word, sentence, picture or other way to answer. In this way, students get lots of listening practice with minimal requirement to produce. You can adapt the language and sentence complexity depending on the level of your students.

To do this, a teacher creates, then reads or plays a recording like the following: *I have a special recipe for cake. I am close with my children. I play the piano but have to move it to my new, smaller apartment. My son “zones out” at times and doesn’t hear what’s going*

on around him. I have a daughter too, and both are grown up now. I met with Sean O’Connell, the famous photographer. Who am I? (Answer: Walter Mitty’s mother). Students can write or discuss their choices/answers with their partners. The text can be presented in first- or third-person.

Activity 2e. (Post) Teachers, ask students to discuss/record thoughts about Walter’s life before and after his adventures. Make sure everyone has a chance to contribute and record what everyone says.

- What do your partners think of the following question: What is Walter Mitty’s “secret life?” Give examples of what everyone thinks and accept all answers. Discuss and decide if your group can agree on one or two answers, giving reasons why you think this.
- (Pre or post) What is a *rut* that you and your group members are in and what are some ideas you might do to *break out* of it? Share ideas with each other. (These can be examples from everyday life or school).

Activity 2f. (Pre or post) Teachers, ask students to discuss/draw/chart/write about the following:

- What are some of the dreams your parents had when they were young? Did they achieve them?
- What are dreams you have for your own life and for any children you might have?
- What does your group think are some possible reactions to not achieving your dreams? You may

use dictionaries to find any vocabulary your group needs. Discuss and listen to each other. Verbally paraphrase what each group member says.

Activity 2g. (Pre or Post) (for higher level students, perhaps) Teachers, together with your students or assigned as homework, ask students to read the five-page James Thurber story on which this film is based.

- Discuss with your group: Compare and contrast the short story and the film
- Make some sort of representation (draw, write, chart, etc.) to show the different ideas shared, based on what students heard from each other.

Movie 3. Bend it Like Beckham

Themes: intercultural relations; cultural and familial expectations; pursuing one's dream despite cultural/familial opposition; Women in sports; Title IX

Link to trailer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-sETt_XmwSE

Activity 3a. (During or Post) Ask students to prepare a 1-minute talk in which they give their answers to the following: What would you do if (you were Jess and) your life dream and special talent came into conflict with your family or culture's expectations? Would you follow the rules? Break them? Lie and keep it secret (as Jess did) or something else?

Note: the above can also be done as a "Pre" activity, but delete the phrases in parentheses, so that it is simply a

hypothetical question to warm up on the topic.

The activity can end here or continue with these follow-ups:

- (During or Post) Imagine you are Jess *or* discuss a different situation with your partner. Listen and ask clarifying questions to be sure you understand your partners' thoughts. You can also ask your students to imagine this from the perspective of the parents. This is interesting from both the perspective of students who are parents themselves and younger students imagining themselves in the role.
- Next, create fluency lines or circles where members of different groups share what their partners thought as well as their own ideas. Change partners every few minutes to be sure that students hear at least three perspectives.
- Make some sort of representation (draw/write/chart) to show the different ideas shared, based on what students heard from each other.

Activity 3b. (During or Post) In this film, one of Jess' oldest friends reveals that he is gay (Scene 20—1:00:55-1:02:57). Ask students the following:

- What words does Jess use to let him know how she feels about it?
- What would be other ways for her to express this same feeling? What about the

opposite? Make a list of expressions and words with your partner(s).

- What body language does she use?
- Why do you think she says/does what she does?

Movie 4. Corrina, Corrina

Themes: grief/loss; intercultural and interracial relationships; race relations

Link to trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M11W5pVWwyY>

Activity 4a. (Post) In groups, ask students to chart the changes each of the main characters (Molly, Manny and Corrina, the grandfather/grandmother) go through during the movie. For example, at the beginning of the movie Molly is _____ (fill in the blank) and she does not speak. Later she _____. Explore and use different vocabulary that illustrates her emotions to fill in the blank.

Activity 4b. (Post) In groups, ask students to circle all appropriate vocabulary words that describe Molly's emotional state at the beginning of the movie (given orally by the teacher or as a pre-recorded audio file), for example: *devastated, saddened, uncomfortable, unhappy, grief-stricken, happy-go-lucky, nervous, heartbroken, thrilled, and anguished*. Using your dictionaries (bilingual is okay), work with your group to find one more word that describes Molly at the beginning of the film. Stand face-to-face with someone from another group and listen to the words that group is sharing. Notes are allowed, especially in the first rounds, but remembering the vocabulary without

prompts is encouraged for internalization of the vocabulary.

Activity 4c. (During or Post) Ask students to talk with their groups about the losses that each of the characters in the movie has experienced. Each person should give examples of at least one of the characters.

- How does this affect each character? Be specific. Listening to what each other has contributed, work together to find other ways to express the same ideas. Use synonyms, paraphrase, etc. to make your variations. You may use dictionaries here, but confer with your partner(s).

Movie 5. The Pursuit of Happiness

Themes: single parents, career ambitions, homelessness

Link to trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89Kq8SDyvfg>

This approach is used in an elective course called *Learning Vocabulary From Movies*, taught by Ted Adamson at the American English Institute, University of Oregon. The course was designed for students ranging in proficiency from beginner to low intermediate and was heavily influenced by a course entitled *Immersion Listening Through Film*, which was developed at Global Language Institute in St. Paul, MN.

In this course, each movie is screened in its entirety, broken up over five days. Ideally, additional review/discussion days are added between screening days. Each section of the movie has a vocabulary list of 10-15 items taken

from that day's screening. Students are reminded that they do not truly "know" a word until they can provide meaning, spelling, pronunciation, possible parts of speech and collocations.

At the beginning of each screening day, a blank handout (Appendix 1) is distributed to each student. During the course of each screening day, the instructor plays an entire 20-minute segment, pausing a dozen or more times at strategic points. During pauses, students work in groups or as a class to do the following: 1) summarize what has transpired onscreen; 2) ask questions; and 3) make predictions. In addition, the instructor can check for overall comprehension, pose thought-provoking questions, and/or ask language-oriented questions ("What did Christopher ask?" "What was the last word that Linda said?")

Also during the pauses, the instructor introduces targeted vocabulary terms (each of which is represented by an image on the handout) immediately after each word has been "seen" in the clip (i.e. the vocab word "ticket" is introduced right after Christopher's car is seen getting a parking ticket). When introducing each word, the instructor writes the word on the board, and each student does the same on her/his handout. Then, the instructor explains the new term while also providing examples, drawing pictures, performing charades, etc. Students ask as many questions as possible.

At the end of each day, a simple one-page summary of the day's events is distributed. If time permits, the summary is read aloud, and students ask questions. Otherwise, the summary is assigned for reading homework. The summary will

also be read aloud at the beginning of the following day. In addition to studying the summary, students' homework includes accessing a Quizlet page which has been created for the purpose of studying that day's vocab items (see Appendix 2). Each Quizlet page has several games or activities, which are intended to help students review the meaning, spelling, and pronunciation of each new vocab word.

<https://quizlet.com/87784041/the-pursuit-of-happyness-1-flash-cards/>

Movie 6. Working Girl

Themes: different sorts of lies; indirect language of business world; glass ceilings; pursuing one's dream; women as bosses

Link to trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odR6tGpZTis>

Activity 6a. (During or Post) Students create an "Everybody in this Movie Lies" chart to discuss, listen and share with other groups. These can be done standing, out of seats, face-to-face (F2F), at desks, etc. Think of all the ways that each character in this the film lied. Discuss, chart, draw or use any of the previous methods discussed to engage with this topic.

- Are all the lies the same? Can you find some categories that explain why they are the same/different? Does their motivation change how you feel? Were any of the lies justified? Is there *any circumstance* that justifies lying in your opinion? There are no right or wrong answers here, but you must justify your opinion by stating

clearly *why* you feel the way you do. Give examples.

- White lies: What are “white lies”? Give some examples of situations where a “white lie” might be effective. Is it right or justified? After everyone has shared, create a poll or poster or other way of showing your findings.

Movie Clips

Clip 1. Moonstruck

Themes: Marriage proposals, marriage and age, engagements, divorce, remarriage for men, widowhood, luck and superstitions, piecing together what happened between early scene and end of movie

Link to trailer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M01_2CKL6PU

Activity 1a. (Pre, During or Post) Students read the following opinions and state if they agree or disagree, explaining why in great detail. Then they ask the other members of their groups their opinions using phrases/questions like: “What do you think?” or “What’s your opinion on this?” etc.

- “I think a woman whose husband has died should remarry if she wants to.” Agree or disagree? Why?
- I think it’s the same for a man. Agree/disagree? Why?
- ...for an older woman (say grandmother age)? Agree/disagree? Why?

- ...for a woman with young children? Agree/disagree? Why?
- I believe in good luck and bad luck and that it affects our lives in big and little ways. Agree/disagree? Why?

We have had a lot of fun with an “out-of-seat” follow-up to these questions during which we ask students who agree with the statements to go to the right side of the room and students who disagree to go to the left and those who do not know or have no opinion stand in the middle of the room. They then speak for a few minutes to the people they agree with and hear and articulate all their reasons for their opinions. We then ask students to either line up or pair/group (still standing, if possible) or form a fluency circle with the students with *different* opinions and share their reasons. They can attempt to persuade or simply share, depending on your objectives and needs.

Activity 1b. (Post) View Scene 3 (Johnny proposes to Loretta: 04:22-9:14), and also view the last 17 minutes of the movie (Scenes 26-31, 1:25:34-1:38:07, breakfast, the morning after), where all the conflicts that arose during the movie are resolved. Ask students to piece together and speculate with their groups: *What happened in between scenes to and with each of the characters seated at the table? Work backward from what the characters said in the last scene to speculate on what happened in the part of the movie we did not see.*

Activity 1c. Possible follow-up to 1b, which serves as Step one:

- Step two: At home, students prepare an audio recording using any voice recording program they have access to (any program offered by your Learning Management System or an online tool such as Voxopop, students' phones, flip cameras, etc.), telling what was going on in the scenes and take guesses about what happened in between.
- Step three: Back in class, re-view any scenes not watched together. Give Ss a chance to ask questions.
- Step four: Interview each other to see what answers group members gave. Compare and contrast answers.

Clip 2. Definitely, Maybe

Themes: numbers, prices and math language practice; tones of voice and sarcasm; polite vs. rude speech; filling in the blanks

Link to trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeunpuuR0AI>

Activity 2a. (During or Post, as follow up practice) View Scene 3, 13:38-14:18) In order to focus on numbers, prices and math language, students do the following:

- Listen to the prices the shopkeepers and the customer name. What are they? Compare and practice

saying them with your partner(s).

- Write down the prices and numbers that your teacher reads off. (Teachers will prepare this ahead of time to be of most use to their particular students)
- Teachers can expand this to practice math equation language, cardinal & ordinal numbers, orally and in written form.

Our students have very much appreciated the time spent in class reviewing the language of numbers and math as often our adult students state they feel foolish asking questions since the material is considered “basic,” but they are unfamiliar with the precise language they need for their high school and college courses and adult life dealing with banks, shopping, and so on. Further, they have difficulty distinguishing numbers when spoken at a rapid pace. The scene above provides both an excellent, entertaining springboard to this necessary practice in both reception and production.

Activity 2b. (Pre, During or Post) “Trants”© (Holland, 2015) are choral chants made from film transcripts. Use these to help “feel” what students are hearing and to support production. Teachers, do them for minimum 2 minutes with you or a student leading the chant and the group chorally repeating so that students stop *thinking* about the language and just *feel* it instead. These are just a few examples; add more for your specific students.

Could/can I get a pack of Morley Red?

- ...a glass of milk?
- ...a pound of bananas?
- ...an heirloom tomato?
- ...a bunch of your best grapes?
- ...a lottery ticket?
- ...a glass of tepid warm water?

Activity 2c. (Pre, During or Post) Use the same directions listed in 2b above. Money and Numbers:

- \$3.25
- $3 \times 5 = 15$
- $27 \times 139 = 3753$ or 3,753
- That's the 3rd time this week.
- $12 - 8 = 4$
- It's \$3.25.
- $7/7^{\text{th}}$; $4/4^{\text{th}}$; $9/9^{\text{th}}$, etc.
- That'll be \$3.25.
- $7 + 7 = 14$
- \$10.50
- $27 \div 9 = 3$

Activity 2d. (Pre, During or Post) Use the same directions listed in 2b above. Students practice chanting grammatical forms as chunks.

I haven't smoked in years (since last year, for 2 and a half years, etc.).

I haven't played baseball (in years, since I was in high school, etc.).

I haven't gone running today (for years, since Tuesday, since I hurt my knee, etc.).

She hasn't eaten all day (since Monday, for 3 days, etc.).

Activity 2e. (During) Have lines from the scene prepared on strips and ask students working in pairs or trios to sequence them while listening. This can be done at desks or if you have room, up and out of their seats. Keep playing until all groups are finished. Have a quiet task ready for any groups who finish early if it is done at seats, such as starting the "grammar transformations," finding synonyms, etc. Alternately, give each student a large-print strip from the scene in mixed up order. Play the scene and ask students to arrange themselves in a sequenced line as they hear their line in the dialogue. Repeat as many times as necessary until all students with strips are lined up. You can use other students as rater-correctors. This works especially well with learners newer to the language.

Clip 3. Mr. Bean

Themes: Internal dialogue practice; listening and training practice to develop our own inner voices and internal dialogue in English.

Link to trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f83rS0ieccE>

Activity 3a. (During) Play one of the scenes with little or no dialogue (suggestions: the beach scene; the birthday restaurant scene, the department store, etc.). Ask students to watch the scene, labeling what is happening, by *thinking about it in English*. Do some practice examples together. This pairs with a daily

reminder that when they are out of the classroom, they should try to switch their *internal dialogue* into English. For example, while they are walking, driving, or on the bus and looking around (Tell students to “look up from your phones for this”), they can people-watch and make their observations *in English*. They can make some notes about what Mr. Bean did, thought and felt *in English*. Students should try to do it the first time in their heads in English (or other target language) instead of translating. This will really help listening development, as the most successful speakers of another language learn to think in the new language.

Students, particularly those newer to the language, can also listen/view a scene and select *emoji* from the list to share their opinion of this scene, combining with discussion as appropriate and relevant. Adamson (2016) uses emoji as a way to invite students with less familiarity with the language to begin to produce responses to the scenes, but we have tried these with higher-level students as well as a break from higher order tasks assigned, with positive responses.

Clip 4. Chef

Themes: Twitter and the language to go along with it; divorce and its effect on children; adults and children teaching each other; childhood memories

Link to Trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgFws3AoIUY>

Activity 4a. (During), Watch Scene 5, 21:10-24:55 (Referring to Line 8 in the transcript (see Appendix 3))

- Students to listen for the first question Carl (the dad) asks about Twitter
- Stop the video and ask students to write down what they heard
- Ask students to compare with a partner and the teacher, or a student volunteer can write down all ideas students share
- Play the scene again and check answers
- With a partner/trio, students write down as many *other* options Carl could have used to ask same question, but using different question formation (for example, *You know about Twitter? Do you know about Twitter? Have you used Twitter?*, and as many others they can think of)
- (optional) Groups can categorize options by type of question, register, etc., making a game out of it and guessing how other groups categorized their examples.

Activity 4b. (During or Post) In groups, students use the transcript to do the following:

- Discuss why Carl (the dad) says what he says in Line 12? Discuss this with your partners and see if you can all agree on one answer. Each student should note what another student’s answer is.

- Watch the scene (21:10-24:55) and listen carefully to the language the characters use. Note short forms, body language, gestures, tones of voice...everything.
- Think and write down 3-5 words that describe the relationship between Percy and his dad. Dictionaries are OK to use here.
- Share and discuss with their group. Make a list of *all* words noted. Post the lists on walls or the board.
- Create a follow-up list of all usable vocabulary for their portfolios.

Activity 4c. (Post) Teacher reads the start of several lines from the transcript or scene and students finish it with several other possibilities that make sense in English (or the target language) that keep the message more or less the same. Here is an example:

Percy: Mom cuts off the crusts.

Carl: Yeah, well, I don't.

The teacher now reads, "Mom cuts off the crusts."

Students fill in a blank with as many alternative ways to say, "Yeah, well I don't" as possible. Students can explore different vocabulary, grammar, register, etc.)

Clip 5. Working Girl

Themes: indirect language of business world, professional attire and expectations

Link to trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odR6tGpZTis>

Activity 5a. (During and Post) Watch the "Ground rules" speech at least twice as a group with the chance for students to make some notes and/or discuss in between viewings. *Scene 4, 14:28-16:10* (for a bit of "scene and character setting" and more examples of business English and workplace expectations start at: 12:31)

- Tell students not to worry about understanding every word but to listen especially for the line, "You might want to rethink the jewelry."
- Who says it to whom? The grammar implies it is stronger than a simple suggestion, but closer to an order or expectation. Working with partners, ask students to cite other clues in the speech the boss gives that show this is something Tess *needs* to do to be successful.
- Students share ideas with their groups, being sure everyone has the chance to contribute. Accept all answers.
- Ask students to go through a transcript of this scene and note all (or as many as possible) of the expectations Tess is expected to fulfill according to her new boss.
- Ask students to walk around the room with at least one other person and ask other pairs what they think. Students should defend and share their answers with details from the scene. They can change their original answers

if someone persuaded them, but students should be sure to note who persuaded them.

Working with Transcripts

Below are just a very few ideas of how we can use transcripts as texts in order to develop and go beyond the listening language skills.

- Take statements and make them into questions, and vice-versa.
- Take all present tense and put into past, and vice-versa, changing time markers as needed.
- Take all positive statements and make them into negatives, and vice versa.
- Take all informal and slang language and put into more formal and academic language, incorporating vocabulary from the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000) as possible.
- Take any lines with swear words and find less offensive equivalents.
- Make lists of all Internet-specific language used and the lines on which they were found. Check your answers first with your own group, and then with other groups. Compile a class list on the board, PPT slide or piece of newsprint to keep for future reference. Post on a course

website, if available, for portfolio additions.

- Lead drills and chant practice using the transcripts. Apply “backward build-up” and “backward chaining” as described by Rardin, Tranel, Tirone, and Green (1988) and Thornbury (1997), respectively. Apply substitutions. Ask students to stand and practice with each other. Record some of the passages on the audio recording tool of your choice, preferably one that students all have access to.

Conclusion

We have been working with films as rich resource material for our students since the 1980s and ‘90s, and continue to discover new ways to focus on a variety of skills using this versatile tool. Turning our attention over the past year to focus on listening skills in particular, we once again found that films served our needs for authentic, highly adaptable material that can be used across a variety of teaching contexts to develop this critical skill, both in and out of the classroom. Our experience and the research all support using films in the classroom, as many teachers will attest. It is our great hope that teachers find the ideas presented here as useful and adaptable to their students and classes as we have.

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Appendix 1

Blank Day One Handout (front and back)

The Pursuit of Happiness
Day One



Adamson

Adamson

Completed Day One Handout (front and back)

The Pursuit of Happiness
Day One



daycare



machine



ticket



rent



tow



stockbroker



interview



application



subway



escalator



internship



stole

Adamson

Adamson

Appendix 2: Pursuit of Happiness Vocabulary List

Day One

daycare
machine
salesman
ticket
rent
tow
stockbroker
interview
application
subway
escalator
gone
internship
steal

Day Three

motel
professional
candy bar
break
accident
donut
right away
lobby
frustrated

Day Five

shelter
social worker
in line
hallway
back up
full
give blood
light bulb
fault
fix
hire
relieved
crowd
hug

Day Two

gift
argue
meeting
arrive
stuck
hurry
landlord
move out
paint
jail
check
building
salary

Day Four

expensive
apologize
worried
bank account
sink
clean
nurse
cancel
broken
kicked out
homeless
station
lock

Appendix 3: Transcript from Chef

Chef-Scene 5, 21:10-24:55, Universal Pictures, 2014, transcribed by Laura G. Holland, for teaching purposes only. Carl = C Percy = P

1. (Carl is making his son a grilled cheese sandwich, “Chef’s style.” Music is playing.)
2. (Carl finishes the sandwich and places the plate in front of Percy)
3. P: Mom cuts off the crusts.
4. C: Yeah, well, I don’t.
5. P: (takes a big bite) Mmmm... it’s good.
6. C: You bet your ass it’s good. (cleaning his knife) Can you turn that down, please?
7. P: Oh, sorry. (we see what he’s watching on the screen)
8. C: You know about Twitter?
9. P: Yeah, I have an account.
10. C: Yeah? How’s it work?
11. P: It’s cool.
12. C: It’s cool? That’s how it works, it’s cool?

13. P: You tweet on it.
14. C: Is that like texting?
15. P: Nah.
16. C: Sign me up.
17. P: 'K.
18. (P goes onto his device and C eats some sandwich)
19. P: So what do you want your username to be?
20. C: Carl?
21. P: You can't just put Carl. It has to be "at" something.
22. C: At Carl Casper.
23. P: (Typing) @ Carl... Casper. Taken.
24. C: Somebody took my name?
25. P: At Chef Carl Casper? That cool?
26. C: Yeah, that's good.
27. P: (typing) @... Chef... Carl... Casper...
28. C: So is this for sex?
29. P: Ewww! Is that what you're doing this for?
30. C: No! I'm not doing it for that. Someone wrote something bad and I want to see what they wrote.
31. P: Good. (reading screen) Oh, shit.
32. C: Hey! You can't talk like that. I don't care if Mommy's not around. I don't want you cursing around here.
33. P: That review went viral.
34. C: What does that mean?
35. P: It means it got picked up and re-tweeted everywhere.
36. C: (looking and scrolling through screen) So all these people have read the review.
37. P: Yeah.
38. C: Oh, shit.
39. P: I think it's kind of cool.
40. C: I don't.
41. P: No, I mean, us doing this.
42. C: Doing what?
43. P: You know, just hanging out.

44. C: We hang out all the time.
45. P: No, like hanging out and doing something.
46. C: Well, we... we do things.
47. P: No, not just like watching something or doing something, like... hanging out and talking, and learning things from each other.
48. C: Well, I figured, you know, with you living at Mom's house and me working all the time, that when we hung out you liked to do fun things.
49. P: I think this is kind of fun, you know, just figuring stuff out, like when you lived at home.
50. C: Yeah, I miss that too.
51. P: Then why don't you move back home?
52. C: Percy, I can't just... it's... you're not, you... you're not the reason that I'm not living at home, you know that, right?
53. P: Mmmm-huh.
54. C: 'Cause it's true.
55. P: Then why?
56. C: Then why what?
57. P: Well... why don't you live home?
58. C: Well, Mommy and Daddy... you know we... we both grew... apart... in different directions. But we're still really good friends, it's just better if we don't live in the same house, and that we're not married.
59. P: (quietly) Oh.
60. C: You understand?
61. P: No.
62. C: It's hard to explain.
63. P: (sighs)
64. C: Hey listen, could we Twitter each other when we're not in the same place?
65. P: Yeah.
66. C: Could you show me how to do that?
67. P: Yeah, okay... So first you click here and you have to enter your username.
68. C: Right.
69. P: You can also log in on your iPhone.
70. C: (takes another bite of sandwich and reacts) Uh-huh.
71. P: You click this button here... it posts to your feed so all your followers can read it.