Assessing the Level of Difficulty of Films in the SLA Context

A Quantitative Approach

Gordon Liversidge

本研究では、映画の難易度レベルの評価方法として量的アプローチを採用する。

すなわち110本の映画字幕をコンピュータにダウンロードし、このデータを1953年のWestのGeneral Service Listから開発された、Nation (1994) による語彙プロファイラーを用いて分析していく。最近の新しい教授法の中には、映画を確実に効果のあがる語学教材として採用し、これを新たな教授法の可能性とみなしているものがある。本研究もこのような流れに沿うものである。

Brown (1987) やWhite (1988) でも述べられているように、英語学習者の為のカリキュラム、自習プログラム、及び指導方針の決定をするためは、教える事に対してその場しのぎまたは主観的な対処法ではなく、むしろ理論と実践に裏打ちされている、主義に基づく賢明な選択主義の立場から、理論的基盤とそれが現在及び未来の英語教授法開発に示唆するものとを理解する必要がある。

There is a need to understand the theoretical bases and implications of present and future technical developments in order to be able to make curriculum, self-study, and instructional decisions from the position of principled and enlightened eclecticism informed by both theory and practice rather than by responses to technology which are either ad hoc or individualistic (Brown, 1987; White, 1988). Some advances have made the use of film as authentic material a pedagogic possibility. This study, which used a quantitative approach to assessing the level of difficulty of films, is part of this process. The onscreen text of 114 films was downloaded into a computer. The data was then analyzed using *Vocab Profiler* (Nation, 1994) developed from the General Service List of West (1953).

Literature Review

Authentic Texts, Pedagogy, and Technology

Learning does not or cannot occur unless there is a context and unless learners have an interest and or at least perceive that their efforts are a worthwhile investment (Widdowson, 1990; Ellis, 1995). Films (movies) have always been a popular medium for learning despite negative prescriptive positions sometimes adopted by educators and institutions. From a

pedagogic position the dilemma has always been whether or not to use authentic texts, or non-authentic materials produced for language learners. The main drawback in using films as one kind of authentic material is that in the English as a foreign language context (EFL) where the learner is not in the target language (TL) environment, the listening ability and general language knowledge of the learner are not at a level to justify their use. However, the ever-growing availability of scenario books with notes such as the Screenplay Series, and of Internet access to scripts and transcripts have increased potential use of films as authentic text films in the EFL context. Furthermore, the technology of placing the English text on screen on TV broadcasts, videos and DVDs increases the rate of second language acquisition (SLA). A number of studies in differing contexts show that learning is aided by the presence of L2 text on the screen accompanying the dialogue (Holobow, Lambert, and Sayeigh, 1984; Baker, 1985; Borras, and Lafayette1994; Neuman, 1990; Liversidge, 1993, 2000, 2002; Vanderplank, 1988, 1990).

Given these developments and the amount of authentic material now available to learner and teacher, it is surprising that there is not more information and research on the likely level of difficulty for the learner. This is needed in order to be able to make curriculum, self-study, and instructional decisions.

Frameworks of Analysis

Liversidge separates measures into lexical, textual, visual, mixed textual and visual, and background knowledge (2002, pp. 74-96) and argues that it is difficult to see how any single linguistic or visual measure alone can provide an accurate assessment of the nature and level of difficulty of film. They are both necessary, but neither is sufficient. The main problem with both the linguistic and visual measures is that they are independent of each other. Whatever framework underlies the measures, none of them provides an approach that is comprehensive, quantifiable and applicable to large chunks of text, all at the same time.

(i) **General Viewer**

The layperson when thinking of a film may primarily think of the story, the text (the dialogue), and possibly the construction of the film in terms of visuals, special effects etc. These are usually embraced by the notion of genre as with the www.imdb.com site (Internet Movie Data Base) as shown in below.

Genders		
Male	Female	
Genres		
Action	Adventure	Animation
Comedy	Crime	Documentary
Drama	Family	Fantasy
Film-Noir	Horror	Musical

Mystery	Romance	Sci-Fi
Thriller	War	Western
Decades		
1930	1940	1950
1960	1970	1980
1990		

(ii) **Genre**

Genre as above is defined as types of video, particularly film, that are perceived by the viewer as being distinctive. This is wider than the standard definitions found in either linguistics (Hoey, 1991; Swales, 1990) or film theory (Nichols, 1976). Genre is a fuzzy or slippery term, usually not admitted by strict, or rigorous, linguists and semioticians. One of the most comprehensive analyses of the concept of genre is by Swales (1990). Swales' definition of genre states that genre is, "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purpose" (p. 58). However, his focus is on English in academic and research settings. Accordingly, the definition is quite restrictive. He states, "I shall discount all uses of the term to refer to non-verbal objects" (p. 33). He also excludes casual conversation and narrative:

> It is not the case that all communicative events are considered instances of genres. In fact, there are at least two areas of verbal activity that I believe are best considered to lie outside genres: casual conversation or 'chat' and 'ordinary' narrative. (p. 58)

Thus, it would appear that the term genre could not be used for film, as movies include both non-verbal input and narrative. However, in examining what other scholars have said about genres, Swales does consider film as a possible genre. "For this purpose, the following four sections briefly consider the use of the term in folklore, literary studies, linguistics and rhetoric. (Another possible area would have been film studies, e.g., Neale, 1980)" (pp. 33-34).

Concerning film, Tudor (1985) discusses at length what constitutes genre. Genre can be defined in terms of attributes within a film (the Western), by the intention (to horrify), or by common cultural consensus. Of cultural consensus he states, "the crucial factors which distinguished a genre are not only characteristics inherent to the films themselves; they also depend on the particular culture within which we are operating....Genre is what we collectively believe it to be" (p. 122). Therefore, it may well be that while people from English-speaking countries do not perceive some films as having particular attributes, this may not be the case for Japanese. Thus, while recognizing that in film criticism some narrative films are not considered to have a genre, the term can be retained to mean in the wider sense, different types of film.

(iii) **Further Perspectives and Analyses**

There are other perspectives and analyses but space and purpose prevent detailed analysis.

First, there is the work of the work of Halliday (1985) on critical discourse analysis and functional grammar. Some researchers have continued to develop the framework, which Halliday provided (Bell, 1991; Fairclough, 1995). Second, there is the semiotic and in particular how Kress and van Leeuwen and (1996) criticize the position of Barthes and others argving that in the 1960's there was of a lack of recognition of structure. The third, is that film, when compared with language, appears to have no systematic underpinnings. This led Metz (1974) to presents iconic codes of visual analogy. Fourth, how Messaris (1994), in his study of visual literacy, separates in film construction between point-of-view editing and beyond point-of-view editing

(iv) **Lexical**

Documentaries, news broadcasts, dramas, films, magazines are all types of media texts. Assessing their difficulty level is more complicated than analysis of a written text because with a written text or a report usually the visual input is limited, for example as in a newspaper, or not present at all as in a novel or biography. This is not an argument that written text is easier than a media text: poetry, for example, can contain a high level of ambiguity. However, written text is one-dimensional. With a media text, ambiguity, dominance, denotation and connotation may be realized in the visual input or in the non-verbal auditory input of music. Put simply, propositions may not be formulated through linguistic means. Therefore, to assess the level of difficulty purely by the language present is a simplification of the complex input present. However, it is a method that has been widely used.

One method of linguistic analysis is to examine the vocabulary present. One of the pioneers of applied linguistics, West, produced in 1953 the *General Word List of English Words*. This analyzed a large corpus of text for frequency of occurrence of vocabulary. The most frequently occurring words were separated into the first 1,000 and second 1,000 *Headwords*. The derivatives are listed under the same headword. Therefore *eat, eaten, eating* are all considered to be under the same headword *eat*. Although the list is old, Nation states, "it has still not been replaced as a source of information about particular words and as a collection of the most important vocabulary for a learner of English." (1990:22)

If one looks at the issue of categorizing words from the perspective of interlanguage (Selinker, 1972) and the developmental stages of the learner, variations of the same headword are better considered as being part of the same *headword* or *family*. One of the main arguments for examining frequency is that repeated exposure to a variety of realizations from the word family *eat* will increase the likelihood of its acquisition. Thus, if a higher proportion of the vocabulary of any media text or written text fall within the first 2,000 headwords, the learner is more likely to have already been exposed to them. Therefore, it can be argued that such a media text will be easier to understand.

Nation (1983) extended the work of West by developing the *Vocabulary Levels Test*. The purpose is to decide whether learners should be given help with vocabulary learning. Nation includes a *2,000-Word Level, 3,000-Word Level, 5,000-Word Level, University Word Level, and 10,000-Word Level*. He argues that word families are a better way of assessment. Of

these, only the *2,000-Word Level* is in the original *General Word List*. Nation also developed the *Vocab Profiler* software program, which provides a breakdown of the *1,000-Word Level 2,000-Word Level,* and *University Word Level*. This program also separates the vocabulary into three categories: *tokens*, the total number of vocabulary items present at each level; *types*, the number of different words present at each level; and *families*, the number of headwords present at each level (see Table 1.)

Table 1 Vocab Profiler Analysis of Film Casablanca

WORD LIST	TOKENS／%	TYPES／%	FAMILIES
Casablanca 104m			
1000	8575／79.6	861／50.2	555
2000	753／ 7.0	249／14.5	206
UWL	109／ 1.0	66／ 3.8	59
Not in the Lists	1337／12.4	540／31.5	？？？？？
Total	10774	1716	820

With the one headword (family) *eat*, the number of tokens might be 6, whereas there would only be 3 types: *eat, 3; eaten,* 2; and *eating*, 1.

Data, as shown in Table 1, can provide a quick analysis of the likely level of difficulty of the text: in this case a film. Furthermore, the *Vocab Profiler* program can print any of the lists. Frequency is not the only factor in understanding a media text and in developing the learner's proficiency. Sometimes a key word may only occur once but if it is grasped, it will not be easily forgotten. However, if the word is not known, and the meaning cannot be grasped, there may be a considerable decrease in overall understanding.

(v) Pedagogic and Self-Study

As stated earlier, very little research has been done to help the teacher or learner in assess the level of difficulty of films. However, in Japan there is at least one specifically designed for films as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 The Nine Categories of the Listening Difficulty Scale

評価項目		
会話スピード	*Conversation Speed*	セリフを発声しているスピード
発音の明瞭さ	*Pronunciation Clarity*	セリフを発声している明瞭さ
アメリカ訛	*American Accent*	本来の英語に比して米語発声の強度
外国訛	*Foreign Accent*	英語以外の言語のナマリ
語彙	*Vocabulary*	語彙の種類の多さ、難しさ
専門用語	*Jargon (Technical Terminology)*	医学・法律など難しい専門用語の数
ジョーク	*Jokes*	英語圏やアメリカ独特のジョークの数
スラング	*Slang and Vulgarity*	地方や民族独特の俗語、卑語の頻度
文法	*Grammar*	文法違反のセリフの多さ、激しさ

The translators and compilers of notes rate the nine categories for each film using the Likert Scale I to 5, 5 being the most difficult. Thus, as shown in Table 3, a total score of 16 or less placed films such as *ET*, *The Last Emperor*, and *The Matrix* in the *Beginner Level*, and placed films such as *Driving Miss Daisy*, *JFK*, *Rain Man*, and *Romeo and Juliet* in the *Professional Level*.

Table 3 Screenplay Series Listening Difficulty Scale Ranking of 113 Scenario Scripts

		最終評価		
16以下	23	*Beginner*	23	初　級　(中学生向き)
17～2	38	*Intermediate*	38	中　級　(高校生向き)
25～34	39	*Advanced*	39	上　級　(大学生向き)
35以上	13	*Professional*	13	最上級　(社会人・専門家向き)
		Total	113	

A number of things are interesting about the *Listening Difficulty Scale*. First, that four of the nine factors relate to pronunciation and only one to grammar. Thus, for the translators and note editors, pronunciation is seen as one of the main barriers for Japanese learners. Second, that the presence of English captioning or L2 subtitling would considerably reduce the weighting of pronunciation in the difficulty scale. This means that the 1950's Deep South drawls in *Driving Miss Daisy* which is rated as professional, the most difficult level, could be accessed by reading while viewing. Third, in addition to the 'standard' vocabulary category, jargon, slang and vulgarity, and jokes have separate categories indicating that they are particularly difficult. It could be argued that comprehension of these categories would not be aided by captioning alone, but would require reference to the Screenplay notes, provided in Japanese at the bottom of each page.

Summary

This overview of some of the frameworks and measures of films suggests that they can have both a practical and a theoretical role in assessing levels of difficulty of films. However, the first requirement of analyses is that they can be applied to different films using the same test conditions. This allows concrete comparisons between films. Of these, lexical approaches fulfill this first requirement. With the medium of film, lexical approaches cannot claim to be comprehensive, due to the visual contextual element. They can, however, provide indications of types of lexical ease and difficulty that the learner may encounter.

The Study

Advances in technology allow film texts to be downloaded into computers. The *Vocab Profiler* program (Nation, 1993), related to and developed from the corpus studies of West et al (1953), can analyze such data. On the basis of results from such an analysis the research

questions are:

1. Can films be categorized into different groups and levels of difficulty?
2. If there are such groups, what are they?
3. Can such an analysis have any pedagogic value, and if so, what are the implications? In particular,
    a. How can this analysis aid learners' incidental viewing in the AV centers, multimedia, or at home?
    b. How can this analysis be of value to the teacher in the classroom?

Method

Materials

Otsuma English Department has about four hundred films. Most of the videos and laser discs have closed captioning, and the DVDs English subtitling. These were purchased with the learner or student in mind. As stated in the literature review, research shows that when learners view films the rate of second language acquisition is significantly greater when captioning or L2 subtitling is accessible. For the same reason, almost none of these videos purchased has Japanese subtitles because they interfere with L2 language acquisition, as learners are more likely to read the onscreen L1, in this case Japanese. The same principle has been applied to more recent purchases of newer, more versatile and user-friendly technology of DVDs, although DVDs usually have onscreen text in both L1 and L2.

For the downloading of the captioning of videos and laser discs, the FUTEK captioning decoder with computer link was purchased. For DVDs, no additional machines were necessary. The specially made Futek program was used for the downloading of video and laser disc text. For DVDs, the Screenplay *captionDVD* software program was purchased and was installed into the computer

Procedures

Videos and Laser Discs

The video or laser disc players were connected to the special decoder, which was in turn connected to a video monitor and a computer. Before starting to play each film, the software for downloading the captioning was set into the play position. Once the captioning had appeared on the video monitor and then on the computer monitor screen, the films were allowed to run to the end. When a problem occurred the process was repeated, and if unsuccessful the second time, the video or laser disc film was eliminated. When the laser disc or video had finished, the computer monitor was checked to see if the captioning had successfully downloaded. If so, this was saved. If not, the process was repeated, and if unsuccessful the second time, the film was eliminated.

DVDs

The procedure was essentially the same except that script was read from the computer monitor screen signal as physical text, in the same way that scanners scan normal printed text into a computer. Thus, the DVD discs were placed not into a DVD player but in a computer DVD drive. As is often the case with first generation technology, software and hardware have their own special weaknesses. In this case, the computer did not know when to stop playing the DVD, as when it reached the end of the DVD, it simply went back to the beginning and started again. Attempts to save the file would sometimes only save up to that point. Therefore, the new technology of DVD was more time consuming than that of videos and LDs, which could be allowed to run to the end.

Data

Downloaded files were stored both on portable CD-RW ROMs and also on the computer's hard disc. For each film, all numeral and percentage data for the 1000, 2000, *University Word List*, and, Not in any Lists of the Vocab Profiler program were complied in one file (see Table 4).

Table 4

2001 Space Odyssey 149mins			
1000	3874/80.1	675/*58.1*	474
2000	317/ 6.6	147/12.7	134
UWL	180/ 3.7	121/10.4	107
Not in the Lists	468/ *9.7*	218/*18.8*	? ? ? ? ?
Total	*4839*	*1161*	715

Limits were set for 'easy' and 'difficult' with the above categories.

Table 5

Categories Highlighted: *Italics* = Easy **Bold** = Difficult

WORD LIST	TOKENS/%	TYPES/%	FAMILIES
1000	*>81%*	<45%>*54%*	
2000			
UWL	*<1%*> 3 %	> 100<*3%*> 5 %	*<40>*70
Not in the Lists	<10%>14%	<30%>35%	
Total	< *6,000*>10,000	< *1,500*> 1,700	< *700*> 900

Hence, the total vocabulary used (4839 tokens), the total number of types (1161), and the 2000 Word Level percentage of 58.1% were classified as easy. However, for the *University Word List* (those) the percentage of tokens (3.7) and types (10.4) and the number of families (107) were classified as difficult. Most of this was then typed into an excel spreadsheet (see Appendix).

Analyses

Video and LD text files were analyzed using the *Vocab Profiler*. However, before the DVD text files could be analyzed by the *Vocab Profiler*, they had to be tidied up. With this new first generation technology the computer read the physical formatted text from screen, as opposed to video and LDs where the text signal being sent to the screen was decoded. Consequently with certain DVDs, scanning errors of text occurred. Running the text through the spell checker eliminated many of these. The scripts were then read through and other mistakes corrected. Patterns of easiness or difficulty were sought from the excel spreadsheet. The *Listening Difficulty Scale* was added for film scripts published by Screenplay.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

A sample sheet of the *Vocab Profiler* is shown in Table 6. The full spreadsheet of the data of one hundred and fourteen films is shown in Appendix 1.

Total Word Number, Length, and Speech Rate

The average total number of words was 9,580 per film, the average film length 124 minutes, and the average speech rate 77 words per minute. Films with more than 15,000 words were: *Casino*, 28853; *A Few Good Men*, 16984; *Gone with the Wind*, 28784; *JFK*, 25206; *Little Big League*, 25430*; *My Fair Lady*, 20443; and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, 15054. When speech rate per minute was calculated, films with an average of more than 100 words a minute were: *Aladdin*, 100; *Cape Fear*, 103; *Casablanca*, 104; *Casino*, 162; *Do the Right Thing*, 112; *A Few Good Men*, 123; *Gone with the Wind*, 124; *JFK*, 133; *Little Big League*, 211*; *Look Who's Talking*, 115; *My Fair Lady*, 118; *The Negotiator*, 108; *US Marshals*, 100; and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, 115.

Films with less than 6,000 words were: 2001 *Space Odyssey*, 4389; *Black Beauty*, 4528; *Crocodile Dundee*, 5909; *Dances with Wolves*, 4822; *Empire of the Sun*, 5332; *ET*, 4920, *Falling in Love*, 5298; *A Fistful of Dollars*, 5421; *The Piano*, 5080; *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, 4598; *Snowwhite and the Seven Dwarfs*, 4434; *and Witness*, 4389. When speech rate per minute was calculated, films with an average of less than 60 words a minute were: *2001 Space Odyssey*, 31; *Batman*, 57; *Ben Hur*, 45; *Black Beauty*, 51; *Black Rain*, 55; *The Cotton Club*, 59; *Dances with Wolves*, 27; *Empire of the Sun*, 35; *ET*, 43, *Falling in Love*, 50; *A Fistful of Dollars*, 55; *Great Expectations*, 46; *Once upon a Time in America*, 37; *Out of Africa* 52; *The Piano*, 42; *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, 40; *A River Runs through It*, 58; *Snowwhite and the Seven Dwarfs*, 53; *and Witness*, 39.

Tokens: 1000 Word Level%, University List%, Outside 2000%

Films with a high percentage of 1000 Word List, a low percentage of University List, and low

Table 6 Vocab Profile of Captioning in Films

Categories Highlighted: *Italics* = easy **Bold** = difficult

WORD LIST	TOKENS／%	TYPES／%	FAMILIES
1000	*>80%*	<45%>*54%*	
2000			
UWL	*<1%>* 3 %	> 100<*3%*> 5 %	*<40>*70
not in the lists	<10%>14%	<30%>35%	
Total	*<6,000>*10,000	*<1,500>*1,700	*<700>*900
2001 Space Odyssey 149m			
1000	3874／80.1	675／*58.1*	474
2000	317／ 6.6	147／12.7	134
UWL	180／ 3.7	121／10.4	107
not in the lists	468／ 9.7	218／*18.8*	? ? ? ? ?
Total	*4839*	*1161*	715
Bodyguard, The 130m			
1000	8125／*82.2*	768／51.8	524
2000	657／ 6.6	231／15.6	196
UWL	91／ *0.9*	59／ 4.0	55
not in the lists	1012／10.2	424／*28.6*	? ? ? ? ?
Total	9885	*1482*	775
Casino 178m			
1000	23105／*80.1*	1115／40.2	663
2000	1527／ 5.3	442／16.0	337
UWL	196／ *0.7*	112／ 4.0	90
not in the lists	4025／14.0	1102／39.8	? ? ? ? ?
Total	28853	2771	1090
Chariots of Fire 124m			
1000	6788／79.3	881／48.5	604
2000	590／ 6.9	270／14.9	232
UWL	124／ 1.4	97／ 5.3	79
not in the lists	1056／12.3	567／31.2	? ? ? ? ?
Total	8558	1815	915
Falling in Love 106m			
1000	4458／*84.1*	533／*63.2*	373
2000	371／ 7.0	106／12.6	95
UWL	16／ *0.3*	15／ *1.8*	*15*
not in the lists	453／ *8.6*	189／*22.4*	? ? ? ? ?
Total	*5298*	*843*	*483*
Harry Potter 152m			
1000	7765／76.6	866／48.3	556
2000	706／ 7.0	287／16.0	241
UWL	81／ *0.8*	46／ 2.6	42
not in the lists	1590／15.7	594／33.1	? ? ? ? ?
Total	10142	1793	839
Home Alone 103m			
1000	6204／77.6	686／47.6	465
2000	661／ 8.3	247／17.1	202
UWL	59／ *0.7*	34／ *2.4*	*32*
not in the lists	1075／13.4	475／32.9	? ? ? ? ?
Total	7999	*1442*	699
JFK 189m			
1000	19391／76.9	1512／38.6	802
2000	1712／ 6.8	584／14.9	426
UWL	569／ 2.3	336／ 8.6	247
not in the lists	3534／14.0	1483／37.9	? ? ? ? ?
Total	25206	3915	1475

percentage Not in the List were: *Arthur*, 81.7, 0.6, 9.6; *The Bridges of Madison County*, 84.7, 0.7, 8.0; *Edward Scissorhands*, 82.2, 0.7, 9.8; *Falling in Love*, 84.1, 0.3, 8.6; *Great Expectations*, 82.5, 0.9, 9.9; *Maverick*, 81.5, 0.6, 9.9; *My Fair Lady*, 81.9, 0.7, 9.8; *Out of Africa*, 83.9, 0.4, 9.1; *The Poseidon Adventure*, 82.7, 0.6, 9.5; *Shadowlands*, 83.4, 0.9, 8.3; *Tootsie*, 82.2, 0.9, 9.5. Films with more than 2% of University List words were: *2001 Space Odyssey*, 3.7; *A Few Good Men*, 2.8; *The Hunt for Red October*, 3.1; *JFK*, 2.3; *Rebel Without a Cause*, 2.4; *The Silence of the Lambs*, 2.0. Films with more than 15% outside the 1000 and 2000 Word Level and not in the University List were; *Aladdin, 17.8; Amadeus*, 15.2; *Batman*, 17.7; *Blazing Saddles*, 19.4; *The Bodyguard*, 19.4; *The Color Purple*, 16.4; *Die Hard*, 16.2; *Do the Right Thing*, 15.2; *Empire of the Sun*, 15.6; *Evita*, 15.3; *Harry Potter*, 15.7; *Natural Born Killers*, 15.9; *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, 16.2; *Rebel without a Cause*, 26.4*; *Robin Hood* (Animation), 20.3; *Teenage Ninja Turtles*, 15.7; and *US Marshals*, 15.1.

Types: 1000 Word Level%, University List%, Number Outside 2000%, Total Number

Films with a 1000 Word Level% greater than 54%, University List% less than 3% and, the numbers of words types not in any of the categories less than 30% were: *Arthur*, 54.8, 2.9, 24.5; *Black Beauty*, 57.8, 0.8, 22.0. *Falling in Love*, 63.2, 1.8, 22.4; *Gung Ho*, 54.5, 2.9, 26.7; *On Golden Pond*, 54.8, 2.9, 26.0; *Out of Africa*, 55.1, 2.0, 25.4; and *Witness*, 56.3, 2.3, 26.5. The only film to be classified as difficult in all categories was *JFK*, 38.6, 8.6, 37.9, 3915. However, films that had a 1000 Word Level% of less than 45% and a percentage of words outside the lists of higher than 35% were; *Aladdin*, 44.6, 36.6; *Amadeus*, 43.1, 36.6; *Batman*, 44.4, 36.3; *Blazing Saddles*, 43.9, 38.1; Casino, 40.2, 39.8; *Do the Right Thing*, 41.5, 41.9; *Jaws*, 44.0, 37.5; 15.6; *Natural Born Killers*, 42.9, 38.8; *Some Like it Hot*, 43.1, 36.2; and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, 37.5, 47.6.

Films with more than 5% of University List word types were: *2001 Space Odyssey*, 10.4; *Back to the Future*, 5.8; *Chariots of Fire*, 5.3; *Dangerous Liaisons*, 6.7; *Dead Poets Society*, 5.7; *Die Hard*, 5.7, *Evita*, 5.5; *A Few Good Men*, 7.7; *The Hunt for Red October*, 8.0; *JFK*, 8.6; *A Man for All Seasons*, 5.8; *Passage to India*, 5.2; *Patriot Games*, 5.5; *The Remains of the Day*, 5.1; *The Return of the Pink Panther*, 5.6; *The Silence of the Lambs*, 6.3 *Top Gun*, 6.3; *Total Recall*, 5.4; and *Tucker*, 5.2.

Films which had total number of word types higher than 1800 were: *Apocalypse Now*, 1942; *Chariots of Fire*, 1815; *Dead Poets Society*, 1940; *Do the Right Thing*, 1861; *Doc Hollywood*, 20024; *A Few Good Men*, 2328; *Gone with the Wind*, 2685; *Great Expectations*, 2099; *The Hunt for Red October*, 2093, *Jaws*, 1869; *JFK*, 3915; *My Fair Lady*, 2513; *Natural Born Killers*, 2068; *The Remains of the Day*, 2079; *Some Like it Hot*, 2025; *Tucker*, 1910; *US Marshals*, 1859; and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, 2372.

Families: University List, Total

Films which had both less than 40 University List words and also less than 700 Family words were: *Alice*, 19, 661; *Black Beauty*, 8, 612; *Bonnie and Clyde*, 16, 636; *The Cotton Club*, 23, 638; *Crocodile Dundee*, 34, 661; *ET*, 31, 549; *A Fistful of Dollars*, 19, 593; *Ghost*, 37, 660;

Home Alone, 32, 699; *Moonstruck*, 15, 636; *On Golden Pond*, 37, 698; *Out for Justice*, 20, 613; *The Piano*, 11, 598; *Platoon*, 35, 658; *Robin Hood* (Animation), 27, 632; *Shine*, 34, 673; *Stella*, 27, 692; *The Sword in the Stone*, 32, 687; *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, 33, 663; and *Witness*, 20, 505.

Films which had both more than 70 University List words and also more than 900 Family words were: *Cape Fear*, 87, 939; Casino, 90, 1090; *Dead Poets Society*, 98, 933; *Doc Hollywood*, 78, 933; *A Few Good Men*, 141, 1100; *Great Expectations*, 84, 1058; *The Hunt for Red October*, 141, 985; *JFK*, 245, 1475; *My Fair Lady*, 89, 1135; *Passage to India*, 76, 933; *The Remains of the Day*, 97,1033; and *Tucker, 83, 931*. University List words usually occur only once.

Discussion

The following questions were asked at the beginning of the study.

Can films be categorized into different groups and levels of difficulty?
If there are such groups, what are they?
Can such an analysis have any pedagogic value and if so what are the implications? In particular,

a. How can this analysis aid learners' incidental viewing in the AV centers, multimedia, or at home?
b. How can this analysis be of value to the teacher in the classroom?

Groups and Levels of Difficulty

A quick perusal of the film data in Table 6, and Appendix 1 indicates that there are patterns of possible easiness and clear patterns of difficulty. The term possible easiness is used because other factors not included in the data can affect understanding, such as pronunciation, visual contextualization, and background knowledge. Furthermore, silent periods in film such as the first fifteen minutes in *Saving Private Ryan* are not built into the calculation and affect overall speech rate calculation. Therefore, while it is evident from the total word number and the speech rate that the dialogues of *Casino, A Few Good Men, JFK* or *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* will present a daunting if not an insurmountable challenge to some learners, other films such as *Out of Africa* or *Shine*, which from the *Vocab Profiler* analysis do not classify in any category as difficult, are both rated by the Screenplay *Listening Difficulty Scale* as advanced level films (jokyu).

However, there are some films that do not only have a low total number of words and speech rate, but also are classified as easy, irrespective of whether it is the token, type, or word family data that is being considered: *Arthur, Black Beauty, ET, Falling in Love, On Golden Pond, Snowwhite and the Seven Dwarfs*, and *Witness*. Films that teachers and learners might think are easier, are not, because they have a larger amount of language which lies outside the first 2000 Word Level, examples of which are *Aladdin, The*

Bodyguard, The Color Purple, Empire of the Sun, Harry Potter, Raiders of the Lost Ark, and the animation version of *Robin Hood.*

What Kind of Groups

A possible first classification might embrace animation, fantasy, family and romance as categorized by the *Internet Movie Data Base*. The *Vocab Profiler* analysis shows these to be generally easier. However, as mentioned in the last section, it needs to be ascertained whether or not there is a large amount of vocabulary, which is not in any of the 1000, 2000, or *University Lists* such as in *Aladdin,* and *Harry Potter*. Following this approach films such as *Shadowlands* or *Home Alone* appear to be easier. Any data, which falls into the categorization of difficult, should be examined closely. Hence, *Stand by Me* would be excluded because of its high speech rate.

A second classification could be the action films, which are popular and sometimes perceived as easy by learners. However, *Vocab Profiler* reveals that *Die Hard* has four difficult categories and no easy ones, which probably explains why the *Listening Difficulty Scale* rates the film as intermediate. The high amount of jargon, and slang, and sometimes vulgarity are a serious barrier to comprehension, and confirm why the *Listening Difficulty Scale* makes these special categories in their own right. Due to the specialized nature of some of the terms, it is unlikely that even with captioning present, that learners will easily understand them.

A third classification type is films such as *Chariots of Fire* and *Dead Poet's Society* which have a high number of words from the University List and a high number of types and families, but not of jargon or slang.

Pedagogic Implications

First, even when looking only at lexical / corpus input alone, the process of deciding what is easy or difficult is much more complex than it first appears. Second, using the *Vocab Profiler* computer analysis one can print or put onto floppy discs for students, word lists for each film of the 2000 Word List, and the University Word List for both Types and Families. There is also a list of the words that are not in the 1000, 2000 or University Word Lists. Such information is of value to the teacher in decided whether to use a film, and if so, in what way. These lists can also be linked to CD-ROMs and online dictionaries such as those installed in CALL Rooms.

Third, learners should be able use these facilities in class or in their own time, in AV centers or at home. As technology advances the possibilities are increasing and becoming cheaper. Students can access scripts online. The *captionDVD* can be installed easily and has a word search function, which takes the viewer directly to the scene where it occurs. This means that learners are not merely looking at a list of words, but can, if they choose, immediately view the scene with or without the onscreen text. Thus, the vocabulary is presented to the learner in a rich context.

Fourth, films are not easy, and to separate between easy / beginner and difficult /

advanced / professional can be misleading. If the 1000 Word, 2000 Word, and University Word Lists are added together there are 2830 Families. This means that, even in the films classified as easy (less than 700), learners are still encountering about one quarter of these in any one possible film, even before, jargon and slang and other infrequent words are considered. When one looks at the films which classify as difficult the amount, range, and speed of lexical input is overwhelming.

Conclusion

Assessing the level of difficulty of films is a complex matter. Even supposedly 'easy' films can have scenes which are very intense with fast and difficult dialogue. The data from this analysis may indicate such difficulties but does not tell us where. Further research could identify these areas. This would enable teachers to more accurately determine which scenes of a film need to be focused on, whether the purpose be for language learning, culture, or literature courses.

Within the lexical data, there is no identification of collocations, phrasal verbs, or idioms. It was argued that although the term genre could not be accurately used in linguistics, there is a need to analyze to scripts to calculate the occurrence of and see whether phrasal verbs and idioms are more prevalent with respect to certain films types.

As argued at the beginning of the literature review, learning does not occur unless there is a context and unless learners have an interest and / or at least perceive that their efforts are a worthwhile investment. The use of film, especially with English captioning or subtitling can speed this learning.

Finally, the role of this quantitative approach in assessing the level of difficulty of films and in particular *Vocab Profiler* must be recognized for what it is. It is just a tool to help teachers and learners alike. It is a partial tool. If such tools and the improving multimedia capabilities are NOT made use of by teachers and institutions, this research is of little value. Learners need to be able watch films at home or in AV centers using supplementary texts and worksheets that are connected to the curriculum and syllabus, and academic institutions have to ensure that self-access is possible.

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Appendix 1 Vocab Profiler Analysis

Film Title		Tokens (Actual Occurrences)						Types (Repetions not Counted)				Word Families	
		words	mins	wpm	%1000	%UWL	%not	%1000	%UWL	%not	total	UWL	total
2001 Space Odyssey		*4389*	141	*31*	80.1	3.7	*9.7*	*58.1*	10.4	*18.8*	*1161*	107	715
Absolute Power		7615	121	63	81.2	1.1	11.1	53.2	3.7	*27.0*	*1446*	50	750
Accused, The		8779	110	80	79.9	1.0	12.4	51.7	4.6	*29.6*	*1401*	56	727
Aladdin		8983	90	100	74.3	*0.7*	17.8	44.6	*2.4*	36.6	1661	*36*	770
Alice		6339	75	85	76.7	*0.4*	13.6	52.2	*1.6*	*29.3*	*1197*	*19*	*661*
Amadeus		10350	160	65	76.5	1.0	15.2	43%	4.5	36.6	1794	77	823
Apocalypse Now		11972	153	78	78.9	1.1	14.0	47.3	4.2	33.4	1942	75	932
Arthur		8077	97	83	*81.7*	*0.6*	*9.6*	*54.8*	*2.9*	*24.5*	*1286*	*35*	710
Baby It's You		9000	105	86	*81.9*	*0.8*	11.5	50.1	3.6	32.6	1550	55	758
Back to the Future	B	7785	106	73	80.3	1.5	11.4	51.6	5.8	*27.3*	*1464*	77	782
Backdraft	A	10127	135	75	73.8	1.3	13.7	50.6	4.8	*29.4*	1604	67	816
Batman		7213	126	57	80.2	1.4	17.7	44.4	4.7	36.3	1746	76	836
Beauty and the Beast		7480	84	89	*83.5*	*0.6*	10.6	50.2	*2.6*	*29.7*	*1393*	*34*	727
Ben Hur		9430	211	45	79.6	*0.8*	*9.9*	53.4	4.1	*26.7*	1559	60	796
Beverly Hills Cop		8452	105	80	79.7	1.2	11.5	52.8	4.3	*27.2*	*1424*	53	755
Black Beauty		*4528*	89	*51*	79.6	*0.2*	12.0	*57.8*	*0.8*	*22.0*	*1039*	*8*	*612*
Black Rain	A	6822	125	*55*	79.7	1.4	14.5	51.8	4.2	*28.2*	*1255*	48	*688*
Blazing Saddles		7406	93	80	72.2	*0.8*	19.4	43.9	3.0	38.1	1648	47	782
Bodyguard, The	I	9885	130	76	*82.2*	*0.8*	19.4	51.8	4.0	*28.6*	*1482*	55	775
Bonnie and Clyde		7547	112	67	80.0	*0.3*	13.3	51.6	*1.3*	32.1	*1282*	*16*	*636*
Breakfast at Tiffany's		10503	114	92	80.5	*0.3*	11.1	49.9	*2.9*	31.2	1714	45	849
Bridges of Madison County, The		9164	135	68	*84.7*	*0.7*	*8.0*	*56.4*	3.7	*24.5*	*1418*	51	773
Cape Fear	A	13207	128	103	80.1	1.0	12.9	45.6	4.7	35.3	2007	87	939
Casablanca		10774	104	104	79.6	1.0	12.4	50.2	3.8	31.5	1716	59	820
Casino		28853	178	162	80.1	*0.7*	14.0	40.2	4.0	39.8	2771	90	1090
Chariots of Fire		8558	124	69	79.3	1.4	12.3	48.5	5.3	31.2	1815	79	915
Chronicles of Narnia, The		12662	174	73	80.5	0.7	10.5	49.2	*2.9*	*29.7*	1998	51	973
Color Purple, The		10694	154	69	76.4	*0.2*	16.4	48.6	*1.3*	34.0	*1498*	*19*	729
Cotton Club, The		7521	128	*59*	79.3	*0.5*	14.0	50.2	*1.8*	34.1	*1353*	*23*	*638*
Crocodile Dundee		*5909*	98	60	79.4	*0.7*	13.0	52.2	*2.9*	30.1	*1260*	*34*	*661*
Crucible, The		11406	123	93	80.0	*0.5*	13.0	50.3	*2.4*	*29.3*	1634	*35*	798
Dances with Wolves	I	*4822*	181	*27*	78.2	1.3	13.7	*56.2*	3.9	*25.6*	*1091*	*41*	*620*
Dangerous Liaisons		9412	119	79	*85.9*	1.4	*6.4*	*55.0*	6.7	*21.8*	1608	92	875
Dead Poets Society		10146	128	79	78.2	1.5	12.9	47.6	5.7	31.5	1940	98	933
Die Hard	I	8615	131	66	75.6	1.7	16.2	45.2	5.7	34.4	1747	90	847
Do the Right Thing		13464	120	112	77.5	*0.5*	15.2	41.5	*2.1*	41.9	1861	*38*	786
Doc Hollywood	I	10287	104	99	78.5	1.0	13.3	45.0	4.2	*36.3*	2004	78	933
Edward Scissorhands		7137	105	68	*82.2*	*0.7*	*9.8*	52.7	3.2	*27.6*	*1311*	40	715

Film Title					Tokens (Actual Occurrences)			Types (Repetions not Counted)				Word Families	
		words	mins	wpm	%1000	%UWL	%not	%1000	%UWL	%not	total	UWL	total
Empire of the Sun		*5332*	154	*35*	76.1	1.2	15.6	51.7	3.9	*29.2*	*1229*	45	*680*
ET	B	*4920*	115	*43*	77.0	*0.7*	14.3	51.9	3.0	31.2	*1042*	*31*	*549*
Evita		8822	135	65	76.7	1.5	15.3	49.5	5.5	30.6	1764	89	869
Falling in Love		*5298*	106	*50*	*84.1*	*0.3*	*8.6*	*63.2*	*1.8*	*22.4*	*843*	*15*	*483*
Few Good Men, A		16984	138	123	78.6	2.8	11.9	47.9	7.7	*28.7*	2328	141	1100
Fish Called Wanda, A		8276	108	77	76.1	1.0	15.0	43.9	3.8	37.8	1612	*53*	741
Fistful of Dollars, A		*5421*	99	*55*	78.3	*0.6*	14.7	*58.8*	*2.1*	*22.8*	*1034*	*19*	*593*
Ghost	I	9136	127	72	*81.2*	*0.3*	11.3	52.5	3.2	*29.2*	*1279*	*37*	*660*
Gone With the Wind		28784	232	124	*81.2*	*0.3*	11.3	43.4	*2.1*	36.5	2685	49	1098
Graduate, The		7555	105	72	*81.9*	*0.6*	10.4	*57.6*	*2.9*	*22.3*	*1128*	*32*	*670*
Great Expectations		14364	310	*46*	*82.5*	*0.9*	*9.9*	49.8	4.6	*27.0*	2099	84	1058
Great Gatsby, The		10489	146	72	*83.4*	*0.9*	*9.9*	53.8	3.1	*26.2*	1669	49	875
Green Card		8190	107	77	80.2	*0.6*	11.9	53.7	*2.8*	*27.6*	*1379*	*38*	720
Gung Ho		8018	111	72	*81.8*	*0.8*	10.5	*54.5*	*2.9*	*26.7*	*1417*	*34*	740
Harry Potter		10142	152	67	76.6	*0.8*	15.7	48.3	*2.6*	33.1	1793	42	839
Home Alone		7999	103	78	77.6	*0.7*	13.4	47.6	*2.4*	32.9	*1442*	*32*	*699*
Home Alone 2		8392	120	70	77.3	*0.8*	12.2	50.4	*2.9*	30.0	*1436*	*38*	720
Hunt for Red October, The		11054	135	82	76.4	3.1	13.6	45.8	8.0	32.1	2093	141	985
Jaws		11425	124	92	78.2	*0.8*	14.8	44.0	3.6	37.5	1869	65	860
JFK	P	25206	189	133	76.9	2.3	14.0	38.6	8.6	37.9	3915	247	1475
Littel Big League*		25340	120	211	79.1	*0.8*	14.1	46.0	3.5	38.1	1969	59	833
Look Who's Talking		10995	96	115	*81.4*	*0.9*	10.2	48.7	4.0	31.6	1635	55	792
Man For All Seasons, A		8841	120	74	81.0	1.6	*9.9*	49.3	5.8	30.5	1652	80	824
Maverick	I	11037	127	87	*81.5*	*0.6*	*9.9*	50.9	*2.9*	30.4	1634	47	804
Memphis Bell	A	7896	107	74	79.0	1.1	12.0	48.9	*2.8*	30.6	*1416*	*33*	730
Moonstruck		8051	103	78	*81.4*	*0.2*	11.4	53.8	*1.2*	*27.5*	*1202*	15	*636*
My Fair Lady		20443	173	118	*81.9*	*0.7*	*9.8*	43.3	4.0	33.9	2513	89	1135
Naked Gun, The		7364	85	87	79.0	1.1	12.0	51.4	4.0	*29.6*	1566	58	819
Natural Born Killers	A	11834	119	99	76.8	*0.8*	15.9	42.9	3.5	38.8	2068	67	898
Negotiator, The	A	14960	139	108	80.5	1.8	12.6	49.2	7.0	30.5	1733	103	842
Officer and a Gentleman, An		9584	126	76	*81.5*	1.0	10.7	52.6	4.0	*29.2*	*1470*	57	752
On Golden Pond		8060	109	76	*81.6*	*0.7*	10.7	*54.8*	*2.9*	*26.0*	*1311*	*37*	*698*
Once Upon a Time in America		8419	226	37	*82.3*	*0.9*	10.1	51.3	3.8	*29.3*	1535	46	767
One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest		10874	129	84	78.9	*0.8*	14.2	46.2	3.2	36.1	1513	44	717
Out for Justice		7856	92	85	78.5	0.3	14.5	51.7	*1.6*	*32.2*	*1257*	*20*	*613*
Out of Africa	A	8432	161	*52*	*83.9*	*0.4*	*9.1*	55.1	2.0	*25.4*	*1435*	*26*	770
Passage to India		9294	163	*57*	80.6	1.3	10.8	52.7	5.2	*24.5*	1732	76	933
Patriot Games		7049	117	60	79.7	1.4	12.1	51.5	5.5	*28.3*	*1463*	73	804
Perfect World		9613	138	70	79.8	*0.8*	12.9	47.4	3.4	12.9	1659	55	796

Film Title	words	mins	wpm	Tokens (Actual Occurrences) %1000	%UWL	%not	Types (Repetions not Counted) %1000	%UWL	%not	total	Word Families UWL	total
Piano, The	*5080*	121	*42*	77.3	*0.3*	14.2	53.9	1.0	*28.2*	*1133*	*11*	*598*
Platoon	7988	120	67	73.9	*0.6*	19.1	45.0	*2.7*	38.1	*1403*	*35*	658
Poseidon Adventure, The	8914	120	74	*82.7*	*0.6*	*9.5*	53.0	3.3	*26.9*	*1361*	43	730
Postman Always Rings Twice, The	10632	117	91	*82.3*	*0.7*	*9.8*	52.3	2.3	*27.9*	1576	*33*	781
Pretty Woman	10778	119	91	*83.3*	1.0	*8.5*	51.6	5.0	*26.3*	1648	75	860
Princess Bride, The	8087	98	83	81.0	*0.9*	11.2	53.5	3.6	30.3	1592	53	791
Raiders of the Lost Ark	*4598*	115	*40*	76.4	1.3	16.2	52.3	4.6	30.3	*1186*	53	*640*
Rain Man P	12473	134	93	79.7	1.1	11.5	51.8	5.0	*28.6*	1747	76	876
Rebel Without a Cause	7677	111	69	*83.6*	2.4	26.4	*54.3*	2.4	*26.4*	*1195*	*28*	650
Remains of the Day, The	14126	134	105	*81.7*	1.2	10.0	50.9	5.1	27.8	2079	97	1033
Return of the Pink Panther, The	7400	113	65	77.3	1.9	12.9	47.7	5.6	30.6	*1487*	74	789
River Runs Through It, A	7176	124	*58*	80.0	*0.9*	12.1	*54.3*	*2.9*	*27.0*	1515	41	804
Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves	9675	144	67	79.2	*0.7*	12.6	48.1	3.3	30.4	1710	51	849
Robin Hood (Animation)	*5892*	83	71	70.2	*0.7*	20.3	45.0	*2.2*	36.5	*1341*	*27*	*632*
Roman Holiday	7044	118	60	78.2	*0.9*	13.8	49.2	3.2	33.6	*1451*	44	734
Scrooge	8635	115	75	79.6	*0.9*	*9.4*	52.3	3.6	28.0	*1487*	50	776
Shadowlands	10520	133	79	*83.4*	*0.9*	*8.3*	*55.2*	4.4	*23.2*	1570	63	850
Shine A	7784	105	74	76.2	*0.6*	15.6	48.7	*2.6*	32.6	*1348*	*34*	*673*
Shining, The	8347	144	*58*	80.7	1.0	11.9	56.1	4.6	*24.4*	*1383*	55	760
Silence of the Lambs, The	7922	118	67	77.1	2	14.2	47.6	6.3	31.1	1734	96	867
Singing in the Rain	8305	103	81	75.5	*0.9*	14.2	46.7	*2.8*	35.7	1531	40	719
Snowwhite and the Seven Dwarfs	*4434*	83	*53*	74.4	*0.5*	14.2	48.4	*1.7*	31.9	*926*	*15*	500
Some Like it Hot	11637	121	96	78.3	*0.8*	12.7	43.1	3.2	36.2	2025	59	918
Stand by Me	8156	87	94	75.4	*0.5*	17.1	50.7	*2.1*	32.5	*1451*	*27*	*692*
Stella	10214	109	94	*81.6*	*0.4*	10.9	49.1	1.9	33.1	1544	*29*	737
Sword in the Stone, The	6692	80	84	78.1	1.0	14.4	50.2	*2.5*	31.5	*1326*	*32*	*687*
Teenage Ninja Turtles	6934	95	73	77.1	1.3	15.7	50.2	4.6	32.4	1554	71	769
Tom Jones	9002	121	74	79.3	*0.9*	12.6	48.5	3.6	*29.3*	1688	53	879
Top Gun I	8120	109	74	78.1	1.6	12.7	50.9	6.3	*27.0*	*1373*	69	734
Tootsie	10866	116	94	*82.2*	*0.9*	*9.5*	49.3	4.6	30.1	1746	65	843
Total Recall I	7192	113	64	79.6	1.4	12.7	51.7	5.4	*28.8*	*1342*	66	712
Tucker	10196	111	92	80.5	1.5	11.3	49.8	5.2	*29.8*	1910	83	931
US Marshals	10491	105	100	76.8	1.2	15.1	45.4	4.7	34.7	1859	78	876
Usual Suspects, The	9598	105	91	80.0	1.3	13.1	48.7	4.6	32.4	1575	65	775
What's Eating Gilbert Grape	8651	118	73	*80.6*	*0.7*	11.8	53.3	3.0	*28.0*	*1213*	*33*	*663*
Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf	15054	131	115	80.6	*0.6*	13.9	37.5	*2.4*	47.6	2373	53	877
Witness	*4389*	112	*39*	78.1	*0.6*	11.7	*56.3*	*2.3*	*26.5*	*928*	*20*	*505*
	9629.3	124.45	78	79.376	0.9772	12.822	49.684	3.7465	30.409	1589.6	55.43	786.75