Catching words: Exploiting film discourse in the foreign language classroom
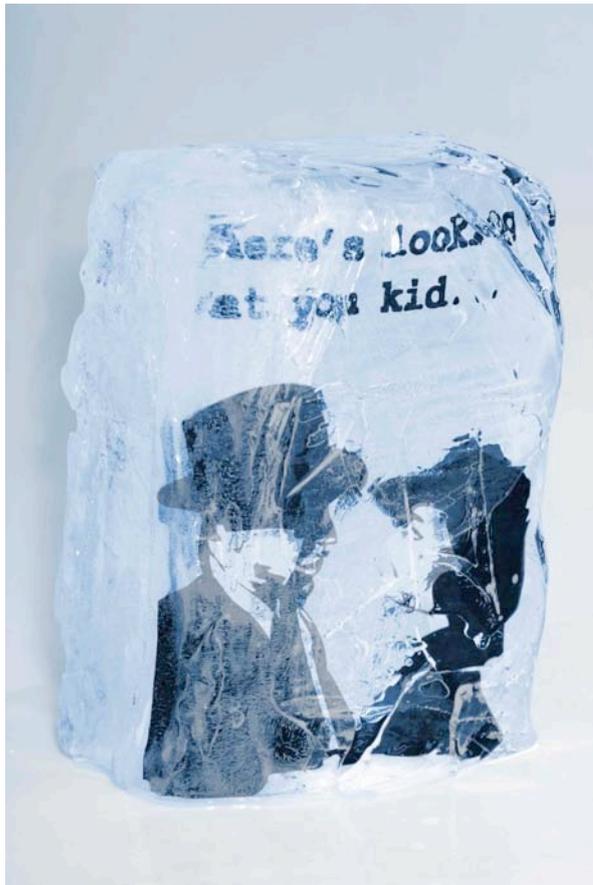
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Introduction

'The finest words in the world are only vain sounds if you cannot understand them.' (Anatole France 1844-1924)

Traditionally, the teaching of English as a Second or Other Language has been based on written models of the language, more often than not focusing on sentence-based grammatical descriptions, or on vocabulary arising in the target texts. This can be seen as a natural consequence of the fact that, not only has the written medium always been easier to capture, display and analyze than the spoken one, it has also tended to be considered more prestigious, historically (Brown and Yule 1983; Carter and McCarthy 2006). Early attempts to represent spoken English to learners were often inspired more by literary sources than authentic conversation, as this extract from an early twentieth-century phrase book for German tourists illustrates:

(Scene: a well-known French confectioner's shop in New Oxford St. It is the Saturday before Easter and the shop, in consequence, is fairly crowded with customers. Enter Mrs Brooke and Miss Elsing.)

Shop-girl (approaching): Are you being attended to, ladies?

Mrs Brooke: No, not yet. Show me some Easter eggs, please.

Shop-girl (pointing to a display of Easter eggs on the counter): In chocolate or marchpane? How do you like these?

Mrs Brooke (to her companion): They are too large, aren't they? (She looks round.) Why, here are some at sixpence; they will do splendidly.

(Mountcalm Carr and Dadley-Potter 1912, cited in Taborn 1983, p.208)

The invention of the tape recorder in the 1930s allowed researchers to begin transcribing and analyzing natural speech and was, according to Halliday (1994, p.xxiii), perhaps 'the greatest single event in the history of linguistics'. The fields of conversational and discourse analysis emerged from these technological advances, and led to the understanding we have today of the fundamental importance of spoken discourse, particularly casual conversation, in our lives: '[…] casual conversation is a critical linguistic site for the negotiation of such important dimensions of our social identity as gender, generational location, sexuality, social class membership, ethnicity, and subcultural and group affiliations. In fact, […] casual conversation is concerned with the joint construction of social reality'. (Eggins and Slade 1997, p.6)

Given its central role in shaping our social identities, it is surprising that spoken discourse has not been the focus of more attention in language learning materials. This chapter aims to redress this imbalance to some extent by describing a method for 'freezing' and then exploiting film discourse[1] in the classroom.

Research on foreign language learning with film or television

Film and television have been widely recognized by researchers as a potentially rich source of input for listening practice and language acquisition in the classroom (Neuman and Koskinen 1992; Koolstra and Beentjes 1999; Chapple and Curtis 2000; King 2002; Colwell and Ipince Braschi 2006; Webb and Rodgers 2009). Its 'multisensory presentation of information' (Koolstra and Beentjes 1999, p.53) provides learners with the opportunity to make new linguistic, paralinguistic and

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[1] The term 'film discourse' is used here broadly to refer to any audio-visual input.

pragmatic meanings in the L2 through auditory, visual and written signals (subtitles). Language learners themselves seem to value film and television highly as a medium for advancing their L2 proficiency as well: Neuman and Koskinen (1992, p.96) report that although TV caption decoders were originally intended for the hearing impaired, over half of those sold in the United States go to the hearing population, many of whom are immigrant families, presumably trying to enhance their comprehension of American television programmes. In a study conducted in the Netherlands, Vinjé 1994 (cited in Koolstra and Beentjes 1999, p.52) found that a quarter of the sixth graders interviewed believed that they learned more English from radio and television than from school. Gieve and Clark (2005, .270) discovered that watching TV and films were amongst the most common self-directed learning strategies amongst Chinese and European students studying at a British university and Ding (2007, p. 275) found that, amongst his informants in China, the winners of national level speech contests all regarded watching film and TV as one of the most effective strategies for improving their English.

Much of the empirical research work on the use of film or television for language learning has focused on incidental L2 vocabulary acquisition with subtitled movies. Subtitling generally follows the 'six second rule' where up to 64 characters or spaces are presented at a time in one or two lines of text. Where the maximum number of characters and spaces are used, the subtitle is shown for six seconds, while shorter texts are shown for proportionally less time (d'Ydewalle and De Bruycker 2007), producing an average presentation rate of around 10 characters (or two words) per second. Since typical speech rates are higher than two words per second, subtitles often have to be condensed, with as much as 30 per cent of the spoken text being lost according to Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof (2002, p.328). While professional subtitlers may be capable of producing subtitles with an equivalent 'information value' to the original dialogue, the loss of so much of the spoken text is unfortunate from the perspective of English language teaching, particularly when a finer analysis of the discourse is required at the post-listening stages (as advocated here). In these circumstances, complete and accurate transcripts are far more useful when they can be obtained, although until now this has been difficult. Results from subtitling studies indicate that there is considerable incidental acquisition of vocabulary, but not grammar (Van Lommel, Laenen and d'Ydewalle 2006) from watching films, and that

acquisition is higher when subtitles are also available to the viewer (Rice and Woodsmall 1988; Neuman and Koskinen 1992; Pavakanun and d'Ydewalle 1992; d'Ydewalle and Pavakanun 1995; d'Ydewalle and Pavakanun 1997; Koolstra and Beentjes 1999). The benefits of subtitling are not surprising, since attention to subtitles at their presentation onset appears to be obligatory and switching attention between the visual image and the text seems to happen effortlessly (Koolstra, Peeters and Spinhof 2002; d'Ydewalle and De Bruycker 2007). Since the processing of written input is generally faster than it is for aural input and the complete subtitle appears on the screen ahead of the spoken utterance, viewers have the opportunity to read ahead on the subtitles (with the possibility of re-reading them), before hearing the words in the soundtrack, effectively getting at least two chances at comprehension of unfamiliar lexis, rather than one. Of course, the use of subtitles with film may have the effect of discouraging the development of effective listening strategies in learners, such as inferring meaning from context (King 2002), but this can be avoided by showing the film without subtitles at the first viewing, in combination with an appropriate gist listening task (see, for example, the materials in Appendix 1).

Comprehension of film and TV programmes will obviously vary according to factors such as learners' language proficiency, film genre, speech rates, accent familiarity and range, and the level of convergence of speech and visual images. Webb and Rodgers (2009) estimate that learners need to know between 3,000 and 6,000 word families to achieve 95 to 98 per cent understanding of films. Below this level, comprehension and incidental acquisition of vocabulary are less likely and learner frustration or de-motivation become more of a problem.

Given both the perceived and empirically established benefits of using film and television for foreign language learning, it is surprising that relatively little has been written about the pedagogical applications of film (although see Baddock 1996; Stempleski and Tomalin 2001), and it seems to be rarely used as a teaching resource in EFL classrooms. A number of reasons have been put forward for this. These include 'time and syllabus constraints; lack of detailed knowledge about film on the part of teachers; a mistaken perception about the lack of pedagogical value of films; lack of technical equipment and expertise; availability of suitable films; cultural appropriateness; the relative difficulty of film texts for language learners' (Chapple and Curtis 2000, p.422), language overload, the daunting length of feature films (King

2002, p. 512), the difficulty of vocabulary contained in films and the problems involved in obtaining and analyzing film scripts (Webb and Rodgers 2009, pp.1-2). The discussion below deals with some of these important issues.

Why use film discourse in the foreign language classroom?
Accessibility
Firstly, recent technological advances have meant that films, as well as other audio-visual input, have become more accessible worldwide and are now also easier to use in an educational context. Many university classrooms around the world are equipped with DVD players, Internet access and video projectors. DVDs can be readily bought or rented in most countries and DVD chapters or DVD player search functions make locating and replaying selected scenes much easier than it ever was with video recorders. The option of playing DVDs with or without subtitles, in the L1 or L2, also gives teachers greater flexibility in terms of the amount of scaffolding provided to learners (Bruner 1983).

Audio-visual materials are also becoming increasingly available through the Internet. For example, sites such as the BBC offer up-to-date streamed video news reports (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/video_and_audio/default.stm) or video shorts recorded by people from all over the United Kingdom and conveniently categorised according to topic (http://www.bbc.co.uk/videonation/). *The Internet Archive* (http://www.archive.org/index.php) has thousands of digital movies in the public domain, available for downloading or streaming. *Apple's iTunes Store* offers TV programs and film for online sale or rental (at time of writing only in the USA, although this is being extended to other countries as licensing issues are resolved), as well as free video podcasts to download onto a computer or iPod. YouTube has a huge selection of video-clips to watch, and although only streamed, freeware such as MPEG Streamclip (http://www.squared5.com/) will allow users to download content to their own computers. Peer-to-peer file sharing, which by some estimates currently accounts for around 70 per cent of all Internet traffic[2], is another common method for (legally or illegally) obtaining audio-visual material. Of course, as the case against *The Pirate Bay* in February 2009 demonstrates, the media, film and music industries are actively seeking to prosecute those who assist in the distribution of illegal content

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[2] Based on a study by Cachelogic in January 2006, reported on the TorrentFreak web site http://torrentfreak.com/bittorrent-the-one-third-of-all-internet-traffic-myth/ [accessed 31 August 2009].

online, but until they offer a convenient and legal alternative to file-sharing, BitTorrent[3] sites are likely to remain popular.

In order to effectively exploit film scenes in the foreign language classroom, a closer analysis of the discourse, using transcripts, is often necessary. As will be seen later in this chapter, transcripts can be produced by 'ripping' (extracting) sub-titles from DVDs with optical character recognition (OCR) software such as *SubRip*, or alternatively by downloading from sites such as *Script-O-Rama* (http://www.script-o-rama.com/snazzy/dircut.html) or *Simply Scripts* (http://www.simplyscripts.com/). Copyright issues do, of course, impinge on these methods and caution is advisable (see the section below on 'copyright headaches').

The increased availability of audio-visual materials worldwide, and the ease with which they can be accessed in the classroom, provides foreign language teachers with exciting new possibilities for curriculum design. Textbook input can be readily supplemented or replaced with authentic input[4] where considered appropriate, and film extracts, studied intensively in lessons, can act as 'jumping off points' into a wide variety of activities, such as project work or presentations based on topics highlighted in the materials or extensive listening practice (students watching the complete film by themselves) outside the classroom.

Authenticity

It has long been documented that while native speakers are perfectly able to interpret the speech behaviours in their own communities, they are largely unaware of what is actually said in any specific situation (Wolfson 1989). Given the fact that our intuitions about spoken discourse are so unreliable, it is hardly surprising that textbook writers have often failed to present accurate models of the L2 in their contrived dialogues. They also tend to be more concerned with displaying specific lexico-grammatical items, which fit into an itemized structural syllabus (Yalden 1987), than replicating genuine discourse. At their worst, textbook dialogues can be painfully contrived, as in this gap-fill completion exercise from a Japanese

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[3] BitTorrent is one of the most popular peer-to-peer file sharing protocols, and facilitates the sharing of large files (often music and film) across the Internet.

[4] Definitions of authenticity vary in the research literature, with at least eight inter-related meanings in existence (Mishan 2005; Gilmore 2007a; Gilmore 2009). Here, authenticity is defined broadly, in the same way as Morrow (1977, p.13) as 'a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort'.

publication (Sell, Kolf and Kanashiro 1985, p.90):

Situation: Jane and Janet are having a doughnut in the school coffee shop. They are waiting for

Bob and Bill. Jane and Janet are joined by Fred and Frank. Jane and Fred do the talking.

Fred: Hello. May <u>we sit down</u>?

Jane: Sure. Have a <u>seat</u>? You didn't happen <u>to see Bob and Bill</u>, did you?

Fred: No. Are you <u>waiting for them</u>?

Jane: Yes. They said <u>they should be here</u> at 2:30.

Fred: Well, it's not <u>2:30 yet</u>.

Jane: My watch <u>says 2:30</u>.

Fred: It's <u>only</u> 2:27. Bob and Bill <u>should be here</u> in three minutes.

Jane: We might <u>wait</u> another ten minutes <u>then</u>.

Fred: That should <u>be enough</u> time for <u>another coffee</u>.

(This is followed by some transformation exercises, using *should* and *ought to*).

The textbook provides learners with irrelevant details at times, such as what Jane and Janet are eating, but little useful information on the context, besides the fact that it is a school coffee shop. Are Jane and Janet students or teachers? What is their relationship with Fred and Frank? Much of the dialogue suggests that they are friends, but the use of 'may' in the opening utterance points to a more formal relationship. Fred's concern over whether the time is 2:27 or 2:30 and exactly how many minutes it will take Bob and Bill to arrive makes him look like an obsessive compulsive, and Jane's reply that they 'might wait (precisely) another ten minutes' also lacks the vagueness that often typifies spoken discourse (Channell 1994; Carter and McCarthy 1997; Cutting 2007). Other unnatural features of the dialogue include the neat and tidy turn-taking, the lack of performance errors from the speakers, such as hesitation, repetition or false starts, and the absence of any reactive tokens (short utterances 'by an interlocutor who is playing a listener's role during the other interlocutor's speakership' (Clancy, Thompson, Suzuki and Tao 1996, p. 355)[5]. The target language is obviously the

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[5] Reactive tokens can be divided into 5 groups (Clancy et al. 1996):
1. *Back-channels*: non-lexical, vocalic forms, serving as continuers, displays of interest or claims of understanding.
2. *Reactive expressions*: short, non-floor taking lexical words or phrases produced by the non-primary speaker.
3. *Collaborative finishes*: the speaker's utterance is completed by the non-primary speaker.
4. *Repetitions*: the non-primary speaker repeats or 'echoes' a portion of the previous utterance.
5. *Resumptive openers*: 'back-channels' used by the non-primary speaker and immediately followed by a full turn from the same participant. Their function is to register the prior turn before taking the floor.

modal auxiliary 'should', used to indicate a probable future event, since it occurs three times in this short, seventy-word stretch of conversation. As a model of spoken discourse then, it is highly unrepresentative and fails to effectively prepare learners for communication in the real world. Of course, few modern language textbooks give models that are as distorted as this, but Gilmore (2004), comparing service encounters from eight widely used ELT course books with their authentic equivalents, still found major discrepancies between contrived and attested data across a range of discourse features such as turn-taking patterns, false starts, repetition and hesitation devices.

Film discourse, although itself contrived, is often closer to the attested language of everyday life; perhaps because of the unusual talents of the scriptwriters, or as a result of the transformation process which occurs when a script is interpreted by actors and negotiated during filming. Some directors, such as Mike Leigh, rely heavily on improvisation, rather than scripting in their work and this can also enhance the sense of realism.

Motivating learners

Now, I think that movies are really useful, interesting, and easy-to-learn tools […] In fact, I learned some expressions or words from them, for the English in movies are exactly natural speaking English. I think it's not just me who likes movies as texts, so why don't we use them more if we have extra times?
(Gilmore 2007b Part II, p.41)

This quotation, taken from the classroom diary of a Japanese university student, supports what many language teachers already intuitively believe: learners are highly motivated by authentic materials such as films. It is interesting to note, however, that she suggests using more movies in class if there is 'extra times' [sic] available, as if they are simply too much fun to be considered serious language learning tools. It is, on the contrary, argued here that not only are the dual goals of interest and usefulness readily achievable, they are a necessary precondition for selection of materials. Learners are only likely to remain engaged with L2 texts when they believe that the benefits justify the effort involved, and only through engagement is language acquisition likely to occur. This position is supported by Schumann's (1997)) stimulus appraisal theory, which suggests that all environmental stimuli are assessed by individuals according to five criteria: i) novelty, ii) intrinsic pleasantness, iii)

goal/need significance, iv) coping potential and v) norm/self compatibility. Positive evaluations across these criteria are thought to result in greater engagement with input, ultimately leading to sustained deep learning (SDL), while negative evaluations result in avoidance. The fairly typical comments from the student's diary above suggest that film material is often evaluated positively across many of these criteria, and we can therefore expect to see greater levels of engagement and L2 acquisition as a result (see Gilmore 2007b for empirical evidence of this).

Meeting learners' varying language needs
Learners at lower proficiency levels are likely to have interlanguage systems that are very similar, given their limited exposure to the target language. This means that ESOL textbooks will often be able to predict, with some level of accuracy, their needs. However, as individuals develop, encountering different L2 data, evaluating its usefulness according to their own stimulus appraisal systems (Schumann 1997), and constructing personal meaning from the input they receive (Williams and Burden 1997), their interlanguages diverge. Higher proficiency learners can therefore be expected to have quite different language needs from each other as a result of these developmental processes. The rich input provided by film discourse, along with the wide choice of contexts, accents and registers available, increase the likelihood of these materials meeting learners' varying L2 needs.

Highlighting features of spoken discourse
As the sample materials in Appendix 2 illustrate, film discourse is rich in features that can usefully be highlighted in order to develop the learner's interlanguage. Language textbooks typically emphasize written, rather than spoken models in their input, which can leave learners sounding rather formal or unnatural, as was illustrated in the earlier extract from a Japanese textbook, so supplementing courses with samples from films is a useful way to redress this imbalance. Of course, material designers need to have the skills of a discourse analyst in order to effectively exploit the authentic material they choose, but there are many publications available that offer advice on spoken features with pedagogical significance such as Wardaugh 1985; Bradford 1988; McCarthy 1991; Dörnyei and Thurrell 1992 and Rose and Kasper 2001.

Problems with using film discourse in the foreign language classroom

Selecting appropriate texts

Although it is argued here that film can play a useful role in the foreign language classroom, selecting appropriate texts and designing materials to effectively exploit them for learning purposes is not easy. Inexperienced teachers often underestimate the challenges posed by authentic materials, which can be caused by the speech rates, rapid turn-taking, dysfluencies, unfamiliar accents, colloquial expressions (which are not normally represented in textbooks), assumed background knowledge, and so on. In addition, since later work in the task cycle typically involves intense analysis of the discourse, film clips of around ten minutes will often generate more than enough material for a series of lessons. This means that material designers have to select scenes which are not only interesting, but can 'stand alone' in the classroom (make sense without too much preamble) and contain useful discourse features for the learners concerned. Given the preparation work involved, it also makes sense to choose extracts that are durable and can be reused by different teachers within an institution over a period of years (see Gilmore 2009 for a more detailed discussion of these issues).

Producing accurate transcripts of film discourse

In order to be able to do any useful work with film discourse in the classroom (usually at the post-listening stage), the dialogue first needs to be 'frozen' in a transcript. This allows learners to catch words or phrases which they might have missed in the listening comprehension tasks, and immerse themselves intensely in the data as 'mini conversational analysts'; something recommended by a number of researchers (Willis and Willis 1996; Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000; Schegloff, Koshik, Jacoby and Olsher 2002; Wong 2002). However, producing accurate transcripts from recorded speech is a time-consuming process, and, depending on the level of detail required, it can take anywhere between six and twenty hours to transcribe one hour of spoken discourse (Fairclough 1992). Fortunately in the case of film discourse, the transcripts are intended to be used alongside the original DVD material (where pronunciation, intonation or non-verbal features can be highlighted), so relatively simple

transcriptions, using standard orthography, will normally suffice[6]. In addition, as we will see later in this chapter, readily available software is also making transcribing film easier to do than it was in the past.

Copyright headaches

The increasing use of authentic materials such as films, music and book extracts in ESOL classrooms means that language teachers and material writers stumble into copyright issues to a greater extent than they did in the past. The word 'stumble' is used deliberately here because copyright law is not only labyrinthine, it also varies in severity from country to country, so that providing guidelines to a global audience can only ever be 'rough-and-ready'[7]. Fair use provisions in the United States, for example, allow citizens to reproduce and exhibit portions of copyright material without authorization of the copyright holder for the purposes of news reporting, criticism, teaching and parody (see Eric Faden (2007) for a creative, and unauthorized, use of Walt Disney extracts in *A Fair(y) Use Tale*). In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, fair dealing exceptions are much stricter and even the single screen grab from the comedy classic Fawlty Towers used in this chapter required copyright permission from both the BBC and the actors appearing in the image (as well as a hefty licensing fee). This is rather ironic given the fact that, at the time of writing, the entire series is freely available for unauthorized streaming or downloading via YouTube. Clearly, as it stands, copyright provisions are lagging seriously behind technological advances, and media providers appear to be struggling to find ways to make money in the new electronic environment.

In general, copyright holders will vigorously protect their rights where they consider them to have been violated, so users should proceed with caution. Certain conditions, based on principles of fair use (in the USA) or fair dealing (in the UK), reduce the likelihood of a lawsuit being filed, while others increase the risk. These are summarized in Table 1 below.

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[6] Most authors representing recorded speech in pedagogical contexts have also tended to favour simple transcription procedures (Crystal and Davy 1975; Carter and McCarthy 1997).

[7] The information provided here only constitutes very general guidelines on copyright law and should not be relied on as a substitute for obtaining legal advice from a qualified lawyer in your country of residence.

Table 1:   Summary of factors influencing the likelihood of litigation by copyright holders (based on UK and US Copyright Acts)

Lawsuits are less likely when…	Lawsuits are more likely when…
• Use is non-profit, and for personal, educational, or research purposes • Use is for the purpose of criticism, commentary, parody, or news reporting • Use is transformative in some way; e.g. repurposing or re-contextualizing work for educational purposes • Work is based on fact • Work has already been published • Inclusion of copyright material is incidental • Only small amounts of the original work are used • No established market for permissions exists • Copyright owner is unidentifiable	• Use is commercial • Work is unpublished • Work is imaginative in nature • Inclusion of copyright material is deliberate • Large amounts of the original work are used • Established permissions market exists • Use competes with established commercial market for the copyright material • Copyright owner is readily identifiable

Naturally, the safest course of action is to always seek permission from copyright holders before using their materials, and often, when the use is non-commercial or educational, fees will be waived in any case. In countries where Reproduction Rights Organisations (RROs)[8] exist, licenses can be purchased giving institutions 'blanket' permission to copy from print and digital publications in return for an annual fee. However, these do not normally cover films or music, and under these circumstances users are obliged to seek permission from the original copyright holder themselves: often a long, drawn-out process. In the case of film sources, for example, images and scripts come under separate licences and just tracking down the original copyright holders can be difficult.

For language teachers who wish to use authentic materials in their classes, the complexity and vagaries of copyright law, combined with the obstacles that need to be overcome to obtain permission, are likely to result in either avoidance of copyright materials altogether for fear of litigation, or flouting of the law in the expectation of

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[8] For example, the Copyright Licensing Agency in the UK (http://www.cla.co.uk/) [accessed 1 June 2009].

never being caught. What educators need are clear and fair guidelines for use of copyright materials and the mechanisms in place to allow licenses to be secured quickly and easily, but this does not seem likely any time in the near future.

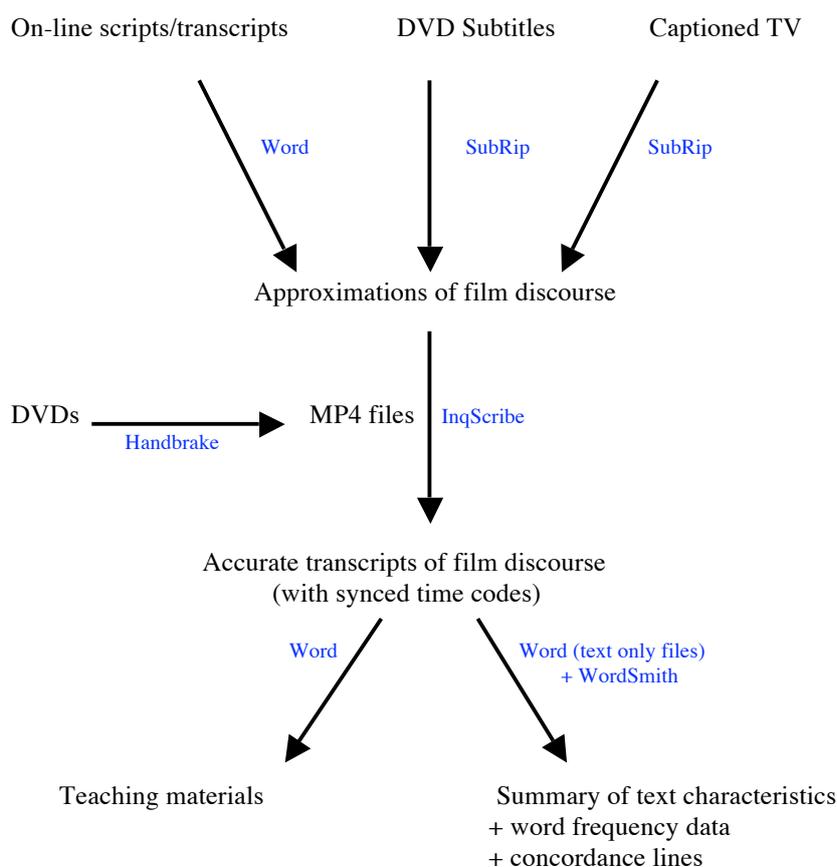**Procedure for exploiting film discourse in the classroom**

The remaining part of this chapter describes a procedure, developed over the last few years, for producing accurate film transcripts in a form in which they can be exploited for language-learning purposes. Since the author is aware of no direct methods available for achieving this aim, this represents a 'work around' solution, involving a variety of proprietary and free software. Although most of the steps outlined will work equally well with both Macs and PCs, some of the software needed differs. Unfortunately, the version of WordSmith tools current at time of writing, version 5.0, (Scott 2007) will only run on Microsoft Windows, so Mac users will need to use virtual Windows software such as Parallels or Boot Camp for the final step. Table 2 below summarizes the software options available:

Table 2   Summary of the software options available to produce accurate film transcripts

Macs	PCs	Description
MacTheRipper	Digital Media Converter	Extract VOB files from DVDs
D-Subtitler or SubRip (virtual PC)	SubRip	Convert subtitle images into text
Microsoft Word	Microsoft Word	Used to produce teaching materials
Handbrake	Cucusoft Ultimate DVD Converter	Convert DVDs into MP4 format
InqScribe	InqScribe	Allows film to be transcribed or annotated
WordSmith (virtual PC)	WordSmith	Corpus analyzing software

The process begins with rough transcripts of the target film, either ripped from DVD subtitles and captioned TV, or copied from scripts/transcripts available online. These are cleaned up and synced with the original media file using InqScribe in order to produce accurate transcripts, which can be analyzed with WordSmith and used to produce teaching materials:

Figure 1: Summary of the procedure used to produce accurate transcripts

On-line scripts/transcripts   DVD Subtitles   Captioned TV

Word   SubRip   SubRip

Approximations of film discourse

DVDs   →   MP4 files   InqScribe

Handbrake

Accurate transcripts of film discourse
(with synced time codes)

Word   Word (text only files)
+ WordSmith

Teaching materials   Summary of text characteristics
+ word frequency data
+ concordance lines

The example below illustrates how an accurate transcript of 'Communication Problems', an episode from Fawlty Towers, could be produced, analyzed and adapted for use with advanced learners on a one-year English course at university, focusing on developing listening and speaking skills. This particular material was selected because it has a number of features that make it valuable for language teaching:

i) The content is both challenging and motivating.

ii) The running time of 30 minutes is an appropriate length to cover over the course of a one-year university course (with the activities shown in Appendix 1, the materials would take around six 90-minute classes to complete).

iii) The transcript exposes learners to a wide variety of useful discourse features, such as colloquial language, politeness strategies, register choices, vocatives, discourse markers, conversational implicature (Grice 1975), vague language, and communication strategies.

iv) The episode allows extension into a variety of topics at the post-listening stage,

such as national celebrations, gambling, husband-wife relationships and stereotyping.

**Step 1: Extracting a rough transcript**

The process begins by extracting the VOB files (which contain the video, audio, subtitles and menus) from the original DVD using MacTheRipper.

Figure 2:   Full disc extraction of VOB files from Fawlty Towers DVD in progress

The VOB files are used by D-Subtitler or SubRip to convert the subtitles, which are actually stored as images, into text. This process is semi-automated and proceeds quite rapidly once underway, but the user has to train the software to recognize the characters initially. In the screen shot in Figure 3, the text that has already been converted is visible at the bottom; SubRip has paused and is querying the character 'V', which it has guessed, incorrectly, to be a 'Y'. Once the user has typed in the correct letter, the OCR software continues with the conversion process until it encounters another unknown character.

**Figure 3:   Training SubRip to recognize characters in the subtitles**
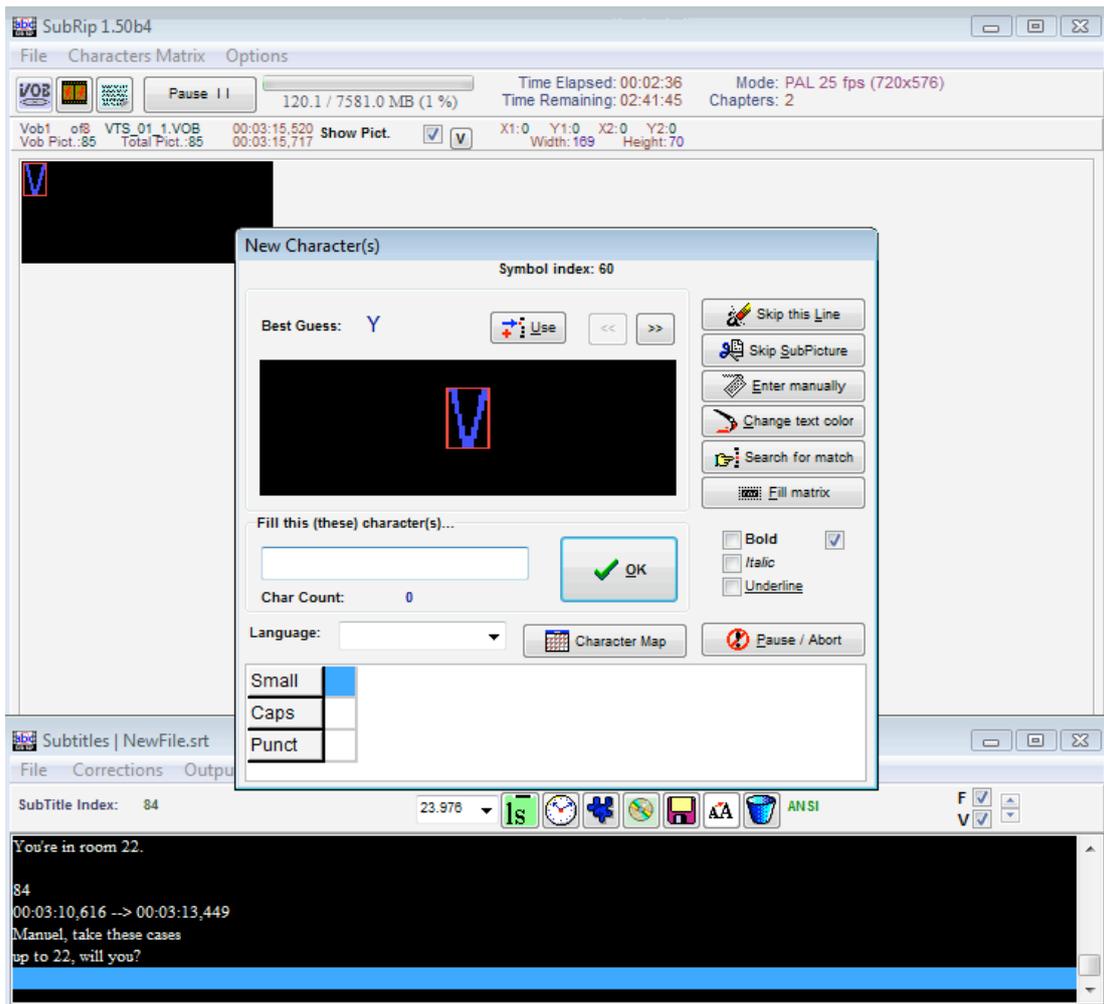
On completion of the character recognition process, the ripped subtitles and their timings are saved into .srt files, which can be copied and pasted directly into InqScribe to be cleaned up.

Step 2: Cleaning up the transcript

InqScribe allows video to be viewed and transcribed or annotated in the same window, but the Fawlty Towers DVD first needs to be converted into recognizable digital media format (QuickTime, AVI, MPEG, etc.). Handbrake is used here to convert the DVD into MP4 format, which can then also be stored in iTunes and downloaded onto an iPod (with or without subtitles) for easy transportation and viewing if required.

Figure 4:   Conversion of DVD into MP4 format for viewing on an iPod
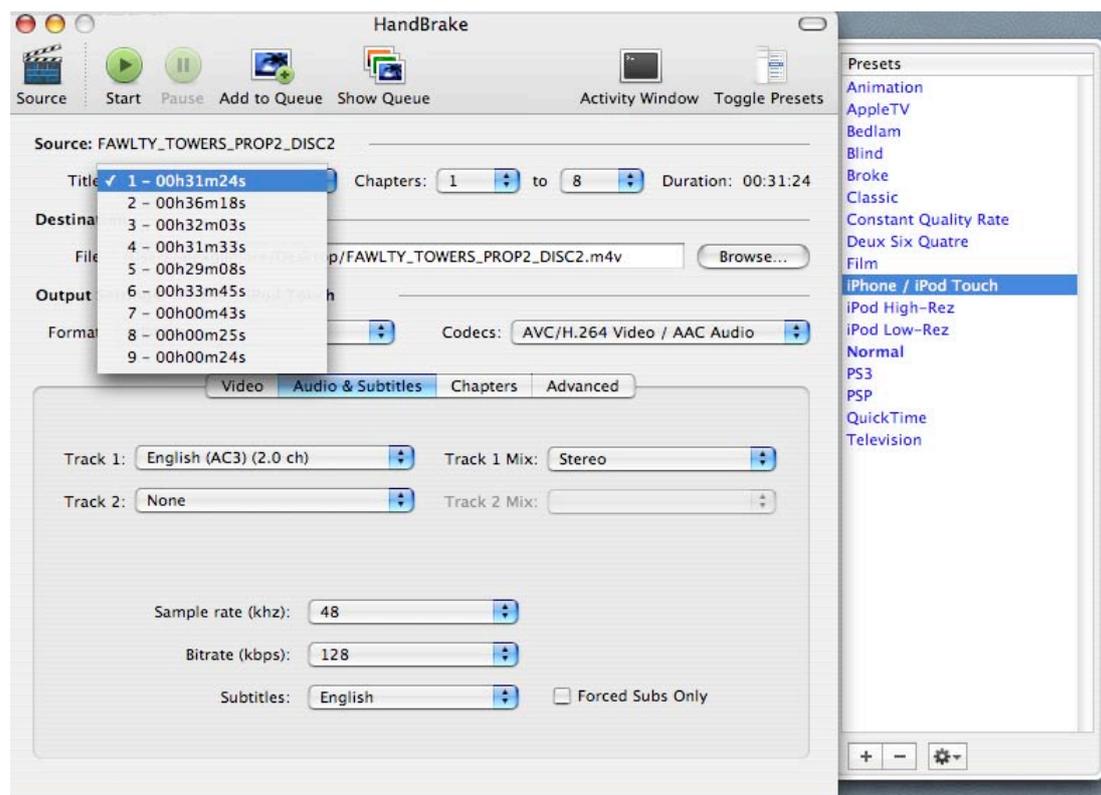
The MP4 version of the episode and the corresponding .srt file of the subtitles are then both copied into the main transcription window of InqScribe. Dynamic time codes, (shown in blue) can be inserted with a single key stroke and allow the teacher or transcriber to jump to any frame in the video instantly and to synchronize the transcript with the speakers. These codes indicate the number of hours, minutes or seconds into the film where a frame occurs, as well as the frame number (30 per second): 1:18:02:20 means that the shot occurs at one hour, eighteen minutes and two seconds into the film and is the twentieth frame in that particular one-second window.

The cleaning up process involves removing the old time codes generated in the .srt files, adding in the names of the speakers and checking that the subtitles accurately reflect the discourse. Because of limitations in reading speeds, subtitles are normally condensed forms of what is actually said. This can be seen in Figure 5 below, where Sybil's final utterance in the transcript on the right, '*this afternoon then'* has been omitted in the subtitle on the screen. In addition, discourse markers, repetitions and hesitation devices are also often left out and these need to be included in the final version because they can be useful for teaching purposes. The play rate for the media file can be slowed down if necessary to ensure an accurate transcription is produced.

**Figure 5: Cleaning up the transcript with InqScribe**
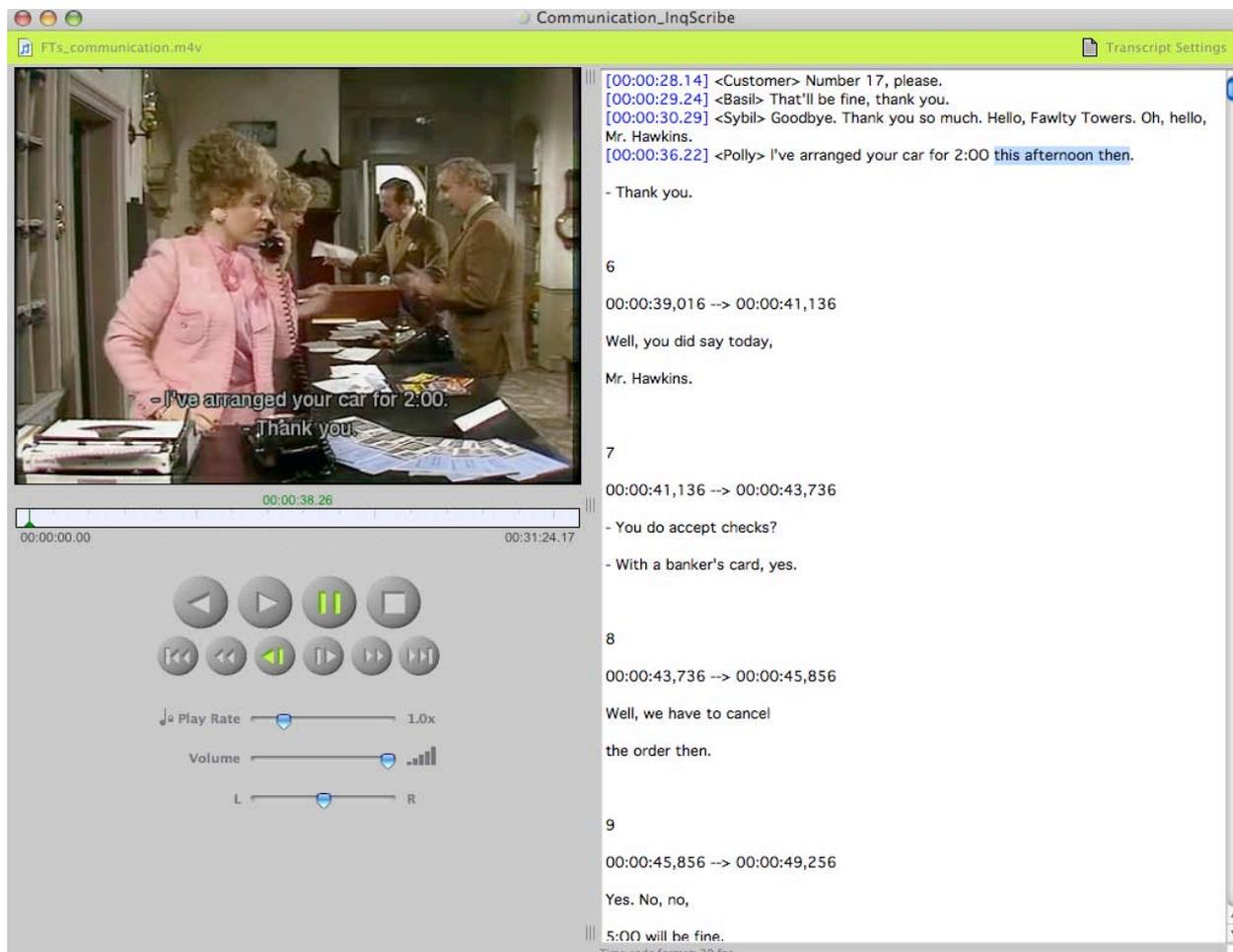
Step 3: Creating a film corpus

Once a clean transcript has been produced, it can be copied and pasted into a Word document and then saved as a text-only file (.txt) for analysis in WordSmith. This corpus analyzing software has a number of features that can aid the materials design process. Firstly, a word frequency list can be generated to allow the teacher to quickly evaluate the vocabulary in the target text and to select potential lexis for pre-teaching. In 'Communication Problems', unsurprisingly for spoken discourse, the majority of hits showing up in the frequency list (77per cent) are 2, 3 or 4-letter words; most of which are unlikely by themselves to present any comprehension problems for advanced learners. Another feature noticeable in the wordlist, and typical of many authentic materials, is the relatively high occurrence of certain items of low frequency lexis specific to the context, reflecting central themes arising in the episode, such as

dragonfly, which is the name of the horse Basil places a bet on. This has 12 hits in this small sample of text, compared with a total of only 66 hits in the 100 million-word British National Corpus. Also typical of authentic texts are the large number of words with single hits in 'Communication Problems' and, since it is both unrealistic and unnecessary to clarify everything, decisions have to be made on exactly which vocabulary to focus on. This will depend on subjective judgments by the materials designer, based on the target learners' proficiency level, their future language needs and an analysis of the lexis central to the story's plot. For example, at one point in the episode, Basil's sarcastic comment to a guest complaining about her room is: 'Well, may I ask what you were expecting to see out of a Torquay hotel bedroom window? Sydney Opera House, perhaps? The Hanging Gardens of Babylon? Herds of wildebeest sweeping majestically…'. This contains numerous examples of low frequency lexis, but as none of it is central to the plot, or likely to be of great value to the students in question, it could be omitted from pre-listening tasks. This does not, of course, preclude the incidental acquisition of this vocabulary by learners during the series of activities.

Once target words for pre-teaching have been identified in the frequency list, their meanings in the context of the film can be explored further using the Concord program in WordSmith, which allows concordance lines to be displayed for a particular search word. In the example below, a search for the word *jolly* indicates that it has both adjectival (you seem very jolly) and adverbial (jolly good luck with it) meanings in this episode of Fawlty Towers. Naturally, only the meanings arising in the target text are focused on in pre-listening tasks.

Figure 6   Investigating the meanings of *jolly* with WordSmith's Concord (in a virtual Windows environment on a Mac)
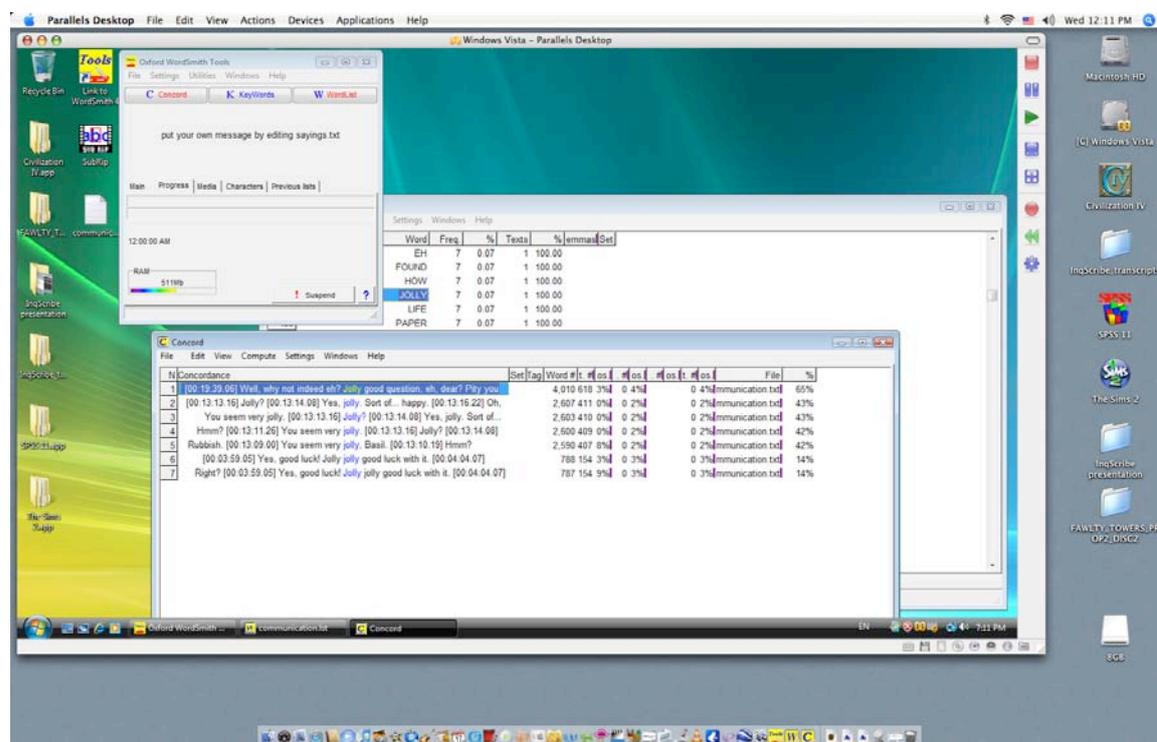
Step 4: Producing language learning materials

After producing an accurate transcript of the target audio-visual material and analyzing the vocabulary and other discourse features arising in the text, the materials designer is in a much better position to select appropriate scenes to suit learners' needs. Normally, as the extract in Appendix 2 which lasts around 1 minute 45 seconds illustrates, a sequence of 5 to 10 minutes will provide more than enough material for teaching purposes, so decisions have to be made in terms of where to begin and end. This will depend on a number of factors such as whether the scene is interesting or thematically relevant, whether it can 'stand alone' in the classroom and what discourse features are highlighted in the input. Of course, learners should also be encouraged to get extensive listening practice by watching the whole film/episode outside of the classroom, once intensive analysis of the selected scene has been completed.

Appendix 1 illustrates what the final language learning materials based on the Appendix 2 transcript might look like. In the introduction, the main characters are described and some background information to the series is provided in order to stimulate learners' interest, contextualize the input and activate top-down processing

strategies. Another option would be just to play a short extract and ask students what they can surmise about Fawlty Towers through bottom-up processing. This would increase the challenge of the task, but would focus learners' attention to a greater extent on specific features of the input, such as the accents of the characters, their relationships, where they are speaking, what they are wearing and the actual words they say. It is clear, then, that task design will affect what learners notice in the input and how long is needed in the classroom to work through materials.

Section A is designed to pre-teach vocabulary identified from the word frequency list generated using WordSmith and ease the process of listening comprehension. The selection of target words will depend on a number of factors including their frequency in the input, their relevance to the main plot and comprehension tasks, and subjective judgments from the teacher in terms of what lexis is likely to be unfamiliar or useful to students. Again, this task can be adapted according to the time available and learners' proficiency level. In the materials shown here, the matching task is relatively easy to complete, but students are then asked to produce example sentences using the target vocabulary, which is more cognitively demanding (and therefore probably more memorable) and would take more time.

Section B contains the gist listening task, which is designed to a) be largely achievable after only one viewing, in order to keep motivation levels high, and b) guide learners towards an understanding of the central plot through careful choice of questions, spaced out appropriately through the episode so that students have time to jot down their ideas while watching. The main aim of the gist task is to give learners the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the characters, storyline, accents and speech rates in the audio-visual material and to prepare the ground for a more detailed understanding of the material in later task cycles. This means that finding all the correct answers to the questions is not essential; indeed, different opinions will actually generate a lot of useful discussion and negotiation of meaning between students in the L2 and this will help to develop their speaking fluency. Any unresolved issues can be clarified by the teacher at the plenary stage, before moving on. As mentioned earlier, it is probably sensible to play the DVD without English subtitles for the first viewing in order to encourage the development of effective listening strategies, such as inferring meaning from context, and to focus learners' attention on the aural input and the action that is taking place on the screen. Once the

gist listening questions have been discussed, learners can watch the episode again with English subtitles (in or outside of the classroom), and on this occasion they are likely to be focusing their attention on the questions they misunderstood or were unable to answer in the earlier viewing.

With a grasp of the basic storyline, students have the scaffolding necessary for a deeper understanding of linguistic, paralinguistic, pragmatic, prosodic or cultural features arising in the film discourse. This is where an accurate transcript of the dialogue becomes necessary, to 'freeze' the interaction and allow it to become the focus of attention. As can be seen in Appendix 2, film transcripts are normally rich in potential features for learners to consider, including colloquial expressions, discourse markers, vocatives and pragmatic choices. In Appendix 2, such phrases are *italicised* and referred to in Section D of Appendix 1, the teaching materials). Film extracts such as this are also extremely valuable in encouraging learners to see themselves as comparative ethnographers (McCarthy and Carter 1994; Cortazzi and Jin 1999; Pulverness 1999; Scollon 1999), bringing about a deeper understanding of both their own and the target culture, and developing their Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) (Byram 1991; Byram 1997; Byram and Fleming 1998). In this sequence, for example, Mrs Richards' rude interruption of Polly and Mr Thurston's conversation provides a useful way into a discussion of cultural differences in service encounters[9]. However, this kind of closer analysis is time-consuming, so relatively short sequences of the dialogue should be selected. For Task C, Appendix 1, the transcript has been divided up into ten sections and pairs of students asked to analyze one section and present their findings to the rest of the class. This would allow the whole episode to be covered, without over-burdening each individual student. Even for higher proficiency learners, this task is challenging so it is advisable to both model the activity (see Section D) and also provide each pair of learners with a list of discourse features from their section that might be interesting to explore.

Once a close analysis of the film transcript has been completed, learners should have a much better understanding of the material, and there will probably be themes which can be picked up and explored in greater depth at the post-listening stages. In

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[9] In Mexico, I once spent half an hour in a hardware store, trying to buy some screws. I patiently waited, British-style, for my turn to be served while customers around me shouted out their requests and (I thought at the time) rudely jumped the queue. It eventually dawned on me that Mexican service encounters were clearly operating under different rules, and the only way to get the shop assistant's attention was to join in the melee.

Section E of Appendix 1, the topic of St George's Day has been selected, and students are asked to investigate and report on another festival or national holiday of their choice. There are, however, many other themes in 'Communication Problems' that could lead into interesting discussions, such as gambling, national stereotypes and racism, husband-wife relationships, or the story behind the making of the Fawlty Towers series.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered some of the theoretical justifications supporting the use of film discourse in the language classroom and has described a series of steps, using readily-available software, for producing accurate transcripts from DVDs. The materials shown in Appendices 1 and 2 illustrate the potential of even small samples of transcript to highlight useful discourse features. Foreign language teachers should be encouraged to take advantage of the huge range of films available around them, to not only motivate students and encourage them to engage with the L2, but also to provide the rich audio-visual input needed to effectively develop communicative competence.

Appendix 1: Sample materials for 'Communication Problems'

'Fawlty Towers' is a popular British comedy series from the 1970s, set in a hotel in Torquay (in the south of England). There are four main characters in the series: match the names below to the picture on the DVD cover.

- Basil Fawlty: The owner of Fawlty Towers, a hen-pecked husband who is frequently extremely rude to his guests.
- Sybil Fawlty: Basil's wife.
- Manuel: A Spanish waiter who works at the hotel (he doesn't speak much English).
- Polly: Works as a waitress and room maid at Fawlty Towers.

A. Before you watch, study some of the vocabulary from this episode of Fawlty Towers. Match the words on the left with their definitions on the right. Make an example with your partner, using these words, e.g.: *I think you should turn your **hearing aid** up, you're not understanding exactly what I say*.

Word	Definition
• Dragonfly	• A large fierce animal with wings and a tail that can breathe fire, or a woman who behaves in a frightening way.
• St. George's Day	• A toilet (informal).
• Eruption	• A place to gamble on horse races.
• Hearing aid	• Horses (children's slang).
• Betting shop	• Happy and cheerful, or an adverb used to emphasize a statement.
• Vase	• To gamble money.
• Loo	• Something to put flowers in.
• Gee-gees	• A kind of flower, or an offensive word for a homosexual man.
• Jolly	• Comments you think are stupid or wrong.
• Nitwit	• When hot gases and molten rock are forced out of a volcano.
• Bet	• Crazy (slang).
• Dragon	• A national holiday to celebrate a famous saint who is said to have killed a dragon.
• Quid	• A kind of flying insect that lives near water.
• Memorial service	• To fill a space or container tightly with something.
• Pansy	• Pounds (slang).
• Stuff	• A stupid person (slang)
• Rubbish	• A device to help deaf people hear properly.
• Loopy	• A special meeting to remember someone who has died.
• Vivisectionist	• A scientist who cuts up live animals for research purposes.

B. Watch the whole episode and try to get the 'gist' of what is happening (don't worry about a detailed understanding at this stage). As you watch, answer the following questions:

1. Why does Mrs Richards interrupt Polly and Mr Thurston's conversation?
2. Why do Mrs Richards and Manuel have problems understanding each other?
3. What does Mr Firkin recommend Basil to do?
4. Why doesn't Mrs Richards like her room?
5. What favour does Basil ask Manuel to do for him?
6. What does Mrs Richards complain about at the reception?
7. Why is Basil so happy in the kitchen?
8. What does Basil ask Manuel to say nothing about?
9. Why does Mrs Richards want to call the police?
10. Where did Polly say she got the money?
11. What favour does Basil ask the Major to do for him?
12. Whose money does Mrs Richards get?
13. Why does a man bring a vase and a glove into the hotel? What is in the glove?
14. What does the Major remember at the end of the episode?

C. You are now going to analyze a section of the transcript from 'Communication Problems' in more detail. Study the section of the transcript which your teacher gives you with your partner, and prepare a short presentation (either using Powerpoint or handouts):
   a) Summarize briefly what happens in your section of the transcript.
   b) Explain any useful vocabulary or phrases occurring in your section.
   c) Provide any cultural background information that will help other students in the class to understand the episode.

D. Here is an example of a presentation for the first part of the episode:
   Summary of the story
   Mrs Richards arrives at Fawlty Towers and rudely interrupts Polly's and Mr Thurston's conversation, to ask for some change to pay her taxi driver. Mrs Richards is unhappy with the service in the hotel and complains, so Polly asks Manuel to help her (Polly knows that Mrs Richards and Manuel will have difficulty understanding each other, which is her revenge for Mrs Richard's rude behaviour). Mrs Richards and Manuel have problems understanding each other because she is deaf and he can't speak much English. At the end of their conversation, Mrs Richards believes that the manager's name is C. K. Watt, aged 40. Finally, Manuel takes Mrs Richards up to her room in the hotel.

   Useful vocabulary or expressions
   That'll be fine [00:29:24]: a common spoken expression, to say that you are satisfied with something.

… *then* [00:00:36.22] and [00:00:43.24]: This is a common 'discourse marker' often tagged on to the end of utterances, and can make your English sound more natural. It means something like 'if what we have already discussed is true, this is the consequence'. Contrast this with the use of *then* in the following:

[00:00:51.11] <Sybil> Oh Polly, Brenda can't start till Monday so would you mind doing the rooms until *then*?

Well [00:39:10] or [00:43:24]: This is another common 'discourse marker', used to mark a boundary between stretches of talk or between different topics. Using discourse markers like this can make your spoken English sound more natural.

Would you mind + verb-ing [00:51:11]: a polite way to ask someone to do something.

I could do with + noun (or verb-ing) [00:54:29]: informal spoken English, meaning to need something (e.g. *I could do with a cup of tea*).

There you are [00:56:17]: Often used in service encounters (shops, restaurants, etc.) when completing transactions.

Girl [01:02:26]: A rather rude and patronizing way to address a younger woman.

In one moment [01:05:08]: A more polite form of 'in a minute' or 'in a sec'.

I was wondering if you could + infinitive [01:08:29]: another polite way to ask someone to do something.

I'm dealing with/attending to this gentleman [01:11:08] or [01:43:10]: a more polite way to say 'I'm talking to this man'.

What is going on here? [02:46:01]: if something is 'going on', it usually has a negative meaning (often used by parents to their misbehaving children).

Names: Notice that the hotel staff use first names with each other, but address guests using their family names. What is the reason for this? How do Basil and Sybil address each other?

Cultural background information

At [00:01:02.26], Mrs Richards interrupts Polly and Mr Thurston's conversation: was her interruption acceptable? Is it acceptable in your culture to shout out requests in a service encounter like this, or should you wait for your turn to be served? Do you know of any cultures where customers are served either one by one or concurrently?

At [01:58:18], Polly suggests that Mrs Richards talks to Manuel. She says: 'Manuel, could you lend Mrs. Richards your assistance in connection with her reservation?' Why is this humorous?

Manuel and Mrs Richards have a lot of trouble communicating with each other. There are at least 5 misunderstandings: can you identify them?

Mrs Richards uses 3 phrases to try to repair the conversation with Manuel, but she sounds rather rude. Identify these 3 expressions and decide how we could make them more polite.

E. In this episode of Fawlty Towers, there are several references to St. George's Day, a celebration and national holiday in many Christian countries around the world. Prepare a poster presentation, explaining about a festival or national holiday in another country that interests you.

Appendix 2: Extract of transcript from 'Communication Problems' after the cleaning-up process

[00:00:28.14] <Guest 1> Number 17, please.

[00:00:29.24] <Basil> *That'll be fine*, thank you.

[00:00:30.29] <Sybil> Goodbye. Thank you so much. Hello, Fawlty Towers. Oh, hello, *Mr. Hawkins*.

[00:00:36.22] <Polly> I've arranged your car for 2:00 this afternoon *then*.

[00:00:38.22] <Guest 2> Thank you.

[00:00:39.10] <Sybil> *Well*, you did say today, *Mr. Hawkins*.

[00:00:41.08] <Guest 3> Er you do accept checks?

[00:00:42.20] <Polly> With a banker's card, yes.

[00:00:43.24] <Sybil> *Well*, we'll have to cancel the order *then*. Yes. No, no, 5 o' clock will be fine. Goodbye.

[00:00:51.11] <Sybil> Oh *Polly, Brenda* can't start till Monday so *would you mind* do*ing* the rooms until *then*?

[00:00:54.29] <Polly> Oh, no. *I could do with* the money.

[00:00:55.28] <Sybil> Oh, good.

[00:00:56.17] <Polly> *There you are*. Thank you, *Mr. Yardley*.

[00:01:00.23] <Polly> Oh, hello.

[00:01:01.11] <Mr Thurston> Hello.

[00:01:02.01] <Polly> Can l help you?

[00:01:02.20] <Mr Thurston> Yes.

[00:01:02.26] <Mrs. Richards> *Girl*, would you give me change for this, please?

[00:01:05.08] <Polly> *In one moment. I'm just dealing with this gentleman*. Yes, *Mr. Thurston*?

[00:01:08.12] <Mrs. Richards> What?

[00:01:08.29] <Mr Thurston> Thank you, *I was wondering if you could* help me?

[00:01:09.28] <Mrs. Richards> I need change for this!

[00:01:11.08] <Polly> In a moment. *I'm dealing with this gentleman*.

[00:01:13.13] <Mrs. Richards> But I have a taxi driver waiting. Surely *this gentleman* wouldn't mind if you just gave me change.

[00:01:17.23] <Polly> Do you?

[00:01:18.10] <Mr Thurston> No, no. Go ahead.

[00:01:21.28] <Mrs. Richards> Thank you.

[00:01:21.28] <Polly> There you are.

[00:01:23.10] <Mr Thurston> Can you tell me how to get to Glendower Street?

[00:01:24.29] <Mrs. Richards> Now, I've booked a room and bath with a sea view for three nights.

[00:01:29.06] <Polly> Glendower Street?

[00:01:30.06] <Mr Thurston> Yes.

[00:01:31.06] <Mrs. Richards> You haven't finished with me.

[00:01:33.17] <Polly> Mrs?

[00:01:34.14] <Mrs. Richards> *Mrs. Richards. Mrs. Alice Richards.*

[00:01:36.16] <Polly> *Mrs. Richards, Mr. Thurston. Mr. Thurston, Mrs. Richards. Mr. Thurston*
        is the gentleman *I'm attending to* at the moment.

[00:01:42.19] <Mrs. Richards> What?

[00:01:43.10] <Polly> *Mr. Thurston* is the gentleman I'm attending

[00:01:45.10] <Mrs. Richards> Don't shout. I'm not deaf.

[00:01:47.11] <Polly> *Mr. Thurston* was here before you, *Mrs. Richards*.

[00:01:50.06] <Mrs. Richards> But you were serving me!

[00:01:51.06] <Polly> I gave you change, but l hadn't finished dealing with him. Now, Glendower
        Street is just

[00:01:55.06] <Mrs. Richards> Isn't there anyone else in attendance? Really, this is the most appalling
        service I've ever

[00:01:58.18] <Polly> What a good idea! *Manuel*, could you lend *Mrs. Richards* your assistance in
        connection with her reservation?

(Cleese and Booth 1979)

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