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## Preface

Considering theoretical and practical aspects and unique challenges of movie selection for English as a second language (ESL) learning and teaching, this book is to offer—

1. A systematic approach to movie selection (criteria, methodology and practical guidance), drawing upon up-to-date scholarship in related fields;
2. A movie guide for ESL learners and teachers: concise introductions to a list of movies suitable for ESL learning and teaching, from which ESL learners and teachers may identify and select movies that meet specific learning and teaching objectives.

To justify and optimize very limited amount of time and effort one can allocate in learning a new language through native-language movies, it is necessary to select movies best fitted for this purpose: movies worthy of and suitable for language learning and teaching, and proper for language learners. Movies, written by the best contemporary writers and spoken by the best contemporary artists, are the greatest evidence of Language. Because many advantages of movie-assisted language learning are so intuitively obvious to many (e.g., native speakers, natural language in natural context, low cost, etc.), the benefits of movies in language learning and teaching seem to become a truth universally acknowledged. Indeed, as will be discussed later, there are empirical and theoretical support (directly and indirectly) for the legitimacy and advantages of movie-assisted language acquisition. At the

same time, certain content in certain movies can be great obstacles to self-expression in a new language and therefore negatively affect motivation.<sup>1</sup>

This paradox—the very unique and remarkable value of movies for language acquisition, and the potential risk of negatively affecting self-expression and motivation—may require some great care in selecting proper movies suitable for language learning and teaching. To realize the unique advantages a movie has to offer, and to minimize the impact of negative messages on the mind of language learners (many of them are still tender in their years), it is necessary to select movies suitable for language acquisition and appropriate for language learners.

Although scholars in ESL teaching and psycholinguistics would generally recognize movie-assisted learning as an effective methodology, little or no advice is offered as to how to make proper movie choice in movie-assisted learning and teaching, the reason being each individual would have different tastes and interests, so ESL learners and teachers would have to figure out for themselves. Conceivably, this sort of figuring would leave many ESL learners confused, if not downright clueless, as to what movies to watch. Though there are some websites dedicated for this purpose, there is no way to find out how and based on what criteria moves are selected and recommended.

There are also practical difficulties to English-language movie selection for movie-assisted ESL learning and teaching. Each year, over one thousand (approximately two thousand) English-language movies from English-speaking countries are released into the market. It thus may be useful to locate and provide a collection of proper English-language movies suitable for ESL learning and teaching, from which ESL learners and teachers may identify and select movies most fitted for specific ESL objectives and needs, without having to sift through a large amount of movies.

To better understand as to what movies are suitable for ESL learning and teaching, to realize the unique pedagogical benefits of movies in second language acquisition, and to address content-related concerns and unique challenges of many ESL learners to define themselves in the English language and culture, it is necessary to adopt a systematic approach to select

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Gardner 2010: 45.

proper movies suitable for second language acquisition and appropriate for ESL learners, and to work in tandem with theories and studies in related fields.

More specifically, a systematic approach requires a set of selection criteria and a selection process, reflecting general principles and concerns in using movies in ESL learning and teaching, and specific rules and principles responsive to specific ESL objectives and situations. It is also part of the view underlying this text that a systematic approach to movie selection need to be supported by, or at least informed by, existing fields and studies directly or indirectly related to language learning through movies, e.g., psycholinguistic studies, educational technology, ESL scholarship, and various film-related studies.

Part I introduces a systematic approach to movie selection for movie-assisted ESL learning and teaching. Chapter 1 identifies problems of movie selection for ESL learning and teaching, and emphasizes the importance of adopting a systematic approach and a set of ESL specific criteria to movie selection. Chapter 2 sets movie-assisted ESL learning and teaching in interdisciplinary context, reviewing theoretical sources of using movies as ESL tutor and tool, and exploring the benefits, concerns and objectives of movie-assisted ESL learning and teaching. Chapter 3 proposes a set of ESL specific criteria, reflecting upon theoretical and practical aspects of movie-assisted ESL learning and teaching as discussed in Chapter 2. Chapter 4 describes the methodology of movie selection for ESL learning and teaching, explaining how to gather candidate movies, make decisions based on selection criteria and conduct research on movies.

Part II provides ESL learners and teachers with concise introductions to a list of 160 movies suitable for ESL learning and teaching, from which ESL learners and teachers may identify movies suitable for specific objectives and needs. Based on the selection criteria and methodology described in Part I, these movies are selected from 1,519 candidate movies gathered from a variety of resources, as best fitted for the purpose of ESL learning and teaching.

Chapter 5 briefly describe the structure of Part II (the content and manner of presentation), and suggests how to use the introductions of these movies as a beginning to locate movies best fitted specific objectives and

needs. Chapters 6 through 8 introduce these movies in three groups: (1) movies primarily of North America English (American and Canadian English); (2) movies primarily of British English; (3) movies primarily of Australian English.<sup>2</sup>

Choosing “the best” of anything will necessarily leave room for debates and arguments, and there is no doubt that readers will have their own perspectives and preferences. The hope is to provide a beginning point and one perspective beneficial to ESL learners and teachers in selecting appropriate movies best fitted for their specific learning and teaching objectives.

I have tried to write this book so that it could be of use to a variety of audiences for different purposes: to provide ESL learners and teachers with a systematic approach and practical guidance in selecting proper movies suitable for ESL learning and teaching; to provide ESL teachers, learners and their parents (in the case of young ESL learners) with a useful movie guide, as a starting point and one perspective to find proper movies most fitted for specific ESL objectives and needs; and to offer some theoretical arguments for academics in related fields.

## ABOUT M-ELT

The series in which this book appears is *Introductions to M-ELT: movie-assisted ESL learning and teaching*. Movie-assisted ESL learning and teaching (M-ELT),<sup>3</sup> as distinguished from movie-assisted language learning or other educational purposes, has its particular concerns and decisions, for the global status of the English language and unique challenges of many ESL learners to define themselves and negotiate identities in the English language and culture.

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<sup>2</sup> Other regions’ English-language movies are not listed here, for example, Irish-English movies, Mexican-English movies, and Indian-English movies. This is because the number of such kind of non-native-English-language movies being mentioned in native-English-speaking countries is too small, and it is difficult to access these countries’ movie review tools or databases without knowing their native languages.

<sup>3</sup> M-ELT is a terminology created by this introductory series. Since this book does not purport to introduce this new term, it will be used infrequently, when the citation to “movie-assisted ESL learning and teaching” or similar words appears to be cumbersome.

In recognition of the unique advantages, implications, and challenges in movie-assisted ESL learning and teaching (M-ELT), Tomato's English is publishing a series of books to provide studies of movie-assisted ESL learning and teaching (M-ELT),; and provides practical guidance to movie selection for ESL learning and teaching.

Although the book explores theoretical aspects of M-ELT in early chapters, it does not purport to introduce the concept of M-ELT, since the primary focus is upon movie selection. As such, the book should be read without prerequisite of M-ELT.

For that reason, the term M-ELT is used only occasionally in the book. It is used only immediately after the full citation to "movie-assisted ESL learning and teaching" in the same paragraph, when it is followed by an explanatory parenthetical with the term M-ELT in the brackets. The hope is that the reader can access the book at any point without having to be familiar with this new term.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The movies recommended in this book are selected from the initial list of 1519 contemporary English-language movies, compiled from a variety of film resources by various organizations and entities (as outlined in Part I, Chapter 4). I am grateful for each and every film organization and film expert, for their professional judgment. Without the insights of these film organizations and experts, it would be a daunting endeavor (if not impossible) to sift through thousands of movies to locate some good quality movies suitable for ESL learning and teaching.

The bibliographical information of movies (release year, running time, director, screenwriter and main cast) is gathered from Wikipedia.org, the Internet Movie Database at [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) and the New York Times. As to content maturity level, whenever available, the ratings by MPAA's CARA Ratings System and Common Sense Media are provided.

