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Preface

This book is for English as a second language (ESL) teachers, intermediate to advanced ESL learners and their parents (hereinafter *ESL learners and teachers*). The intent is to be beneficial to ESL learners and teachers in selecting proper movies suitable for movie-assisted ESL learning and teaching.

The best language tutor in today's digital era may as well be a collection of movies,¹ suitable for language acquisition and appropriate for language learners. Movies, written by the best contemporary writers and spoken by the best contemporary artists, are the greatest evidence of Language. 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.²

¹ Thomas Carlye (1795-1881) wrote: "The true University of these days is a Collection of Books." (Carlye 1840: 94). While there must still be some truth in this statement about 170 years ago, technology has changed, or at least greatly enlarged, the concept of book, which may have included movies already.

² Recent study on motivation in ESL learning has confirmed the importance of the concept of self, which concerns the development and

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.

It is part of the view underlying this text that to realize the pedagogic advantages a movie has to offer, and 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.

It thus may require a systematic approach and a set of selection criteria grounded in language learning and teaching. Time-consuming as such an approach can be, considering the important, unique value of movies as tutor and tool in language learning and teaching, and the impressionable minds of young learners in their tender years, it may be an indispensable effort to effectively use movies in language learning and teaching.

This book introduces a collection of twenty-eight movies suitable for learning contemporary American English and appropriate for ESL learners; and provides an overview of the systematic approach in selecting these movies. Part 1 explains the set of ESL specific criteria and considerations in selecting these movies; and outlines the resources in gathering the initial list of over 700 contemporary American-English-language movies. Part

expression of ESL learners' own identities through the language they are learning. *See, e.g.*, Gardner 2010: 45.

2 introduces these twenty-eight movies from the perspective of ESL learning and teaching. Along with each review is the information relevant to deciding the fitness of a movie for ESL objectives, such as linguistic characteristics (speech style, the breadth of vocabulary and diction, etc.), ESL proficiency level, content maturity level, and the availability of screenplay or transcript, etc.

Each movie is relatively unique in its own style or subject, representing a particular type of life experience or social milieu in contemporary America. I have tried to select this collection of movies so that they present a regular American's life experience and social environment.

In spite of concerns and risks of using movie in language learning and teaching, carefully selected movies are the best evidence of the language, and potentially a great language tutor, available and accessible to ESL learners at very low cost, and at any time. 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 promoting the cause of the conceptualization of M-ELT in interdisciplinary context. The hope is to realize the full potential of M-ELT in ESL acquisition, address some of the practical concerns in M-ELT in order to optimize one's time and effort in learning English through English-language movies.

For the purpose of this book, this collection of movies is primarily of American accent, with Canadian accent in one movie, and a combination of American accent and British accent (very understandable and intelligible British accent) in three movies. It should also be noted that these movies do not intend

to cover every regional or cultural dialect in North America or in the United States. Because the General American accent has become the de facto standard accent in the United States, most ESL learners may be unburdened with the need to worry about or compare the nuances of each regional or cultural dialect.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The movies recommended in this book are selected from over 700 candidate movies compiled from a variety of sources outlined in Part 1. 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.