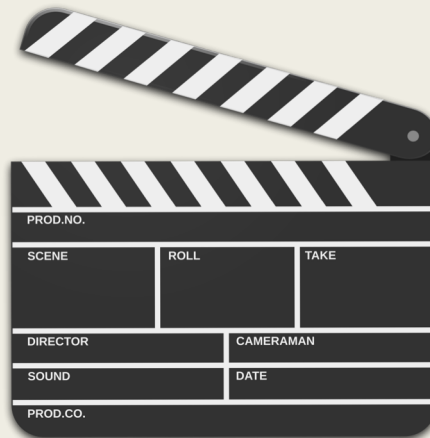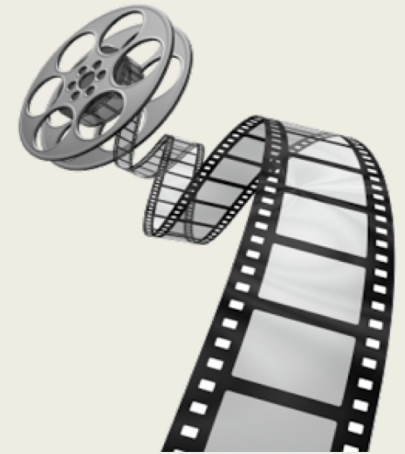# USE OF FILM SCENES AS "REAL DATA" IN AUTHENTIC PRAGMATIC ASSESSMENT

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Introduction

- Share assessment experiences with you today

- Not new method – inherited this technique from predecessor

- **Made important tweaks to enhance different aspects**

- Can lead to mutual benefit to student and teacher

- Authentic assessment is arguably achieved
  - *Involves individual problem solving*
  - *Grades are indicative of students' ability and understanding*
  - *Some candidates need greater support (thus further experience gained)*

What is Pragmatics?

- Meaning in Interaction (Thomas, 1995) (and Situation)

- Intended meaning given factors like **context**, **person**, **situation**, **goal**, etc.

- Meaning more than what is said – they often speak <u>indirectly</u>

- Taking someone's <u>feelings</u> into consideration when saying something

- At a picnic: "I'm tired"/"Its cold" – could mean "Let's go home"

- At a cafe: "Is anyone sitting here?" – normally means can I sit here

- At home: "The cookies taste interesting" – normally means they taste terrible

- **In pragmatic research, the use of <u>real data</u> is fundamental – "constructed" examples would be invalid**

Final Assignment Challenge

- Large class of around 80 students
  - *More challenging to require all authentic data*
  - *Waiting for something interesting to happen that's worthy of analysis*
  - *Could suffer from Observer's Paradox (their recording affects the subjects' linguistic behaviour)*
  - *Possible but challenging…*

One Solution

- **Allow students to choose freely from <u>movie clips</u> and treat as analyzable data**

- Students need to find clip themselves – this acts as a <u>pre-assessment</u>

- Able to use any suitable clip that meets the <u>basic requirements</u>

- Films and drama are constructions of "**believable worlds**" and we as assessors can benefit from this:

    - *We can be emotionally affected by the film – you forget its acted*

    - *Combination of good acting, directing, ad-libbing, script writing, etc. leads to a believable interaction*

- Use of "real data" is also welcome – political speeches, unscripted TV interviews, documentaries, etc.

Pros of Using Film Scene Data

- Huge pool of data to choose from – approximately +56,000 films (English language) – multiple possible clips per film

- Vast breadth of genres, situations, dialogue types, etc.

- Students are able to choose a clip they have a <u>personal interest</u> in – Stanley Kubrick, vampire genre, Benedict Cumberbatch, etc.

- Instructor is able to monitor and advise – able to easily pinpoint weaker members of the class early on to give support/guidance

- Data easily accessible – YouTube, DVDs, video streaming, etc.

- Resulting analysis could be both interesting, challenging and original

Cons of Using Film Scene Data

- **Its not real data!**
  - *(...but its close)*

- Some students are daunted by the <u>huge variety</u> of possible clips, getting lost in the selection process and the detection

- Not all clips chosen are suitable

- Maintenance and supervision is required

- Not suitable for research

Basic Guidelines for Students

- Transcript should take up approximately one side of A4 (~2-4 minutes)
- **Chosen scene has to be naturalistic and believable**
- Chosen scene has to be complete and unedited/unbroken
- **Chosen scene must be pragmatically interesting and worthy of analysis**
- **Application of 2-3 applicable pragmatic theories learned from the course**
- Completed analysis will be around 2,000 – 2,500 words essay (5-6 sides of A4)
- Certain choices explicitly **excluded** – TV Sit Coms with audience laughter (Friends, Big Bang Theory, etc.); specific clips that many people previously misunderstand; languages that instructor/tutor are not native speakers of; …

Maintenance and Advising

- Several check points are necessary to ensure quality of choice:

  - *__Show and Tell Tutorial__ – students showcase their clip to instructor and comments come from everyone – allows for cross pollination/inspiring others (but no copying)*

  - *__Green Light for Clip__ – ideally sought before plan*

  - *__Essay Plan__ (5% weighting) – to check if analysis is appropriate*

- If students "get lost" or "misdirected",

  - *Suggest types of films, actors, directors, etc. – e.g. David Fincher, Cohen Brothers, Quentin Tarantino, etc.*

  - *After several attempts we give an "emergency list" of films*

  - *If still problems we have a "super emergency list" of clips*

Interesting Examples

- Over the years there have been some very interesting analyses, some highly original, others very perceptive

- Here are a few of the clips that students have chosen:

Ex. 1 – The Danish Girl

- Student identified with the main character in film

- Carried out an deictic analysis of the people talking in the scene (real and "fictitious")

- Done with great sensitivity and (perhaps) personal experience

- Showed me a level of insight that I overlooked

Ex. 2 - Fargo

FRANCES McDORMAND

FARGO

a thriller by joel & ethan coen

a lot can happen
in the middle of nowhere.

- ■ Student was interested in the pragmatics of police interrogation/questioning

- ■ Chose a scene from Fargo where the suspect is evading answering questions

- ■ Had to devise a <u>new pragmatic theory</u> to cope with her findings and that from the literature (**Potential Conversation Implicature**)

Ex. 3 – Pulp Fiction
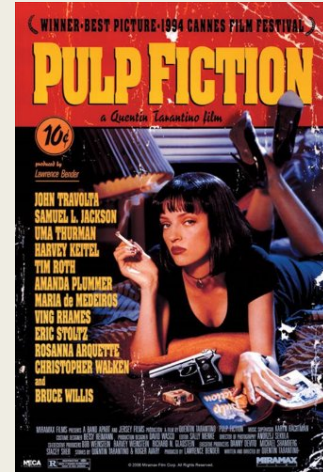
- Very interesting choice of clip with use of lethal force and how it affects conversation/negotiation

- Scene with 3-way "Mexican stand off" and associated dialogue

- Highly original choice of clip to analyze pragmatically – seems to veer towards power analysis (verbal and physical)

Ex. 4 – Toy Story 3

- Animation is also possible if the world is believable

- Scene with Lotso using verbal persuasion strategies and verbal power with Buzz Lightyear

- Not all animation can work, but there have been several good analyses from this source

Ex. 5 – My Left Foot

- In my class I had a quadriplegic student with **Spinal Muscular Atrophy** (meaning limited physical movement)

- Also allows for self expression in the choice of clip

- Chose to analyze Christy Brown who had **Cerebral Palsy**

- The scene where he becomes emotional during a dinner meeting with friends and his carer/doctor announces her engagement (to someone else)

- A good analysis of pragmatic strategies Christy uses to show his emotional state

Other Examples...

- Obligation Strategies for Entrapment in "Girl with a Dragon Tattoo"

- Possible Asperger's Syndrome Affect on Implicature Detection in "The Imitation Game"

- Power Strategies Between Director and Leading Actor in "Birdman"

- Seduction Techniques and Refusals in "The Graduate"

- Nurse Power in a Mental Institution from "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"

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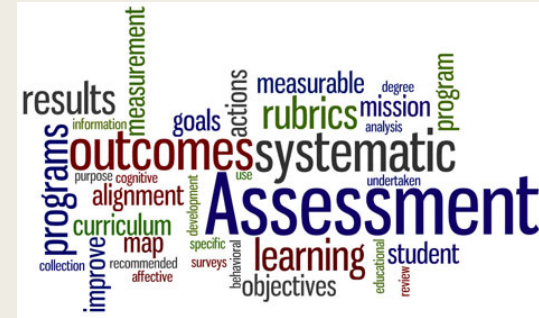
- What Makes Annoying Orange Annoying?
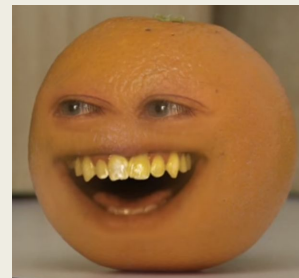
Use of Actual Real Data Also Encouraged

- How Barak Obama Deals with Hecklers

- Analysis of Nigel Farage's Post Brexit Election Speech

- Persuasion Techniques During Donald Trump First Press Conference

- Management of Bad News During Anthony Weiner's Telephone Conversation

Challenges Related to Real World Assessment

- Students have to demonstrate their knowledge of the subject in first selecting the clip (we don't give them the clip) and apply appropriate pragmatic theories from the course

- Provides a significant assessment challenge with a high degree of latitude for:
  - *expressing interest*
  - *original analysis*
  - *using naturalistic-type data*

- With movie data there is a vast pool of easily-accessible situations available

- Checkpoints allow for guidance, suggestions, inspiration and intervention (if necessary)

Additional Benefits of Method

- Wide variety of approaches and choices of clips – makes for interesting research by student and interesting reading by the instructor

- Some students are able to clearly demonstrate their strong analytic ability and originality of choice and approach

- Quite a number of students have received a 'D' or 'F' in their 5% plan and went on to do A-range analyses (appropriate intervention)

Summary

- While it may not be real data, allowing movies to be used as such brings in a <u>rich and various source of data</u> to allow for pragmatic analysis.

- <u>Problem solving</u> needed in finding a suitable clip and on how to analyze it

- Demonstration of <u>application of pragmatic knowledge</u> required

- <u>Appropriate supervision</u> given to ensure all stay on target

- <u>Easy detection</u> of students requiring support

Thank You for Listening! (Q&A)