

# Screen English: A Practical Movie Course Guide

Kevin Miller  
Tsurumi University

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Screen English, a listening-based movie course, is designed to appeal to students of all levels while offering enough variety of activities to maintain student engagement throughout the year. In this paper, I explain how the course is organized as well as provide samples of activities that teachers can use in their own classes. A number of photocopiable activity handouts for teacher use are available for download from a special website set up to correspond to this *JALT Conference Proceedings* paper.

リスニング中心の映画コース「スクリーン・イングリッシュ」は、学生が年間を通して取り組み続けることができるよう、十分な種類の活動を提供し、全てのレベルの学生に対して魅力的になるよう企画したものである。本稿では、コース概要および教員が授業で使用可能な活動例を挙げている。JALT Conference Proceedingsの本稿と対応するウェブサイトには、教員がダウンロードしてコピーできる活動用資料を多数掲載している。

**T**HE USE of audio-visual media in classrooms has come a long way since the days when teachers fumbled with reel-to-reel movie projectors, but the understanding that videos contribute to a motivating and effective learning experience (Stempleski & Tomalin, 2001) has persisted through the many changes in media delivery. We are fortunate to be teaching in an age when videos on virtually any topic can be streamed to our computers and handheld devices—for free no less—and the only limit to their use is the teacher's imagination and creativity (Krajka, 2006). As Furmanovsky (1997) pointed out, however, care must be taken when choosing authentic videos for students, and the selection process can be time consuming. In this paper, my aim is to simplify the task a bit for teachers by presenting a number of web-based video activities taken from a blended learning university listening class called Screen English. Links to videos and downloadable activity worksheets are made available on a website (<http://screen-english.blogspot.jp>) set up to accompany this paper.

## Student Characteristics and Class Set-up

Screen English is a yearlong elective movie course for university English majors, 2nd year or higher, at a small private university in Kanagawa, Japan. There are 65 students in the class, making it quite large for an EFL class. Students' TOEIC scores range from about 220 to 550, which suggests they have minimal to low-intermediate English proficiency.

The class meets once a week (28 weeks) for 90 minutes in a long, narrow computer room that lacks adequate projection and audio facilities but that does have 70 individual PCs with headphones and DVD drives. Nearly all teaching content is presented via a blog (Blogger by Google), effectively making this a blended learning class. All students are required to create a Google account at the start of the course (or use the one they already have) so they can make comments on the Screen English course blog.

Presenting material on a blog has advantages that help overcome the challenges of the large class size with students of varied levels. Some advantages are the following:

- YouTube videos relevant to class activities can be linked or embedded in the blog.
  - A great number of video clips at various levels of difficulty can be offered.
  - Students can choose the video clips they want to watch from a list of links.
  - Students can watch the clips at their own pace and pause or rewatch as they like.
  - Images and screen captures can be posted to appear as a slideshow on the blog.
  - Every student has an unobstructed view of images and videos on their own PC screen as well as high quality audio through headphones.
  - Students can select and look up unknown words if they choose.
  - Information is “permanent” on the blog in contrast to information presented in a traditional slideshow that is only viewable for moments per slide during class.
  - The information and links are available to students who are absent or who wish to review the material outside of class.
  - Everything can be viewed anywhere on a smart phone, tablet, or PC.
- Students can submit comments in the comment box on each blog post.
  - Links to previously taught material or to other sites (*Wikipedia*, *IMDb*, and so on) can be posted.

One disadvantage to introducing class material on a blog is that the teacher loses some control of the presentation timing. Hidden blog posts can be revealed on demand, but this can be clumsy to do in class and students will have to refresh their screens to see the new material.

### Course Focus and Textbook

In the Screen English course, I present a different movie genre each week in the first semester and a different movie director each week in the second semester. Presentation of these topics is brief (10-15 minutes), and the majority of class time is spent on original activities using YouTube videos linked to the course blog. I also use a commercial textbook as supplementary material, *Golden Age of Hollywood* (Hamada & Akimoto, 2013). This textbook includes a DVD and features classic movie clips that fit in well with my course syllabus, shown in Appendix A along with the textbook units I use for each genre and director. Students have their own copies of the textbook and use the DVD in their PC drive for 30-40 minutes about 12 times in the year. I keep some extra copies of the textbook and DVD on hand for when students forget to bring their own. Although I have not had issues with Internet connectivity yet, the textbook is also a backup should trouble occur.

### Class Procedure: Introduce a Movie Genre or Movie Director Followed by Blended Learning Activities

I introduce the topic of the week (a movie genre or movie director; for samples, see <http://screen-english.blogspot.jp>) and interact with students as a group about what they know of the topic, seeking

examples and characteristics, if these are known. Students then access my course blog and look at linked *YouTube* trailers and clips related to the topic for a short time. This is followed by one or more blended learning activities. Hinkelman (2005) described blended learning tasks as those that “move back and forth between online and face-to-face” (p. 29) as classroom interaction, and noted that these tasks may “allow learners of different levels and styles to be accommodated” (p. 21). This is an important advantage in this course, with its large class size and various levels of English. Blended learning allows for maximum participation even by those with low proficiency.

## Activities for Screen English

### Cloze Exercises

Cloze exercises have long been a staple of CALL and listening classes and can be used to develop listening comprehension (Vandergrift, 1999), vocabulary acquisition (Ur, 2012), reading comprehension (Howl, 2008), increased understanding of collocations (Hunt & Beglar, 1998), and the noticing of grammar points (Noonan, 2004).

In Screen English, following the examples of Gebhardt (2004) and MacGregor (2007), I typically use movie trailers and short clips for listening activities. The cloze exercises I make are all original activities using selected *YouTube* videos that are related to the topic of the week. Natural speed audio can be difficult to understand at times, so I strive to make cloze blanks only for identifiable words and expressions or ones that should be identifiable from context. These exercises are not necessarily easy, but students of all levels are able to complete them by listening to the short clips multiple times and pausing as they like. After a period of time, we go over the answers together in class and I expand upon vocabulary and culture points.

When making cloze activities, I listen to the clips myself and transcribe the sentences. I typically add images made by screen capture of the clip to my document. When I cannot understand the audio

on a clip, I can usually find the script with a Google search. Two resources that have proven useful for this purpose are *Internet Movie Script Database* (<http://www.imsdb.com>), and the Subtitled Trailers channel on *YouTube* (<https://www.youtube.com/user/pchqfr2>).

Four cloze activity samples and links to clips on *YouTube* are listed below (see <http://screen-english.blogspot.jp> for handouts).

- *Rush Hour 3* (2007) clip (for comedy genre class); (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-wb9ddKsDE>)
- 5 horror movie trailers (for horror genre class):
  - » *Psycho* (1960) trailer (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NG3-GlvKPcg>)
  - » *The Exorcist* (1973) trailer (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1PhFIEoVOW>)
  - » *The Shining* (1980) trailer (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1G7Ju035-8U>)
  - » *The Sixth Sense* (1999) trailer (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VG9AGf66tXM>)
  - » *The Others* (2001) trailer (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bMEGtUxajY>)
- “Jack Nicholson Top 10 Acting Performances” video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OWfHzVSQZ0>)
- “Top 10 Tim Burton Movies” (for Tim Burton movie director class) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khm4jztVVYo>)

### Sequencing Activities

Sequencing activities are ideal for mixed proficiency level classes because anyone can participate, even with only partial understanding, yet all students are exposed to natural speed English. A great resource for these activities is the *WatchMojo* website (<http://watchmojo.com/>), which has a huge database of Top 10 lists narrated efficiently and clearly in natural English.

## Top 10 Disney Villains

I passed out a list of Disney villains (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8T5yjHitQiGd1M2Nm12bklmVDA/view>) to each student and told them there were prizes involved in the activity. I asked students as a group to identify the villains from the images and say which Disney movies they were in. Students were instructed to speak out. As they did so, other students added or changed the information on their own handouts in the appropriate boxes. I gave the answers for movies students didn't know or told them to look up the information on the Internet. Then I asked students to rank the villains according to their own standards of least evil to most evil. If they didn't know the characters, they were nevertheless to assign each villain an arbitrary ranking and write it on the paper. To participate, every student had to rank each villain from 1-10. When all students completed their rankings, they watched the *WatchMojo* clip (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTR-lePo9PA>), the URL of which was not revealed until this moment. In the clip, they saw the "definitive" ranking by *WatchMojo*. If the ranking assigned by *WatchMojo* was the same as the student's ranking, they circled it. If the *WatchMojo* ranking was different, they marked it with an X. There was roughly a 10% chance of getting any item correct. When all students had completed the video and handout, they totaled up the number of correct (circled) answers. The students with the highest number of matches to *WatchMojo* got a prize, making this a lottery requiring students to listen to and focus on an extended English clip. The difficulty level could be increased by asking for additional information about each villain or by adding cloze questions.

I have also sourced *WatchMojo* for an activity about "Top 10 Iconic Movie Villains," using the clip of the same title (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTdTQq4ldws>). For the handouts, see my blog (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8T5yjHitQiGemlDTUdpWHctMzA/view>).

## Uncle Buck

*Uncle Buck* (1989) is a comedy directed by John Hughes starring John Candy and Macaulay Culkin. The premise of the movie is that the childless, unemployed Uncle Buck is summoned to look after his brother's children due to a family emergency. He is at first inept at handling children, but grows into the role somewhat during the course of the movie. In the clip used in the activity, nephew Miles is suspicious of his uncle, whom he has never met before, and asks him many questions, such as "Where do you live?" and "What do you do for a living?" These and other questions in the clip are ideal for listening practice in the EFL classroom.

The *Uncle Buck* clip (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZMWgW6QNuw>) on YouTube is very short (25 seconds), but features natural English questions and answers in rapid-fire delivery. The activity (introduced to me by Duane Kindt) is great for TOEIC practice as well as for any movie or listening course. Before showing the video, I passed out a piece of paper to each student. I had the students imitate me as I folded the paper and tore it up into 12 roughly equal pieces. Each student now had 12 small blank pieces of paper. I dictated the questions from the video one by one, but not in the order spoken in the video and had students write each question (not the answer) on a separate paper. Students could ask for clarification, such as spelling and repetition. Then I played the video clip while students attempted to arrange the questions on their desk in the order they were asked. After playing this very short clip numerous times, I reviewed the correct order by showing the video and pausing after each question. As a follow-up, I had students match the questions and the answers (see Appendix B).

## Musicals Matching Activity

This activity utilizes a simple graphic organizer designed to enhance student awareness of famous musicals and the music associated with the movie versions of the musicals. I passed out the hand-

out “Famous Songs from Musicals” (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8T5yjHitQiGMVhpWmdCZEVtNIE/view>) and then played portions of the linked clips to the whole class through audio speakers without projecting any images. Students tried to guess which musicals the song clips were from. After playing the music clips, I had students go to the blog, watch the clips, and correct any missed guesses.

## Online Quizzes

There are numerous ways to create online quizzes, but I use Quiz-Revolution (<http://www.quizrevolution.com/>). I typically make online quizzes in preparation for actual written quizzes that I give in class. The quizzes are multiple choice and can be embedded into a blog or website. Adding images to the quizzes is optional. For a sample quiz on movie directors, see my blog ([http://screen-english.blogspot.jp/2015/01/online-quizzes\\_4.html](http://screen-english.blogspot.jp/2015/01/online-quizzes_4.html)).

## Online Biographies

In a movie class, there are ample opportunities to talk about actors, and actor biographies are well suited for reading, writing, and presenting practice. *Wikipedia*, *IMDb* (<http://www.imdb.com/>), and *Bio*. (<http://www.biography.com/>) are all useful for researching actor biographies. As I wanted my 65 students to each research a different actor, I made a link to the “Vulture’s Most Valuable Stars” page (<http://www.vulture.com/2014/10/most-valuable-movie-stars.html#/all/vulture-rankings>). I had students choose an actor and write the name of the actor in the comment box on the course blog. I then told them that no name already on the list could be duplicated. This required students to repeatedly refer to the blog and read the comments of previous students in order to choose their own actor to research. Additionally, I posted information about certain very famous actors, such as Jack Nicholson, Robert De Niro, Leonardo DiCaprio, Marilyn Monroe, and Meryl Streep, on the

blog in the form of slideshows (see sample at <http://screen-english.blogspot.jp/2015/01/famous-actors-2.html>).

## Comparative Culture

In discussing the movie genre Westerns, it is interesting to talk about the relationships between them and *jidai geki* [Japanese period dramas]. The “spaghetti Western” *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0BrdMi-oyc>) was based on the Kurosawa film *Seven Samurai* (1954; <http://www.tcm.com/mediaroom/video/203402/Seven-Samurai-The-Movie-Clip-Swordsman.html>). I posted links to clips of the duels in both movies. Likewise, the recent film *Yurusarezaru Mono* (2013; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gC9PGikiOlo>), a Japanese film, was based on the Clint Eastwood Western, *Unforgiven* (1992; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDAXGILEdro>). For these, I posted links to the trailers.

## Directors and Popular Culture

When discussing famous directors whose movies are now considered to be classics, it may be useful to point out their continued relevance to popular culture. Stanley Kubrick is among the directors whose style and famous scenes are often referenced in *The Simpsons* (other directors being Alfred Hitchcock and Steven Spielberg). To make the Kubrick references clear, I presented a side-by-side comparison of Kubrick scenes and *The Simpsons* scenes in an online slideshow with audio (<http://screen-english.blogspot.jp/2015/01/directors-and-popular-culture.html>) using Yodio.com, a free online program that allows users to make slideshows with audio and embed them into websites. Slideshows like this can also be made with the “Photo Slideshow” function on *YouTube* by clicking on “Upload” and using the “Create Videos” menu.

As an additional example of Kubrick’s famous movie scenes that appear in popular culture, the retail firm, Ikea, recently released an

advertisement that was based on a famous scene from *The Shining* (1980) by Kubrick, a clip of which ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxiGpm\\_d90k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxiGpm_d90k)) is also linked to from my blog.

## Cartoon Makers

Online cartoon makers can be used to help students focus on the movie dialog found in trailers and clips. Free sites like Make Beliefs Comix (<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/>) and stripcreator.com (<http://www.stripcreator.com/>) are fun to use. If students select a very short movie scene, they can type the dialog in the scene and illustrate it by choosing comic characters that approximate the characters in the movies. I have posted some samples on my blog (<http://screen-english.blogspot.jp/2015/01/cartoon-makers.html>).

## Online Dictionary Practice

When presenting documentaries, the vocabulary can be a barrier for many ESL students. I chose a short clip (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2diPZOty0>), the 7-minute condensed version of *Super Size Me* (2004), and had students use an online dictionary to look up vocabulary on a handout (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8T5yjHitQiGQldyNDdiZ1VhLWM/view>) before they viewed the clip. For this I used a bilingual dictionary at *Alc* (<http://www.alc.co.jp/>), but *Weblio* (<http://www.weblio.jp/>) can be used as well. For English-English dictionaries, I recommend the dictionary aggregator *Onelook* (<http://onelook.com/>).

## Webquests

Webquests, a detailed explanation of which can be found at QuestGarden (<http://questgarden.com/>) and WebQuest.Org (<http://webquest.org/>), are inquiry-based activities that utilize the Internet to get students involved in finding, reading, and processing information from the web in the target language. Tasks may be done alone,

in pairs, or in groups. Users make the webquests and post them on the website for others to share. A search for movie-related webquests on QuestGarden.com revealed over 100 webquests that can be used or modified for use in a movie course. Although I have not personally used the databases mentioned here, I recognize their potential in Screen English class and plan to include them in the future, as a result of attending the JALT TnT Workshop by Bieri (2014).

## Conclusion

Teachers who use digital media in their blended learning classes are finding that classrooms are energized by the use of high-interest videos such as those found on *YouTube* (Sherer & Shea, 2011). By providing access to numerous movie trailers and clips of various levels on a course blog and by employing a variety of activities to foster excitement and interest, teachers can maintain student enthusiasm and engagement over the course of a yearlong listening-based movie course, even among those students whose English level might be considered too low for authentic materials. In this paper and its accompanying website, listening activities, along with the relevant links and downloadable handouts from a university Screen English course, have been provided for teachers to use in enhancing their own classes. By using these and similar activities, teachers can create a blended learning environment that will hopefully contribute to the “necessary process of redefining higher education institutions as being learning centered and facilitating a higher learning experience” (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

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## Appendix A

### Course Syllabus With Related Golden Age of Hollywood Textbook Units

Week	Genre (spring semester)	Golden Age of Hollywood unit
1	Action Adventure	
2	Romance	Unit 1 <i>Roman Holiday</i>
3	Science Fiction	
4	Historical	Unit 2 <i>Gone With the Wind</i>
5	Fantasy	
6	Animation	Unit 4 <i>Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs</i>
7	Documentary (also Mockumentary)	
8	Musical	Unit 8 <i>Singin' in the Rain</i>
9	Sports	
10	Comedy	Unit 7 <i>How to Marry a Millionaire</i>
11	Horror	
12	Western	Unit 11 <i>Stagecoach</i>
13	Drama	
14	War	Unit 12 <i>A Farewell to Arms</i>

Week	Director (fall semester)	Golden Age of Hollywood unit
1	Christopher Nolan	
2	Alfred Hitchcock	Unit 3 <i>Rebecca</i>
3	Stanley Kubrick	
4	Steven Spielberg	Unit 5 <i>King Kong</i> (*not Spielberg)
5	Quentin Tarantino	
6	Martin Scorsese	
7	Woody Allen	Unit 9 <i>It Happened One Night</i> (*not Allen)
8	Kathryn Bigelow	
9	The Coen Brothers	
10	Clint Eastwood	
11	Francis Ford Coppola / Orson Welles	Unit 10 <i>Citizen Kane</i>
12	Hayao Miyazaki / Peter Jackson	
13	Tim Burton	Unit 6 <i>Holiday Inn</i> (seasonal tie-in)
14	Ridley Scott / James Cameron	

## Appendix B

### Uncle Buck Questions and Answers Matching Exercise

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Where do you live? ____                                   | a. Lots of things.                    |
| 2. Do you have a house? ____                                 | b. It's a long story.                 |
| 3. Own or rent? ____   | c. I'm your dad's brother, all right. |
| 4. What do you do for a living? ____                         | d. 38.                                |
| 5. Where's your office? ____                                 | e. I don't have one.                  |
| 6. How come? ____  | f. Rent.                              |
| 7. Where's your wife? ____                                   | g. I don't need one.                  |
| 8. How come? ____  | h. In the city.                       |
| 9. Do you have kids? ____                                    | i. It's an even longer story.         |
| 10. How come? ____   | j. Don't have one.                    |
| 11. Are you my dad's brother? ____                           | k. Apartment.                         |
| 12. What's your record for consecutive questions asked? ____ | l. No, I don't.                       |

Answers: 1h, 2k, 3f, 4a, 5e, 6g, 7j, 8b, 9l, 10i, 11c, 12d