A Film-based Approach to Workplace Communication

Abstract

   Workplace communicative competence is generally recognized as one of the ultimate learning goals for college students majoring in applied English language. While most teaching materials targeted on this curricular goal is either designed around a notional-functional or a corpus-based syllabus, a pragmatic component is obviously lacking in these materials. To arouse *pre-experience* applied English majors' response and therefore enhance their sensitivity toward the complexity involved in the workplace communication, the researcher took a film-based project approach to first to guide through a team of six students, and then to a class of learners who took the course in which the film-based materials were employed. Following the procedure of conducting text analysis on the scripts, formulating workplace specific topics and questions, and engaging classroom learners with film-based learning activities, the study aimed to facilitate pre-experience business English learners' communicative competence through a series of motivating film-based learning activities. The qualitative data included the project students' text analysis on the film scripts, learning activities they were guided to design, and their learning feedback, while the quantitative data were from the questionnaire results collected from the classroom learners. The findings showed that both group of students indicated intermediate to high motivation in enhancing their communicative competence through the film-based learning approach. This study can be a reference for instructors and researchers who are interested in applying a film-based approach to ESP teaching and learning. (231)

Key words: workplace, communicative competence, film, ESP

I. Introduction

   One of the ultimate curricular goals for an applied English program at a five-year college is to equip her students with appropriate English proficiency so as to help them become competent communicators in their future workplace. However, the pedagogical foci of the English courses in the first three to four years are mostly placed on providing students' knowledge about English language usage, including knowledge about lexical, morphological, syntactic, phonological, and discourse rules. This, the researcher thought, leaves the functional aspects of language competence well behind in the program-wide curriculum design, not to mention the contextual knowledge required for workplace communications. Prompted by this curricular gap for applied English students, the researcher intended to explore how an out-of-box, non-traditional approach to teaching English for specific purposes (ESP) could be both motivating and effective for her *pre-experience* students -

namely learners who are supposed to acquire the English language skills and contextual knowledge *before* they personally have sufficient experience in the target real-world communication contexts.

After the researcher identified these *pre-experience* students' learning needs, she proceeded to search for appropriate materials which she thought could facilitate students' acquisition of functional or pragmatic aspects of workplace communicative competence as well as relevant contextual knowledge about the business workplace. In reviewing the available printed teaching materials, the researcher found that most language-learning textbooks were either structured around a corpus-based syllabus or focused on a notional-functional design. These two types of materials usually provide exemplary discourses, both in oral and written forms, to present the language usage. However, these materials provide at most the declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge, namely what-, when-, and how-knowledge, about workplace communications, which are supposed to be directly applicable ideal situations. For pre-experience students, these idealized sets of knowledge might preclude them from exposure to complexity involved in the real-world communication and thus result in their lack of pragmatic competence required to be effective communicators.

Following this thinking logic, teaching materials which could first arouse students to ask why-questions and then engage them to think about answers to what-, how-, and when-questions would be the most suitable materials to meet these pre-experience students' needs. In the study, the researcher first led a group of six applied English students to carry out a senior project on an English-speaking film, *The Devil Wears Prada*, on the basis of which they did analysis on the film scripts, and then translate what they found from the analysis into learning activities, both in language area and content area, which were to be used later by a whole class of pre-experience students.

II. Literature Review

When pondering upon how to facilitate a second language (L2) learner's communicative competence in the workplace context, the researcher argues that multidimensional perspectives based on second language acquisition theories should be considered. In the following, the researcher will first review what componential competences are required to establish one's communicative competence in the workplace. Secondly, as a result of the identification of the required competences as specified in the model of communicative competence, she will further explicate why film-based materials are employed in the study to supplement the non-linguistic, contextual or schematic knowledge which is essential for making sense of the functional aspects of workplace communications. Thirdly, she will explain the

theories on which the learning approaches are based in the study.

Pragmatic dimensions of language competence be added into curricula

In contrast to Chomsky's (1965) definition of language competence, Dell Hymes (1967, 1972) first proposed the notion of communicative competence by stressing the social and functional dimensions of language. By his proposal, Hyme referred communicative competence to "aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts" (quoted from Brown, 2000, p.246). Afterwards, Savignon (1983, p.9), in interpreting communicative competence, stressed that it was "a dynamic, interpersonal construct that can be examined only by means of the overt performance of two or more individuals in the process of communication." Later, Canale and Swain (1980) further suggested that communicative competence contained four different components: *grammatical* competence, *discourse* competence, *sociolinguistic* competence, and *strategic* competence. According to Brown (2000, pp.246-247), the first two components, or subcategories, referred to the use of the linguistic system itself, while the last two indicated the functional aspects of communication.

Over the years, communicative competence had been modified, while the newest perspectives were proposed by Lyle Bachman (1990), who simply called it as "language competence." Bachman explained that language competence consists of *organizational* competence and *pragmatic* competence. While organizational competence is divided into two subcategories: *grammatical* competence and *textual* (renamed from Canale and Swain's *discourse*) competence, pragmatic competence is comprised of *illocutionary* competence and *sociolinguistic* competence.

When reviewing the curricula of applied English language programs in Taiwan, particularly those in the technical colleges and universities, English courses in the first few years logically start with developing learners' *organizational* competence (Bachman, 1990) in the English language. In other words, the pedagogical foci are mostly on the language form or usage, as a contrast to language use, including grammars governing sentence-level and discourse-level rules. Inevitably learners are preoccupied with grasping the organizational aspects of the English language, leaving the pragmatic dimensions, or language use, of their English learning, to the last period of study or being postponed to a timeline beyond their study at school. The pedagogical gap in developing learners' awareness of pragmatic aspects of English communications, particularly when it focuses on learners' future workplace contexts, can be translated into lack of understanding the subtleties involved in workplace communications, such as power relationships between interlocutors, schematic knowledge about expected work attitudes, job responsibilities, and

professionalism, as well as the positioning of the company with relation to the industry it is in, etc.

To bridge the gap, an instructor is suggested to provide workplace related contextual or schematic knowledge through appropriate teaching materials so as to develop learners' illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence in workplace communications.

Using film scripts as content-rich, aesthetically motivating teaching materials

Language-learning materials which are oriented toward workplace communications abound in the commercial textbooks. However, they are either corpus-based or structured around a notional-functional syllabus. With the complexity involved in various workplace communications, discrete linguistic knowledge, whether it be lexical, grammatical, or discourse knowledge, is not sufficient to support an L2 learner to be an effective communicator at work.

As an ESP practitioner, the researcher reasons that the audio and visual aspects of a film can first arouse learners' motivation in learning about workplace issues and communications, while the film scripts as a type of literary texts can then lead them into in-depth discussions on the pragmatic functions of the language expressions used by the interlocutors portrayed in the film. In using the film imagery to support L2 learner' content-based English learning, the researcher resonates with Kasper's (2000) argument that "the visual learning experience created through the use of film can help ESL students deal successfully with sophisticated textual material" (p.124).

As to why using film scripts as a basis for further discussions, the researcher maintains that they are rich both in schematic knowledge about the target communication contexts and in examples for pragmatic interpretations of the language expressions. Furthermore, like any aesthetic texts, film scripts provide various scenarios which can be explored and exploited for learners' cognitive development, particularly in the area of target communication contexts.

The benefits for using film scripts as literary texts, or called literature with small "l", are widely supported by several second language teaching experts. Long (1986) suggests that literature can be used to help L2 learners "develop a feeling for language, or *responses* to 'texts', in both written and spoken discourses." These responses, Long explains, can be further led into classroom discussions. To translate literary texts into language learning meterials, Long (1986) suggests that a teacher uses questions as an aid to arouse learners' response. In practice, low-order questions can be raised to first ensure students' comprehension of the literary text, and then higher-order questions follow to both elicit students' genuine feeling or responses and engage learners in critical thinking (Long, 1968).

With literature being integrated into an L2 classroom, Widdowson (1978) also

argues, literature can provide a basis for extending language usage and developing an awareness of language use. As a contrast to efferent reading, which is defined as "reading in which the reader is concerned with what she will carry away", aesthetic reading experience from exposure to literary texts is concerned with what happens to the reader during the actual reading (Rosenblatt's, 1987; cited by McKay, 1986). To differentiate the differences between a literary text from a non-literary one, Pickett (1986) stressed the effect of *ethos*, "a subjective impression aroused in a reader which only a literary text can help readers to develop." In conclusion, film scripts can be used as a type of literary texts, which in turn can both arouse learners' genuine feeling or response and engage them in developing awareness of language use and higher-order cognitive development in the target content learning.

From comprehensible input to comprehensible output

As film scripts are not produced originally for language learning, learners' comprehension should be the first step to using them for further language or content learning. According to Krashen (1985), L2 learners need to have comprehensible input before actual acquisition to happen. Through the Input Hypothesis Krashen (1985) proposed, he claimed that an important "condition for language acquisition to occur is that the acquirer *understand* (via hearing or reading) input language that contains structure 'a bit beyond' his or her current level of competence" (cited by Brown, p.278, 2000).

Therefore, the project students in the study were asked to transcribe the film scripts to first supplement the gap in their listening comprehension and then, on the basis of the written scripts, to do further analysis for both linguistic and pragmatic comprehension. In practice, after they mastered the overall meanings explicit and implicit in the film scripts, they were guided to further deepen their learning by drafting language learning activities for other classroom learners.

After input comprehension was ensured, the project students were then guided to draft questions for learning activities aimed at the whole class of students. The question types can be divided into form-focused questions and meaning-focused ones. Form-focused questions include multiple-choice questions clarifying the definitions and usage of single words or phrases. Nevertheless, meaning-focused questions are addressed either in multiple-choice questions or in essay questions. For this learning activities design, the researcher bases her assumptions on the Output Hypothesis proposed by Swain and Lapkin (1995). In support of the Output Hypothesis, de Bot (1996, p.529) argued that "output serves an important role in second language acquisition…because it generates highly specific input the cognitive system needs to build up a coherent set of knowledge" (cited by Brown, p.281, 2000).

Following the learning activities design, the project students took on the role of expert learners, who then engaged in interactive dialogues with classroom learners on the learning blog. In conclusion, film scripts to be used as teaching materials should ensure that they become comprehensible input to learners first so that comprehensible output can be possibly produced by learners. Also, during the transference period of turning input into output, an instructor's scaffold guidance is of significant importance to help facilitate the learners' learning process.

III. The Study
3.1 Subjects

Two tiers of applied English majors of a five-year college program at an institute of technology in northern Taiwan participated in the study. The first tier of participants was a team of six students who, under the researcher's advice, carried out a full-year senior group project starting from the second semester of their fourth year, namely, spring semester, 2010. They were also the major tier of participants who followed through the complete process of the study: from noting down the film scripts, identifying scenarios, analyzing the texts, designing learning activities, to engaging in interactive activities. The second tier of participants was a class of thirty-seven students, who were comprised of thirty-five applied foreign languages majors (14 fifth-year students, 20 fourth-year students, and 1 third-year student) applied English majors, in addition to two fifth-year international trade majors. They all took the elective course – Raising Workplace Awareness through Films – which was conducted by the researcher in fall semester, 2010. Although two out of the six project students were also among the thirty-six students, all of them were *pre-experience* students, who did not have corresponding work experience as portrayed in the film in the study at that time.

3.2 Methods for data collection

Qualitative data were collected from the project students' text analysis on the film scripts, learning activities they were guided to design, and their learning feedback. Quantitative data were the questionnaire results from the whole class of students who responded to the film-based course conducted by the researcher.

3.3. Description of the Student Project

It is a requirement for all applied English majors of the five-year college program to do a full-year senior project starting from the second semester of their fourth year all the way to the end of the first semester of their fifth year. On the basis of weekly meetings, a group of five to six students, under guidance from a project advisor, carries out an English language learning related project.

3.4 Procedures for data collection

In the study, the participants--a group of six project members advised by the

researcher--started out their group project first by reviewing commercial English-speaking films and then selected one, collectively with the researcher, which they thought they could explore and exploit English language and workplace content learning. The movie they chose was *The Devil Wears Prada*, an American popular movie released in 2006. Then they proceeded with their project in the following steps.

Step 1: Film viewing and topics formation

After they selected the film, they watched the whole film at their own available time. Based on each individual's impressions on the film, each one wrote up ten questions or topics they would like to discuss with relations to the workplace. These questions or topics were then pooled together and discussed in the weekly project meeting.

Step 2: Scenario identification and script transcription

Even though there were overlaps in the questions or topics, differences in participants' interest and attention to the film scenarios were also found. Therefore, considering each project member's major interest in the workplace issues as portrayed in the film, the whole film was divided roughly into six parts, with each of them being responsible for one part. For each part of the film, each member was required to identify two to four *scenarios,* which could stand alone as a relatively complete workplace issue so as to be discussed and exploited further. When the scenarios were identified and confirmed by the researcher, each member was responsible for transcribing the scripts, both by relying on their listening comprehension and by referring to the English subtitles. When they finished transcribing the scripts, they were also encouraged to add a few introductory lines to indicate what the setting or scenario was. Through the scenario identification and script transcription step, the researcher was able to look into the current level of these pre-experience learners' schematic understanding about the language and workplace issues presented in the film. This preliminary understanding thus laid the foundation for their further text analysis on the scripts and the scaffold assistance needed from the researcher.

Step 3: Script analysis

Based on the transcribed scripts, each member then proceeded with analyzing the scripts. The script analysis was comprised of two parts: the language part and the content part. With the language part, the project members were to look for vocabulary or phrases they thought they themselves did not understand or future learners would need explanations. All the words or phrases were later complied into a vocabulary list. With the content part, the project members were asked first to highlight sentences or statements pertinent to workplace issues, and then to draft up

questions for further discussions. This script analysis step, being comprised of the language and content parts, was to ensure that the texts they transcribed could first become comprehensible input to them before they could further process the input--an important theoretical assumption based on Input Hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1985).

Step 4: Learning activity design

After the script analysis step, the project members proceeded into the next stage--learning activity design. At this point, since the data--including the scripts, a word list, and a content-based essay questions list--were numerous, the researcher stepped in and reviewed whether the topics selected could thoroughly represent the outstanding themes portrayed in the film. This pre-activity-design reviewing process was particularly worthwhile and important, since the learning activities to be designed by these project students were to be employed later in a class setting, where classroom learners' interest and learning goals should be appropriately considered. With this consideration in mind, the researcher added two new topics--'do's and don'ts in a job interview' and 'communicating with your boss and colleagues'; then she combined and/or renamed the original topics into four new topics, with totally six topics for the whole film (see appendix five). Under the six new topics, each project member was re-assigned to be accountable for each topic with related scenarios and scripts. In this way, the researcher reasoned that each member would become the first 'expert learner' who had the best understanding of the topic he or she was responsible for.

As to the process of learning activity design, the project members were provided by the researcher with sample questions, both in multiple-choice and essay-questions formats, on which they tried out their language output in the questions design (for sample questions, see appendix one). Even though with a significant amount of scaffold guidance from the researcher, this learning activity design step was aimed to bring out these project students' potential in producing comprehensible output—an L2 acquisition assumption which was based on Output Hypothesis Swain and Lapkin (1995) proposed.

Step 5: Learning feedback to the film-based activities

Finally the project students posted all the learning activities on a learning blog. In the meantime, the researcher started her course--*Raising Workplace Awareness through Films*--in early September, 2010. For the first to the fourth weeks, the whole class of students followed the instruction cycle: pre-viewing schemata building through handouts and lectures, first viewing a continuous part of film without pauses, second viewing of some film excerpts with pauses for question-and-answer sessions, and post-viewing questions for future discussions. Starting from the fourth week,

they were asked to get on the learning blog to review the script excerpts, which were followed by a vocabulary list and questions, either in multiple-choice or essay question types, and then to respond in writing to the essay questions at their choice. It turned out that the classroom learners spent more weeks on reviewing the scripts and writing their responses. Therefore the questionnaire survey originally planned to be conducted after the complete film instruction cycle was postponed to the ninth week, when all the students were present to take their mid-term exam. However, through the questionnaire survey, all the classroom learners were able to express their responses to this film-based approach to raising their workplace awareness through the film in the study. (The procedures for the student group project are schematized as a flow chart in appendix two.)

Data Analysis and Findings

Data were collected from both tiers of students' responses. For the first tier of students–project members, they were asked to reflect in a learning feedback sheet (see appendix three) the difficulties they encountered and the benefits they felt they have gained during their project. This learning feedback sheet was comprised of twelve questions in a five-point Likert scale. All the twelve questions were subsumed into three categories—namely the three stages of their project in their chronological order: the input stage, the output stage, and the interaction stage. Below are their collective responses to the questions under the three stages.

At the input stage

At the input stage, the project students were to (1) look for ten questions or topics about the workplace, (2) identify some complete scenarios for further discussions, (3) understand the English words/expressions used in the film, and (4) understand the pragmatic meanings of the English expressions used in the film. For the first two questions--looking for ten questions/topics and identifying some complete scenarios, four out of six (80%) project students indicated that the tasks were not difficult to them. As to the degree of difficulties in understanding the linguistic and pragmatic meanings of the English expressions used in the film, four out of six (80%) project students indicated "not difficult" for understanding the linguistic meanings, and yet the same number (80%) of students indicated "difficult" for understanding the pragmatic meanings. However, as to questions (5) whether it is useful for them to read the scripts and discuss the literal and pragmatic meanings of the dialogues and question (6) the overall learning at this stage, all of them (100%) agreed that the learning was useful and they had learned a lot.

As to their extra comments, one project member indicated that she "felt a great sense of achievement" after the task.

At the project students' output stage

At the output stage, the project students were guided, with sample questions from the researcher, to draft multiple-choice questions on vocabulary definitions and content comprehension, as well as why-questions to elicit classroom learners' responses. For all the three tasks above, four out of six (80%) project students indicated "yes" to the difficulties involved in the tasks. However, all of them (100%) agreed that they had learned a lot from the learning activities designing tasks.

As to their written feedback, three project members expressed that the question designing tasks were interesting and raised their self-confidence since they used to be a teacher's job. One member with higher English proficiency indicated that it was not difficult for her to prepare essay questions, though it was difficult for her to answer the questions herself since she needed to wear the characters' shoes.

At the classroom learners' output stage

The second tier of students' learning responses were expressed in the results of the questionnaire (see table 1 and 2) survey conducted to the whole class. In the questionnaire, they indicated their learning feedback up to the point where they had completed the learning process with related to the film in the study. For questions 1-1 to 1-6, their collective responses indicated their learning in the English language learning; for questions 2-1 to 2-4, they pressed their opinions on the content learning in workplace issues; for questions 3-1 to 3-6, they showed their overall responses to the course.

Table 1 Means and Standard Deviation for the Questionnaire Survey Items (N=37)

N=37	Item description	M	SD
1-1	Listening ability is not good enough to understand the film.	3.46	.77
1-2	English subtitles were very helpful for comprehension.	4.08	.83
1-3	Written scripts are helpful for understanding the workplace contexts.	4.00	.75
1-4	The vocabulary list was helpful and interesting.	4.00	.85
1-5	The multiple-choice questions facilitated my after-class review.	3.70	.88
1-6	Writing responses to essay questions was challenging but meaningful.	3.84	.93
2-1	Workplace issues discussed in class were suitable for my level.	3.59	.86
2-2	Film watching with script analysis was more interesting than reading texts.	4.14	.86
2-3	Handouts were relevant and helpful for my workplace understanding.	3.59	.80
2-4	Through film watching, I have learned much about the workplace issues.	4.14	.82
3-1	Learning about the workplace before graduation was important.	4.51	.80
3-2	Course design and teaching methods were motivating to me.	3.65	.95
3-3	Both the film and handouts used in class were suitable for my level.	3.76	.89
3-4	Improving workplace knowledge and English through films is a good idea.	4.08	.89

3-5 Post-watching exercises were helpful for both language and content learning.	3.92	.80
3-6 Overall I think I have learned a lot from the course.	3.95	.74

Table 2 Means and Standard Deviation for the Three Dimensions of the Questionnaire Survey (N=37)

	Dimension description	M	SD
Dimension 1	Language learning	3.85	0.51
Dimension 2	Content learning	3.86	0.66
Dimension 3	Overall learning	3.98	0.63

(a) Overall feedback on the course

Overall, the majority of students agreed that (1) it is very important to learn bout workplace related concepts and communication skills before they graduate; (2) the way the course was designed and presented was very motivating to them; (3) the film and the handouts used in class were all relevant and suitable for their current levels; (4) it is good idea to learn about the workplace and improve their English through film; (5) the post-watching exercises were appropriate and helpful for their learning both in the English language and about the workplace related issues.

(b) About the language learning

Most students indicated their listening comprehension was not good enough, though the English subtitles were very helpful for their comprehension. However, through written scripts, they had better understanding about what the English dialogues mean in the workplace contexts. In addition, the vocabulary list with the explanations of each word or phrase was very helpful and interesting.

They also agreed that the multiple-choice questions made their after-class challenging but meaningful to their learning.

(c) About the content learning

The majority of students agreed that (1) the workplace issues discussed in class were appropriate to them and suitable for their levels; (2) film watching with the script analysis was far more interesting than merely reading articles; (3) handouts were relevant and helpful for their learning. Finally they agreed that through film watching, they had gained multiple benefits such as how to behave and communicate in the workplace.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data above, findings can be divided into two parts for discussions. From the first tier of students'—project members' responses, making film scripts

comprehensible requires them to have appropriate understanding both linguistically and pragmatically. When comparing the difficulties involved in linguistic comprehension and pragmatic comprehension, the researcher found that the former one was easier to overcome than the latter one. As reflected informally in their project meetings, and later in the classroom discussions, the schematic or contextual knowledge about the workplace communications was the newly added components to these pre-experience learners' overall comprehension. However, the written scripts and the discussions based on them provided another good chance for them to turn their insufficient listening comprehension into more thorough comprehensive input. Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis provides a sound theoretical foundation that an important "condition for language acquisition to occur is that the acquirer *understand* (via hearing or reading) input language that contains structure 'a bit beyond' his or her current level of competence." (cited by Brown, p.278, 2000).

When compared with turning film scripts into comprehensible input, producing comprehensible output through designing questions for exercises and responding to blog visitors posed a challenge to all project members. However, this challenge, without stressing the accuracy of their linguistic or grammatical competence, was an interesting and meaningful task for most of the project members. With appropriate scaffolded assistance from the researcher, the questions they drafted both reflected their authentic personal responses and presumed responses from their counterparts taking the class. This in turn helped the researcher to look into their levels of understanding about the workplace issues as presented in the film.

As reflected in the questionnaire results deriving from the classroom learners, the majority of them responded positively to their language and content learning experiences in the course, as well as the overall course design and teaching approach up to the point where they finished their first film-watching activity in the course.

As a synthesis of the two sources of findings above, the researcher suggest that a project approach to film scripts and film-based materials be utilized as in-depth learning method for pre-experience ESL learners to raise both their organizational competence and pragmatic competence in workplace communications.

CONCLUSION

As the workplace is ever-changing for our students, we can hardly prepare our students solely by use of textbooks which are designed for idealized workplace situations and dialogues, leaving the gap in the diversity and variability involved with interlocutors communicating inter-culturally in the real-world communications. From this perspective, a current popular English-speaking film can thus provide far more content-rich, response-provoking teaching materials to facilitate pre-experience ESL learners' multi-dimensional acquisition of language usage and

language use. In addition, the contextual knowledge embedded in the film scenarios is also a good source of content materials, be it related to workplace issues or other themes, for an instructor to explore and exploit in an ESP classroom.

Furthermore, by applying a project approach to transferring the film scripts and film-based learning activities into readily available teaching materials for classroom learning, an instructor can effectively guide two tiers of learners to engage in various levels of learning. However, when considering about employing the suggested approaches as described in the study, an instructor or researcher will need to be aware of the availability of popular English-speaking films and the transferability of their major themes into workplace related topics and discussions. Possible meaningful workplace topics or issues should be identified and defined before taking great effort to research into a film. Even with the limitations in the limited choice of films, the current study provides a valuable reference for instructors and researchers who are interested in raising ESL learners' language competence and communication skills through film watching and film-based materials. For future studies, the researcher suggests that more films be utilized, not limited to English-speaking ones, to develop learners' multilingual and multicultural understanding as well as their intercultural communicative competence.

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APPENDIX ONE

Sample script and questions

Miranda is talking to her staff, discussing about what belt should go with a dress.

Nigel: (to Andrea) Stand, watch and listen.

Miranda: Where are the belts for this dress? Why is no one ready?

Staff 1:   Here. It's a tough call. They're so different.

Andrea: (laughing)

Miranda: Something funny?

Andrea: No, no, no, nothing's… You know, it's just that both these belts look exactly the same to me. You know, I'm still learning about this ***stuff*** and…

Miranda: "***This stuff***"? Oh, okay. I see. You think this has nothing to do with you… However, that blue represents million of dollars and countless jobs.   And it's sort of comical how you think that you've made a choice…that exempts you from the fashion industry…when, in fact, you're wearing a sweater that was selected for you…by the people in this room…*from a pile of "stuff"?!*

Question

_____What does "a tough call" mean?

(A) a difficult phone call (B) a bothering call (C) a difficult decision to make (D) a very difficult job to do

Question:

_____ If you were Andrea, what do you think about those belts?

(A) Like Andrea, you think those belts look exactly the same.

(B) As a newcomer to the company, you listen and think why those belts are different in the colleagues' opinions.

(C) You have no ideas about them, and leave your colleagues to make the decision.

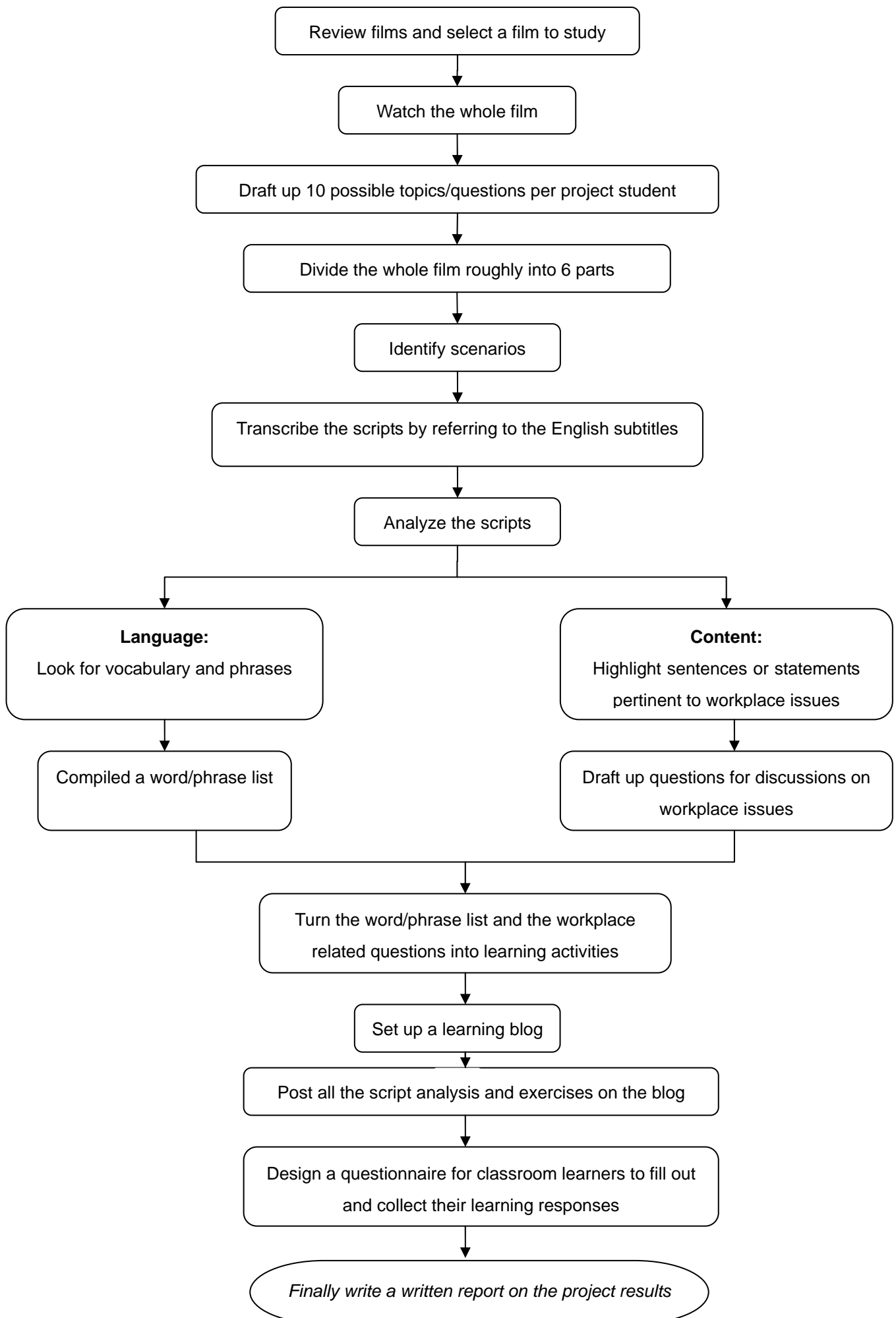Except the options above, I have extra comments as follows:

Question: Why do you think Emily makes that suggestiont to Andrea: "Never ask her any questions." Does this comment make sense to you? Why or why not?

Question: What _lesson_ do you think Miranda was trying to give to Andrea? Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

APPENDIX TWO

Flow Chart indicating the Student Project Procedures

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Review films and select a film to study │
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                    │
                    ▼
        ┌─────────────────────────┐
        │    Watch the whole film  │
        └─────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Draft up 10 possible topics/questions per project student │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    ▼
    ┌───────────────────────────────────────┐
    │  Divide the whole film roughly into 6 parts │
    └───────────────────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    ▼
        ┌─────────────────────────┐
        │    Identify scenarios     │
        └─────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    ▼
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Transcribe the scripts by referring to the English subtitles │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    ▼
        ┌─────────────────────────┐
        │    Analyze the scripts    │
        └─────────────────────────┘
            │                      │
            ▼                      ▼
┌──────────────────────┐   ┌────────────────────────────┐
│     Language:         │   │         Content:            │
│ Look for vocabulary   │   │ Highlight sentences or      │
│ and phrases           │   │ statements pertinent to     │
│                       │   │ workplace issues            │
└──────────────────────┘   └────────────────────────────┘
            │                      │
            ▼                      ▼
┌──────────────────────┐   ┌────────────────────────────┐
│ Compiled a word/      │   │ Draft up questions for      │
│ phrase list           │   │ discussions on              │
│                       │   │ workplace issues            │
└──────────────────────┘   └────────────────────────────┘
            │                      │
            └───────────┬──────────┘
                        ▼
        ┌───────────────────────────────────────┐
        │ Turn the word/phrase list and the workplace │
        │ related questions into learning activities  │
        └───────────────────────────────────────┘
                        │
                        ▼
            ┌─────────────────────────┐
            │   Set up a learning blog │
            └─────────────────────────┘
                        │
                        ▼
    ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────┐
    │ Post all the script analysis and exercises on the blog │
    └──────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        │
                        ▼
    ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────┐
    │ Design a questionnaire for classroom learners to fill out │
    │ and collect their learning responses           │
    └──────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        │
                        ▼
    (   Finally write a written report on the project results   )
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APPENDIX THREE

Learning Feedback on Your Project

Name: _____ Student No. _____ Please use the following questions to reflect on your learning in the Business English course. Circle your answers from 4~1 (from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*).

I. During the Input Stage (Script transcription and scenario identification)

1. It is not difficult for me to look for ten questions or topics about the workplace.

2. It is not difficult for me to identify some complete scenarios for further discussions.

3. It is not difficult for me to understand the English words/expressions used in the film.

4. It is not difficult for me to understand the pragmatic meanings of the English expressions used in the film.

5. I think it is very useful for me to read the scripts and discuss both the literal and pragmatic meanings of the dialogues.

6. Overall I think I have learned a lot from this stage – transcribing and analyzing the scripts.

●   Except the responses above, I have the following comments (Please write about the difficulties you had or the learning benefits you have gained from this input stage):

II.   During the Output Stage (Learning activity design)

7. It is very difficult for me to prepare multiple-choice questions on the vocabulary used in the film.

8. It is very difficult for me to prepare multiple-choice questions on the why-questions about the content of the film.

9. It is very difficult for me to prepare essay questions on the why-questions about the content of the film.

10. Overall I think I have learned a lot from this stage – designing questions for future learners.

●   Except the responses above, I have the following comments (Please write about the difficulties you had or the learning benefits you have gained from this question-designing task.):

●   Overall, my response to the project is (You may write them in Chinese):

APPENDIX FOUR

Learning Feedback on Raising Workplace Awareness through
The Devil Wears Prada

Please use the following questions to reflect on your learning in the Business English course. Circle your answers from 5~1 (from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*).

I. About the language learning

1-1. It is very difficult for me to understand what the characters said only by my listening ability.

1-2. The English subtitles were very helpful for my listening comprehension.

1-3. Through written scripts, I had better understanding about what the English dialogues meant in the workplace contexts.

1-4. The vocabulary list, including the notes explaining each word's literal and implicit meanings, was very helpful and interesting.

1-5. The multiple-choice questions made my after-class review easier and more interesting.

1-6. Writing in response to the questions asked in the exercise, though challenging, was meaningful to my learning.

II. About the content learning

2-1. The workplace issues discussed in class were appropriate to me and suitable for my level.

2-2. Film watching, together with script analysis, was far more interesting than merely reading articles.

2-3. Handouts as supplementary materials were relevant and helpful for my better understanding about the workplace.

2-4. Through film-watching, I think I have obtained multiple learning benefits, such as knowing how to better present myself and communicate with others in the workplace, as well as improving my awareness of cultural differences in the way people deal with their jobs and personal life.

III. Overall feedback on the course

3-1. It is very important for me to learn about workplace related concepts and communication skills before I graduate.

3-2. The way the course was designed and presented was very motivating to me.

3-3. The film and the handouts used in class were all relevant and suitable for my current level.

3-4. It is a good idea to learn about the workplace and improve our English through films

3-5. The post-watching exercises were appropriate and helpful for my learning both in the English language and about the workplace related issues.

3-6. Overall, I think I have learned a lot from this course.

I have some comments to make about my learning and/or suggestions to the teacher (You may write them in Chinese):

APPENDIX FIVE: Table for Six Topics, Subtopics, & Samples questions

Topics	Subtopics	Quoted statements from the film & possible questions for discussions
(1) Do's and don't's in a job interview	How to present yourself appropriately: (a) before an interview: an impressive resume, research into the company, etc.; (b) non-verbal communication skills: image right for the company, e.g. clothing and accessories; (c) verbal communication skills: knowledge about the company, self-confidence, etc.	(a) Gird your loins! (The workplace is compared to a battle field); (b) Did someone eat an onion bagel? (What does an onion bagel mean here?); (c) That's foul! (Why the handbag is *foul*?) (d) So, you don't read Runway? (What is Runway? Why does Andy is expected to ready Runway before the interview?)
(2) Understanding your job responsibilities & improving knowledge about the profession and the industry you work in	(1) What is competence/ incompetence at work? (2) Discuss: duties, responsibilities, added value, expertise, etc. (3) How do you define your job responsibilities? (4) What is "professional" knowledge?	(a) Details of your *incompetence* do not interest me. (What does it mean to be competent at work?) (b) You're *chained* to that desk. (Why "chained" to that desk as an assistant?) (c) *Man* the desk at all time, got it? (Why "man" the desk: literal and pragmatic meanings?) (d) It's *a tough call*. They're so different. (What "a tough call" to professionals, but only "stuff" to novices?)
(3) Communicating with your boss and your colleagues	How is it different to communicate with the boss and colleagues? Any different from your talk with your teachers and classmates? Subtopics: tone, expressions, etc. Is it appropriate for a boss to speak like Miranda? Why or why not?	(a) Miranda: Emily? Nigel: She means you! (Why calling your colleague's name means calling you?) (b) Emily: Never ask her (Miranda) any questions. (Why can't Andy ask her boss any questions?) (c) If I do something right…it's unacknowledged. She doesn't even say thank you. But if I do something wrong, she is vicious. (Why a boss behaves that way?) (e) Emily's conversation with Andy.

(4) How to deal with the frustrations and challenges at work	(a) Is frequent acknowledgement from boss necessary? (b) Quit the job when frustrated? (c) How hard should we try at work- die or deign to work? Or other answers? (d) What is whining? (5) When assigned an unreasonable task, what will you do?	(a) You are not trying. You are *whining*.(Why people whine at work?) (b) So I'm screwing it up... I just wish that I knew what I could do. (What does "screw up" and "I wish I knew.." mean?(c) If you don't have that Harry Potter book by then don't even bother coming back. (How to deal with a difficult assignment?)
(5) How to make choices at work based on your values	(1) What does a job mean to you? (In terms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.) (2) Jobs choose you or you choose jobs? (3) Passive vs. proactive at work (4) Excel at work at the expense of other's interest? Or?	(a) To jobs that pay the rent! (What does a job mean to a person at this level?) (b) This place where so many people would *die* to work, you only *deign* to work. (Why some people die to work while some others deign to work? How about you?) (c) Miranda Priestly is a huge deal. A million girls would *kill* for that job. (Why killing for a job?) (d) Miranda: I always hire the same girl...who worships the magazine. (Why hiring someone who worships the magazine?) (e) I saw a lot of me in you...You chose to get ahead.
(6) How to deal with the conflict between work and personal life; how to avoid making over-commitment to your job at the expense of your personal relationships	(1) Take assignments after working hours? (2) balance between work and family/personal relationship (3) When the work environment is in conflict with your work ethics/values. (4) Running into affairs at work. How to deal with it?	(a) Andrea's dad: We're just a little worried, honey. We get e-mails from you at your office at 2 a.m. (Does it make sense to work into midnight?) (b) Andrea: My boss. I'm sorry, Dad. I have to take this. Hello, Miranda? (How to deal with assignment after working hours?) (c) Andrea: I turned my back on my friends and my family…and on everything I believed in and…. And for what? Nate: For shoes. And shirts. And jackets and belts and… (What does "turn someone's back on others" mean? What are being discussed here?)