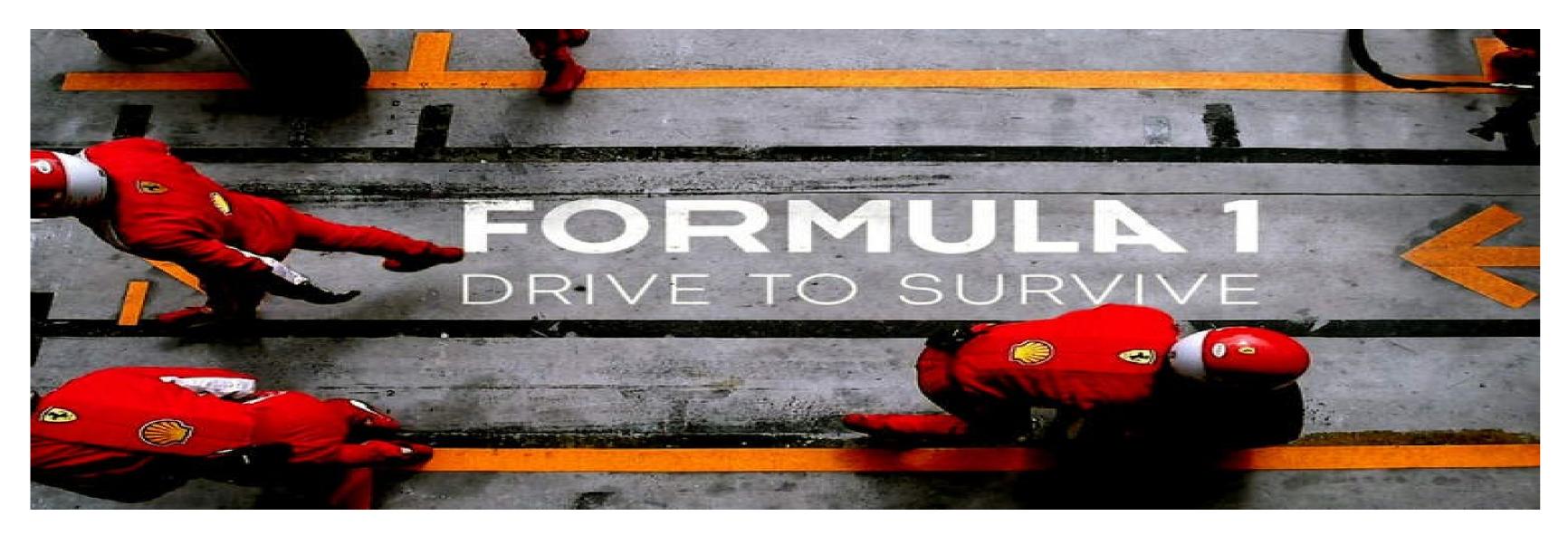# Driven by Words: Lexical Coverage of *Drive to Survive* and its Potential for Incidental Vocabulary Learning

Kadir Kaderoğlu[a] & Maria-del-Mar Suárez[a]   Universitat de Barcelona[a], Catalonia, Spain

INTRODUCTION

Drive to Survive (DtS) – a successful Netflix Original Series on Formula 1, pinnacle of motorsport – exhibits a unique blend of scripted (e.g., prearranged commentary), and unscripted (e.g., radio communications during races) texts. Given this mixture, DtS can be deemed semi-scripted, albeit leaning more towards the unscripted end.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The vocabulary demands of semi-scripted television programs and their potential for incidentally learning low-frequency and academic spoken words remain unexplored.

Study	Type of Text Analyzed	Vocabulary Demands
Nation (2006)	Unscripted - Spoken Language	2k band + proper nouns + marginal words = +90% 3k band + proper nouns + marginal words = +95%
Webb & Rodgers (2009a)	Scripted - Movies	2k band + proper nouns + marginal words = +90% 3k word families + proper nouns = +95%
Webb & Rodgers (2009b)	Scripted - Television Programs	2k band + proper nouns + marginal words = +90% 3k band + proper nouns + marginal words = +95%
Shahriari & Motamedynia (2022)	Scripted & Unscripted - Television Programs	1k band + supplementary lists = +90% (both) 2k band + supplementary lists = +95% (unscripted) 3k band + supplementary lists = +95% (scripted)
Candarli (2023)	Unscripted - YouTube Trending Videos	2k band + proper nouns + marginal words = +90% 3k band + proper nouns + marginal words = +95%
----	Semi-scripted – Drive to Survive Netflix Show	Unexplored

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How much vocabulary is needed to reach 90% and 95% lexical coverage in *Drive to Survive*?

2. To what extent does *Drive to Survive* hold potential for incidentally learning Academic Spoken Word list words for L2 learners at different levels of exposure?

3. To what extent does *Drive to Survive* hold potential for incidentally learning mid- (4k to 9k) and low-frequency (5k to 14k) words for L2 learners?

METHODOLOGY

To this end, 50 episodes of *DtS* consisting of 236,543 tokens were analyzed with AntWordProfiler (Anthony, 2021).

Software

AntWordProfiler

A freeware tool for profiling the vocabulary level and complexity of texts.

RESULTS

1. How much vocabulary is needed to reach 90% and 95% lexical coverage in *Drive to Survive*?

Word Family Level	Lexical Coverage	Viewing Comprehension Threshold
2,000 Word Families + Supplementary Lists	94.61%	90% threshold for good viewing comprehension (Durbahn et al., 2020)
3,000 Word Families + Supplementary Lists	96.59%	95% threshold for reasonable comprehension of a text (Laufer, 1989), TV programs (Webb & Rodgers, 2009b)

2. To what extent does *Drive to Survive* hold potential for incidentally learning Academic Spoken Word list words for L2 learners at different levels of exposure?

Number of encounters	Number of word families encountered (overall coverage in ASWL levels 1 through 3 – 1664 families in total)	Mean of encounters (frequencies)
5 or more		
4 episodes	271 (16%)	37.13
16 episodes	578 (35%)	84.47
50 episodes (all)	877 (53%)	169.90
10 or more		
4 episodes	170 (10%)	55.21
16 episodes	414 (25%)	114.94
50 episodes (all)	668 (40%)	220.97
15 or more		
4 episodes	127 (8%)	69.89
16 episodes	335 (20%)	139.29
50 episodes (all)	550 (33%)	265.87
Total Coverage of ASWL across DtS	63.41%	---

3. To what extent does *Drive to Survive* hold potential for incidentally learning low-frequency (5k to 14k) words for L2 learners?

Total number of low frequency (5k to 14k) word families	997	Percentage
5+ encounters	123	12%
10+ encounters	61	6%

DISCUSSION

- Relatively easy to follow, aligning with movies (Webb & Rodgers, 2009a) and TV programs (Webb & Rodgers, 2009b). However, high number of proper nouns(6.9%) might cause a problem for those who are unfamiliar with the show.
- Lower ASWL Coverage in *DtS* (63.41%) compared to university lectures (87.0–89.8%) (Dang, 2022), TED talks (89.6%) (Liu & Chen, 2019), and science and technology documentaries (86.8%) (Vukovic-Stamatovic, 2022), all of which are academic spoken genres, unlike DtS.
- As much potential as TV programs to learn low frequency words with 5+ encounters
- Entertaining & educational at the same time for avid motorsports followers around the world