

The Effect Of Viewing Subtitled Videos On Vocabulary Learning

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ABSTRACT

Second language development could be achieved through various teaching or learning processes; however, employing multimedia has recently intruded the process in easing or complicating manners. This study has focused on the effectiveness of English subtitles on the EFL learner's vocabulary learning. The participants were 92 Iranian degree university students studying Translation at Islamic Azad University of Mashhad, Iran. Having set two homogenized groups on the basis of their English language proficiency level, each was randomly assigned to be control and treatment groups. They were given two different instructions, one practicing instructional video episodes with subtitles and the other without subtitles. Their vocabulary learning was tested by a Content Specific Test (CST). The mean scores of the two groups were compared through a t-test. The findings illustrated that participants viewing the videos with subtitles could obtain a significantly higher mean score of the CST vocabulary tests than that of the ones who viewed the videos without subtitles. The findings of this research can get educators well informed of the effectiveness of subtitles on EFL learners' better vocabulary learning.

Keywords: subtitle, vocabulary learning, video

INTRODUCTION

There has always been a rising stress on English language teaching as a mechanism for communication, and technology has played a serious role in facilitating authentic communication. In a sense, the effectiveness of multimedia has drawn great consideration and is supposed, under the theory of adding an additional channel of media to send out a message, to significantly improve communication and comprehension (Dwyer, 1978). Multimedia technology (like TV, computers, networks, emails, video cassette recorders (VCRS), compact disc ready-only memories (CD-ROMs) and interactive multimedia) aids the teaching technique of integrating real-life situations with the target language into the language classroom. In this meticulous setting, learners slowly expand their language acquisition by being exposed to the authentic environment of the target language.

According to one of the most outstanding theories of second language acquisition, Krashen (1985) proposed that learners can learn a large amount of language unconsciously through ample comprehensible input. The Input Hypothesis, stated by Krashen, argues that the use of a target language in real communicative environments and the stress on rich comprehensible input, by exposing the learners to the target language in the classroom, facilitate their language acquisition. In other words, language acquisition only happens when comprehensible input is suitably delivered. In this respect, language teachers resist to use a wide range of teaching techniques to make authentic situations and to promote learners' language acquisition.

Many researchers have presented strong evidence that multimedia have useful effects on language learning because of rich and authentic comprehensible input (Brett, 1995; Egbert & Jessup, 1996; Khalid, 2001).

THEORIES

Today, language learning has turned out to be more available by implementing multimedia with spoken information and full visual context, such as subtitles. For instance, subtitled videos representing words and pictures in oral and visual form are more probable to activate both coding systems in the processing than words or pictures alone. The dual-coding theory proposed by Paivio (1971) suggests that when pictures are added to the meaning, the number of signals connected with the message increases. Viewers then will be more probable to keep the message in mind. Therefore, the results of the past research appear to sustain the aspect that the use of subtitles causes multi-sensory processing, interacting with audio, video and print mechanisms. These information input foundations make the process of language learning enhanced, improve the comprehension of the content, and increase vocabulary by looking at the subtitled words in meaningful and stimulating circumstances. In addition, many teachers feel that subtitles shed new light on a better way of using various multimedia in the ESL classroom. When subtitled technology appeared more than 15 years ago, many educators quickly saw value in exploiting its potential in helping students process language in a different way and effectively by means of the printed word (Koskinen, Wilson, Gambrell, & Neuman, 1993; Holobow, Lambert, & Sayegh, 1984; Parks, 1994; Vanderplank, 1993; Goldman, 1996).

Most Iranians have problems, particularly when it comes to communicating with foreigners in English. That makes accessing information difficult for those with limited English language proficiency. In addition, for those Iranian students who wish to study abroad, language is the main problem since they have studied in Persian for all their educational life, thus adapting to a non-Persian environment is consequently very difficult. Iranian students start learning basic English at their secondary schools; however, the curriculum structure is based on teaching grammar, reading, and vocabulary rather than oral skills; therefore, most students' oral communication skills are limited.

The need for English in Iran is unique. English is not only a required course for Iranian students, but is also required and tested as part of major entrance examinations in Iran. Therefore, considering videos with subtitles in English as a foreign language would provide solutions to facilitate the process of learning.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of subtitled videos in enhancing university students' language learning in Iran [English as a Foreign Language (EFL)]. In this study, the term language learning represents students' vocabulary acquisition.

Teachers' professional development activities always focus on to the types of teaching strategies that help students improve along with their path of learning process. As the research has been designed to discover the effectiveness of presenting subtitles in the movies on vocabulary acquisition, it would be of much significance if it were confirmed that this strategy works. In general, it can also be concluded that the findings of this research would contribute to the body of literature in the field of language teaching, learning, and use of multimedia technology knowledge. The findings of this study can be shared with the curriculum designers, EFL/ESL teachers for technology to be implemented in the classroom, and materials developers for teaching English.

RESEARCH ON L1 CAPTIONS ON VOCABULARY

In 1999, Kosslstra and Beentjes conducted a study on the effectiveness of the use of L1 caption L2 spoken videos on the fourth and sixth graders' vocabulary acquisition and word recognition in Dutch. There were 126 students from the fourth grade and 120 students from the sixth grade, however assigned into three groups. The results showed that students in the experimental group viewing L1 caption L2 spoken video outperformed on the vocabulary learning. Moreover, an empirical study conducted by Katchen (1997) investigated what instructional issues may be involved when second-language television recordings with first-language subtitles are used in the second language classroom. The experiment study consisted of 14 native Chinese speakers enrolled in an advanced English listening class. This project focused on what sorts of issues and questions may be involved when intermediate-to-advanced EFL students attend to both spoken English and written Chinese. The findings reported that those foreign language movies with L1 captions benefit learners from phrases, slang and vocabulary. Interestingly, the results revealed that students with good listening skills found that captions slowed their progress,

but they did benefit from them. Students with lower listening skills were more dependent on captions.

RESEARCH ON L2 CAPTIONS ON VOCABULARY

A study conducted by Neuman (1990), observing 129 seventh and eighth graders in bilingual programs, examined the effectiveness of captioning in foreign language instruction by designing four different modes. Nine segments of an educational science series lasting 5-8 minutes were subtitled in the subject's target language. The results of the experiment showed that participants who watched subtitled programs learned more new words from the second language than those in any of the three other conditions. In other words, the findings indicated strongly to support the impact of CCTV on bilingual students' acquisition of language, literacy, and conceptual knowledge.

Neuman and Koskinen (1992) also claimed that CCTV created a rich language environment which enabled students to learn words incidentally through context as they developed concepts in science. Overall, the study supports the claim that CCTV - a multisensory, largely entertaining medium - provides powerful comprehensible input which influences ESL students' acquisition of vocabulary and reading development. Koskinen, Knable, Jensema, Markham, and Kane (1995) again carried out a study concerning the effects of using subtitled science segments on the incidental vocabulary acquisition of 72 volunteers over a period of nine weeks. The participants were tested on word recognition, sentence anomaly and word meaning appearing from segments after viewing them and were evaluated on their acquisition of the targeted vocabulary. This finding did not indicate significant differences on the word recognition and sentence anomaly post-test; however, the word-meaning test yielded significant findings that favored CCTV.

In support of the positive perception toward using L2 captions, Bean and Wilson (1989) reported that their adult non-native-speaking students showed extremely positive attitudes toward captioning and increased in vocabulary. Students who viewed L2 subtitled materials showed significant improvement in reading comprehension, listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and word recognition.

Moreover, Ellsworth (1992), a teacher at the Benjamin Franklin Institute in the Mexican State of Yucatan, reported that an in-class study of closed-subtitled programs motivated the learners to use their second language with greater ease and confidence. In this study, he assigned students into three modes of presentation containing (1) captions, (2) non-captions, and (3) audio only. Then grammar, vocabulary consisting of idioms and slang, and U.S. cultural expectations were built into his lesson plans. The researcher contends that subtitled videos may "help people who are insecure in their second language to use it, interact with it, and expand it (p.24).

RESEARCH DESIGN PROCEDURE

To investigate responses to the research questions, this study followed procedures through inferential statistics. The quantitative section had been accomplished by an experimental design. The participants had been selected from a list of all students who had taken the course of Audio/Video Interpretation. Considering the experimental treatment in this study, two conditions were set for the two groups, referred to as English subtitled videos and videos with no English subtitles. The independent variable was the presence of foreign or English language subtitles in the videos, while the dependent variables were students' performances on the Content-Specific Tests (CST) of vocabulary. The participants of the study were from two campuses of Islamic Azad University of Mashhad. They were intact groups of TEFL students who took the Tape and Video Interpretation course. At each campus, since two classes were to be held, one was set as the control and the other as the treatment group. A Michigan English proficiency test was given to everyone to check their homogeneity. The t-test procedure indicated the variance between the treatment and control groups.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Findings of the study are based on the statistical procedures conducted on the sample of the study.

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for the control and treatment groups and Table 2 is an independent sample t-test in illustrating the mean variance with 95% level of confidence.

Although, according to Mohseni (2008), it was pre-supposed that all students enrolled in the degree level were in the same level of English proficiency, a standard test of proficiency, compiled from a Michigan Test of English, was employed to ensure whether the students in the control and treatment groups sit in the same proficiency level. This test was given to them before starting the treatment.

With reference to Table 1, the control group consisted of 47 students, while 45 were in the treatment group. The mean score of the control group is 81.02 with the standard deviation of 12.87, whereas the mean score and standard deviation of the treatment group are 83.24 and 11.85, respectively.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for control and treatment groups in MET

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control	47	81.02	12.876	1.878
Treatment	45	83.24	11.850	1.766

A t-test for equality of means was launched to ensure if the mean scores' variances are or are not significant. Although the treatment group's mean score indicates 2.22 higher than for the control group, with reference to Table 2, the significance level of .39 indicates that there is no significant difference in between. This analysis confirmed that both the control and treatment groups are in the same level of English proficiency.

Table 2: T-test for Equality of Means for MET

t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper			Lower	Upper
-.861	90	.392		-2.223	2.583	-7.355	2.909

DATA ON VOCABULARY ACQUISITION

As mentioned earlier, CST consisted of a vocabulary acquisition subtest. The data collected from the test are presented in the following sections.

The dependent variable elaborated in this research project was vocabulary acquisition. The main research objective was to study and find out how subtitles could help learners understand and acquire new words presented in the subtitles. With reference to Table 3, the control group's mean score is 31.79, while the treatment group's mean score is 46.20 which is 14.41 points higher than for the control group. Standard deviation in the control group is 13.98, whereas in the treatment group, it is 9.35.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Control and Treatment Groups in Vocabulary Acquisition

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocabulary Acquisition	Control	47	31.79	13.983	2.040
	Treatment	45	46.20	9.385	1.399

Table 4 illustrates the numerical findings of an independent sample t-test for vocabulary acquisition in the control and treatment groups. With reference to the significance value of 0.000, it is indicated that there exists a significant difference between the means of the two groups. With 0.95 confidence level, it is inferred that teaching English language learners with the assistance of subtitled videos makes significant improvements in the level of vocabulary acquisition.

Table 4: T-test for Equality of Means for Vocabulary Acquisition

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower
Vocabulary Acquisition	-5.779	90	.000	-14.413	2.494	-19.367	-9.458
	-5.827	80.774	.000	-14.413	2.473	-19.334	-9.491

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The study elaborated on the effectiveness of viewing videos with subtitles on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition. Selecting the sample from Islamic Azad University of Mashhad, they were given a test compiled from Michigan English Test to evaluate their level of proficiency. The scores taken from the test helped in realizing that there was no significant difference between the proficiency level of the control and treatment groups. Both control and treatment groups were given similar teaching materials and procedure; however, the video being viewed by the treatment group was presented with English subtitles. With reference to the statistical results, it was significantly proven that the presence of subtitles on the videos helped learners better acquire the words used in the conversations.

Employing multimedia, such as audio video appliances, in language teaching environments assists learners to receive the language through multisensory channels. Using subtitled videos would also help language learners develop their level of vocabulary. The findings of this study should incite professional developers update methods of language teaching in a way that multimedia be included in teaching procedures.

Educators might develop research projects seeking the effectiveness of video subtitles on other components of the language, such as reading or listening comprehension, and even pronunciation. The research findings would reconfirm the theory of learning through multisensory channels.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Dr. Madhubala Bava Harji, a Senior Lecturer, Multimedia University, Malaysia is currently the Director of the Centre of Foundation Studies and Extension Education. Her PhD research was on *Smart Partnership in Reading in English*, with storybooks as a vehicle to developing literacy among preschool children. In addition to her administrative duties as the director of the centre, she supervises postgraduate students in the fields of language and education. Her research interest includes English Language teaching, Education, Reading, Assessment, Miscue Analysis and ESL literacy. Her current research is on Conceptual Tempo and Miscues of Readers at Risk.

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