



SUBTITLES HELP TO AMELIORATE STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS

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ABSTRACT



This paper focuses on improving communicative skills with the help of subtitles in English. There is no chance for ESL/EFL learners to have an exposure to English speaking environment. They lack vocabulary and collocation control. For the effective communication, vocabulary, fluency, intonation, stress, pronunciation and sentence structure are essential. Subtitles may help the students to learn English effectively. It may be the subtitle of a film, a drama, a cartoon series and cricket commentary etc. Keen watching of subtitles will enable the students to acquire good communicative skills like a native speaker. The present study will be done through the help of questionnaire given to the undergraduate students from different majors of an arts and science college. Subtitles will be an effective tool to enable the students to improve their speaking skill and to enhance their listening skill too.

Keywords: *Subtitle, Vocabulary, Fluency, Intonation, Stress, Pronunciation, Speaking, Listening.*

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching English nowadays has become more challenging than ever. In order to help the learners' mastery (increase the proficiency) of language skills, language teachers have to provide quality teaching materials that will be engaging, interesting, up-to-date while simultaneously being a tool that will ensure that the students learn. This is based on the fact that movies provide exposures to "real language," used in authentic settings and in the cultural context which the foreign language is spoken. They also have found that movies catch the learners' interest and it can positively affect their motivation to learn (Kusumarasyati, 2004; Luo, 2004). Watching visual media with subtitle can help the ESL/EFL learners to improving communication skills.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Using videos or films as a learning resource has received a great deal of attention from researchers and has been successfully applied to various educational applications (Yang et al., 2009). Researchers have indicated that multimedia learning materials are more useful than traditional paper-based instruction. Videos which provide visual, contextual, and non-verbal input provide foreign language learners with simultaneous visual and aural stimuli which can make up for any lack of comprehension resulting from listening alone (Brett, 1995). Several previous studies have also shown that such videos are highly accepted by learners during the learning process. Moreover, captions have been perceived as the most useful and efficient auxiliary for watching videos, while videos with authentic accents have been recognized as being a good learning resource for language learners (Dahbi, 2004).

STATEMENT OF THE PURPOSE

The paper aims at investigating the phenomena of using English subtitles as a language learning strategy. It proposes that watching videos with subtitles in English will be helpful to improve one's communicative skill.

HYPOTHESES

The study began its investigation with the following assumptions

1. The EFL/ESL learners struggle to speak as they don't have much vocabulary and they are weak in sentence construction.
2. They were unable to follow the video of native speakers as the pronunciation of the native speaker varies from a non-native speaker.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions helped to carry out the research successfully till the end.

1. Does subtitle really help the students' to improve their English language?
2. Does it help to improve one's vocabulary?
3. Does it help in improving one's pronunciation?
4. Does it help in sentence construction?
5. Is there any difference between watching a video with and without subtitle?

RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study involves 20 undergraduate students from The American College in Madurai. The subjects were chosen from different majors as all majors have English as a course subject. The questionnaire was prepared based on the benefits the students get from watching with subtitles. The questionnaire consists of 10 statements with the options Agree, Disagree and Don't Know"

DISCUSSION

Subtitles are defined as the printed translation or the textual versions of the dialogue in films and television programs that you can read at the bottom of the screen when you are watching a foreign film (Canning-Wilson & Wallace, 2000). Subtitles can either be screen play of a dialogue or transcript or commentary in films, television programs, and usually displayed at the bottom of the screen. The first large-scale study to investigate the potential of subtitling as a pedagogical tool was conducted by Price (1983). Approximately 500 participants watched four clips with or without subtitles. Findings showed that subtitling resulted in



superior comprehension independent of background, linguistic, and social variables.

RESULTS

S.No	Statements	Agree (in %)	Disagree (in %)	Don't Know (in %)
1	I mostly watch movies with subtitles in English	85	15	-
2	I learn new words from watching films with subtitles	100	-	-
3	Subtitles help me to learn foreign accent	80	10	10
4	Subtitles help me to learn real English not text book English	65	25	10
5	Subtitles help to learn the phrases that native people use in daily conversations	80	-	20
6	Subtitles help me to understand the content easily	80	20	-
7	Subtitles prevent deviation from listening	25	40	35
8	Subtitles help to increase the listening duration	65	20	15
9	Watching a subtitled audio/video is interesting rather listening to a lecture	75	10	15
10	I think subtitles really help to improve my communicative skill	90	5	5



Zanon (2006) distinguishes three types of subtitling as follows: (1) Bimodal subtitling: from English dialogues to English subtitles; (2) Standard subtitling: from English dialogues to subtitles in the learners' mother tongue, and (3) Reversed subtitling: from dialogues in the learners' mother tongue to English subtitles. From Bimodal subtitle, one can learn the correct pronunciation as the native speaker. And from Reversed subtitling, one can learn new words with their meanings. Canning-Wilson and Wallace (2000) suggest that subtitled movies encourage learners to consciously notice new vocabulary and idioms, and as such, may have potential to facilitate vocabulary acquisition without being a distraction for learners.

Zanon (2006) also claims that through using subtitled films a triple connection between image, sound in one language and text which is provided normally in another sound and text are linked by translation. Subtitle is an efficient tool to reinforce the connection between the sound and written form of the language. The students may not be able to listen to lectures for a long time. But if it is listening to through visual aids, the students will be able to listen. Subtitle increases the duration of listening. Listening is not considered as a word-by-word deciphering enterprise but a search for meaning. The main goal of listening is to prepare students to understand actual speech in order to communicate in English. L2 listeners must learn to cope with *genuine* speech and *authentic* listening situation. That is, listeners must be able to understand natural English speech to meet their own needs as members of the English-speaking community. Many Second Language Acquisition theories posit that exposure to authentic listening and reading texts facilitates an implicit process through which new language and linguistic rules become internalized and can then be automatically reproduced (Brett, 1997).

SUGGESTIONS

Through watching videos with subtitles, one can also learn real English, not simply textbook English, and they can pick up different accents and slang. While watching the movies with subtitle, the students listen to the native speakers' pronunciation as well as to their lip movements. This will help them

to improve their pronunciation. All must have a movie that they really like. One can watch it with subtitles for the first time. When watching it the second time, try to switch the captions. This way one can develop the habit of watching movies as they really are, i.e. in real English.

SUMMING UP

Learning any new language is going to be a challenge. But the experience doesn't have to be painful. Movies are the all-time king of entertainment and watching them is one of the best methods for learning English. One can pick up many expressions and new vocabulary, a genuine accent, as well as the non-verbal communication that goes along with everyday conversation. Through watching videos with subtitle, one can learn while enjoying.

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