

The Influence of the Choice of Movie and TV Subtitles on Learners' Second Language Acquisition

Zai Fengyu

National University of Singapore, Singapore, Singapore, 119077

Abstract: *Whether to choose subtitles when playing English movie clips, or which subtitles to choose (Chinese subtitles, English subtitles or Chinese and English subtitles) is a difficult problem for teachers. Opinions on this issue vary widely. Teachers' attitudes basically come from their own foreign language learning experience or some so-called common sense, and lack empirical support. Because of this, it is necessary to analyze and observe the impact of film and television subtitle selection on learners' second language acquisition through empirical evidence and second language acquisition theory.*

Keywords: *second language acquisition; subtitles; comprehensible input; influence*

1. Introduction

Watching foreign language movies can promote the second language acquisition of foreign learners. Foreign language movies can not only help learners understand the cultural background of the target language, but also promote learners' mastery of the target language. Because of this, college English teachers will show some English movies for students to watch during the teaching process. Studies have also shown that English movies have a very good role in promoting the teaching of college English. However, opinions on this issue vary greatly as to whether to show subtitles to students during playback, or which type of subtitles to choose. Many English teachers object to students reading while enjoying foreign language movies, because they believe that subtitles distract learners from and sounds, causing students to rely too much on subtitles and neglect the actual spoken language, is not conducive to language training. They worry that foreign language learners' reliance on subtitles will lead to a failure to improve their listening skills. However, some teachers believe that showing Chinese subtitles when playing English movies can help students better understand the movies. Undoubtedly, the attitude of Chinese English teachers on whether subtitles should be displayed at the same time when playing English movies is basically based on their own foreign language learning experience or some so-called common sense, which lacks empirical support. In order to further understand the impact of the choice of video subtitles on learners' second language acquisition, this will observe the relationship between the choice of video subtitles and second language acquisition by studying the different performances of 80 students under four different video subtitles.

2. Film and Television Subtitles and Second Language Acquisition

2.1 Research on film and television subtitles and second language acquisition

Domestic researchers do not have much research on the relationship between the choice of film and television subtitles and second language acquisition. Among them, Dai Jing ^[1] believes that subtitles better than no subtitles, because the language input of text information can improve learners' ability to understand the language, can also improve learners' ability to produce language. However, this study lacks empirical support. In comparison, there are slightly more foreign studies on the influence of film and television subtitles on second language acquisition. According to foreign researchers, when a foreign language movie, listening to the sound while watching the image and reading the subtitles can promote learners' understanding of the film more than simply listening to the sound of the movie or watching the image of the movie ^[2]. In addition, watching movies/TV with subtitles can promote to be more calm and confident when using a foreign language ^[3]. Moreover, more and more empirical studies have shown that subtitles can promote second language learners. For example, Markham ^[4] that subtitles can promote learners' understanding, and Neuman & Koskinen ^[5] proved that subtitles can improve learners' word construction and comprehension. Cognition of words has a very good

effect, and Huang & Eskey^[6] found through empirical evidence that subtitles can help learners' listening comprehension. In fact, in the process of learning foreign languages, learners' ability to process language through listening is generally inferior to that through vision. The most direct manifestation of this is that learners' reading comprehension ability is generally stronger than their listening comprehension ability (Lund1991). Subtitles help language learners express what they hear in the form of text, thereby promoting understanding of the language and additional cognitive effects of other information, such as deepening the depth of the information^[7]. Because of this, learners who watch film and television materials with subtitles have better reading ability, listening ability, vocabulary acquisition and cognition, and overall reading motivation than learners who do not watch film and television materials without subtitles.

2.2 Research Problem

Although the related studies on film and television subtitles and second language acquisition basically show that film and television subtitles can promote second language acquisition, there is almost no relevant research on whether different choices of film and television subtitles have an impact on second language acquisition. General studies are limited to observing subtitles of the same source as the sound of the movie (such as displaying English subtitles when playing a movie with English pronunciation). But what is the effect of watching subtitles from a different source than the sound of the film and television? This article answers the following questions: 1) When watching English movies, do the four subtitle choices of zero subtitles, English subtitles, Chinese subtitles, and Chinese and English subtitles have the same impact on their listening comprehension? 2) Do these four different subtitle choices have the same effect on their language acquisition?

3. Experiment

3.1 Subject

The subjects participating in the experiment were 80 second-year undergraduates who were not majoring in English in a university, including 29 boys and 51 girls. The subjects were divided into four groups by random sampling, that is, 20 people in each group. In order to confirm whether there are significant differences in the English proficiency of the four groups of subjects, the author conducted ANOVA analysis on the test scores of the four groups of subjects in the National College English Test Band 4 through SPSS13.

3.2 Test Means and Process

This experiment refers to the questionnaire and test question questionnaire in the study of Huang&Eskey^[6], and at the same time slightly modifies the questionnaire and test question in this study to adapt to the test content and purpose of this study. Before the students watched the movie, the teacher made a simple explanation of the requirements of the watching process, that is: students are not allowed to take notes during the watching process, but can only remember them by heart; You will need to retell in English the movie clip you watched, complete a listening comprehension test and fill out a questionnaire. When retelling the content of the movie, the subjects were required to try to use the words and sentences in the movie. When answering a listening comprehension question, if the subject is unable to make a confident choice because he or she does not understand or remember the details, he/she needs to leave the question blank (in order to prevent subjects from randomly choosing an answer when they do not understand, thus affecting the assessment of their listening comprehension ability). The questionnaire asked the subjects which subtitles they subjectively believed were more conducive to their English learning and the reasons why. Next, the first group of participants was tested after watching clips of the movie without subtitles. Then the second, third, and fourth groups watched movie clips with English subtitles, movie clips with Chinese subtitles, and movie clips with Chinese and English subtitles, and were tested accordingly.

4. Experimental Results and Analysis

Two experienced English teachers were invited to score the listening comprehension questionnaires and compositions of the four groups of subjects (the listening scores were scored based on the correctness of understanding, with 5 points for each question, a total of 10 questions; and the

composition was scored Scores are based on the number of language points learned in the movie. Each correctly written sentence that appears in the movie will be awarded 5 points. If only part of the information of a certain sentence in the movie is written, the score will be 2.5 points; otherwise no points will be scored). In order to check whether the ratings of the two teachers are consistent, we performed a correlation analysis on their rating results. The correlation reached 0.921, indicating that the ratings of the two teachers were highly consistent. The students' final scores for the listening and composition items were taken as the average of the scores given by the two teachers. Then, we used SPSS statistical software to conduct an analysis and comparison of the listening comprehension scores and composition scores of the four groups. In addition, in order to understand students' preference for subtitles, we also compiled student questionnaires to understand students' attitudes towards various subtitles. First, we tested whether there were significant differences between the listening comprehension scores of the groups. Through the ANOVA statistics of SPSS, the comparison result of the listening comprehension scores of the four groups is $p < 0.05$, which indicates that there are significant differences in the listening scores of the four groups. In order to further observe the differences between groups, we used post hoc comparison to test the differences between groups, and the results are as follows:

Table 1: Comparison of the differences between the four groups in listening comprehension scores

Significant Degree Group	Group	First Group	Second Group	Third Group	Forth Group
First Group(No Subtitle)			.000	.000	.000
Second Group(English Subtitle)		.000		.024	.651
Third Group(Chinese Subtitle)		.000	.024		.347
Forth Group(Chinese and English Subtitles)		.000	.651	.347	

From Table 1, we can see that the differences in listening comprehension between the first group (without subtitles) and the second group (English subtitles), the third group (Chinese subtitles), and the fourth group (Chinese and English subtitles) are all less than 0.05, that is, the listening scores of the subjects who watched movies without subtitles were significantly different from those of the other three groups who watched movies with subtitles, which means that different subtitles do have different effects on listening comprehension. We can see that by observing the average scores of the listening scores of the four groups, we can find that the test subjects who watched movies with subtitles have higher scores than those who watched movies without subtitles, which confirms Huang & Eskey [6] that subtitles help Listening comprehension levels improve from a viewing perspective. There is a significant difference in listening comprehension between the second group (English subtitles) and the third group (Chinese subtitles) ($p < 0.05$). This shows that the listening scores of subjects who watched movies with English subtitles were better than those of subjects who watched movies with Chinese subtitles. This may be due to the fact that English subtitles are more convenient for subjects to directly access the original listening text than Chinese subtitles, which promotes their listening comprehension understanding; however, there was no significant difference in the scores of subjects who watched English subtitles and those who watched Chinese and English subtitles. The reason may be that both have English subtitles, allowing subjects to directly obtain the original listening text. There was no significant difference in listening comprehension scores between the third group (Chinese subtitles) and the fourth group (Chinese and English subtitles). This may be because the choice of two subtitles can make the subjects understand the listening content better, and because some subjects rely on Chinese subtitles when watching movies with Chinese and English subtitles, they have no time to watch English subtitles. The difference between watching movies with Chinese subtitles and watching movies with Chinese and English subtitles is not obvious.

Next, we compare the composition scores. Same as above, the comparison result of the composition scores of the four groups is $p < 0.05$, and there is a significant difference in the composition scores of the four groups. The table below reflects the differences between the groups:

Table 2: Comparison of differences between groups in writing scores

Significant Degree Group	Group	First Group	Second Group	Third Group	Forth Group
First Group(No Subtitle)			.000	.000	.000
Second Group(English Subtitle)		.000		.001	.977
Third Group(Chinese Subtitle)		.000	.024		.000
Forth Group(Chinese and English Subtitles)		.000	.977	.000	

From Table 2, we can see that the writing scores of the first group (without subtitles) and the second group (English subtitles), the third group (Chinese subtitles), and the fourth group (Chinese and English subtitles) are significantly different ($p < .05$); This reflects that different subtitles will indeed have different effects on the writing effect. By observing the average scores of the writing scores of the four groups, we can see that the test subjects who watched movies with subtitles scored higher than those who watched movies without subtitles. There was a significant difference ($p < .05$) in writing scores between the second group (English subtitles) and the third group (Chinese subtitles), but not significantly different ($p > .05$) from the fourth group (Chinese and English subtitles). There was a significant difference in the writing scores of subjects who watched movies with English subtitles and those of subjects who watched Chinese subtitles. This may be due to the fact that subtitles can promote word construction and word recognition; while subjects who watched English subtitles there was no significant difference in writing scores between subjects who watched Chinese and English subtitles. The reason may be that both have English subtitles, allowing subjects to directly acquire words and vocabulary in the target language. There is a significant difference ($p < .05$) between the writing scores of the third group (Chinese subtitles) and the fourth group (Chinese and English subtitles), mainly because Chinese subtitles can promote learners' listening comprehension, but because they do not contain the target In the original language (English), learners cannot obtain direct language input, so they cannot successfully complete the output. In contrast, Chinese and English subtitles can provide learners with direct target language input, and are equipped with the Chinese meaning of these English, so that students can understand these English through translation, such input becomes "understandable input", which can Help students acquire more vocabulary and sentences from movies, and the acquisition effect is better than watching without subtitles or Chinese subtitles.

In addition, during the investigation of students' subtitle preferences, it was found that: 67.7% of the subjects chose Chinese and English subtitles; 21.5% of the subjects preferred to watch movies with English subtitles; 7.7% of the subjects preferred to watch Chinese subtitles; 3.1% of the subjects chose Try to choose movies without subtitles. That is to say, when English learners watch English movies, they like Chinese and English subtitles the most, followed by English subtitles. This may be because they realize that subtitles can help them understand the content of the movie to a certain extent, but simple Chinese subtitles often do not allow them to fully understand the English equivalent of Chinese, and simple English subtitles are difficult to understand, so They also hope that there will be corresponding Chinese and English subtitles to help them understand the meaning and acquire some English vocabulary and sentences. Of course, for English learners with higher proficiency, they are more likely to choose pure English subtitles, because that way they can concentrate on watching English subtitles and listening to English dialogue, so the amount of English input is relatively more. Because their proficiency is high, they basically can understand English subtitles; these inputs are understandable inputs, so the results are good.

5. Conclusion and Enlightenment

The above experiments show that movie subtitles have a positive impact on learners' second language acquisition, mainly reflected in improving listening comprehension and helping learners acquire the vocabulary and sentence patterns of the movie subtitles when writing. A very important theory in second language acquisition is that we acquire language by comprehending information or receiving "comprehensible input". It can be seen that film and television subtitles can help learners understand information and obtain understandable input. Such a process can promote language acquisition. English subtitles and Chinese and English subtitles promote learners' listening comprehension and language acquisition more than no subtitles or Chinese subtitles. For general English learners, Chinese and English subtitles may be the best choice, because it can not only help them acquire the vocabulary and sentence patterns of the target language, but also promote their

listening comprehension; for learners with higher English proficiency, English Subtitles may be the best choice, they are basically able to understand most of the subtitles. All in all, the role of movie subtitles cannot be ignored. The correct choice of movie subtitles can promote learners' second language acquisition. In the future, relevant research still needs to continue in order to explore the more subtle relationship between film and television subtitles, film and television programs themselves and second language acquisition.

References

- [1] Dai Jin.(2005). *Film and Television Subtitles and Foreign Language Teaching [J]*, *Foreign Language Video Teaching*. Issue 103.
- [2] Brett, P.(1997). *A comparative study of the effects of the use of multimedia on listening comprehension[J]*. *System*, 25:p. 1.
- [3] Ellsworth, T.(1992). *Integrating subtitled video into your teaching [J]*.*English Teaching Forum*.
- [4] Markham, P. L.(1989). *The effects of captioned television videotapes on the listening comprehension of beginning, intermediate, and advanced ESL students[J]*. *Educational Technology*. 29-10, pp. 38-41.
- [5] Neuman, S. B. and P. Koskinen. (1992).*Captioned television as 'comprehensible input': Effects of incidental word learning from context for language minority students[J]*. *Reading Research Quarterly*. 27, pp. 95-106.
- [6] Huang, H.S., & Eskey, D. E..(2000). *The effects of closed captioned TV on the listening comprehension of intermediate ESL students[J]*. *Educational Administration Abstracts*, 35 (1).
- [7] Lund, R. J. (1991).*A comparison of second language listening and reading comprehension[J]*. *Modern Language Journal*. 75, pp.196-204.