Chapter 11

English Major Students’ Attitudes towards Movies and Series as Language Learning Resources

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on the attitudes of the fourth-year English Language Teaching (ELT) students towards strategies related to using movies and series as foreign language learning resources. The subjects were teacher candidates (at a state university in the west of Turkey). The current study demonstrates that foreign-language majors are not immune to downsides of a low-exposure EFL setting. The participants also state that only their family members - but not friends - are likely to cause a shift to the dubbed version of movie/series they want to view in the original language and with L2 captions (intralingual captions / in the source language) otherwise. This study suggests that backseat TV systems on buses can provide solutions. The backseat TV systems are welcome by most of the participants, in particular by those whose intercity travelling habits are found to be quite high.

INTRODUCTION

With emerging information and communication technologies (ICT), digital resources and web-based solutions, foreign language teaching in the 21st century is no more limited to classroom language, conventional listening and reading exercises, grammar-based instruction or teacher-centered methodology.

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Learners usually move on their own choices using websites, mobile applications, social media, and networking to have more communication and interaction in the target language. They prefer to watch movies or TV series in order to acquire familiarity with colloquial language. These are new fascinating solutions for those who would like to spend their free time on self-learning while entertaining themselves.

“Language teachers and learners operate within a set of interrelated constraints”, which are “often associated with the limited time and resources available” to both and language teaching or CALL should not be conceptualized without authentic constraints (Hubbard & Levy, 2006, p. 8). It is necessary to keep this in mind building strategies for the teaching of English. It is possible that it may be the reason for computer-assisted language learning journals to need to reach beyond the classroom. Hubbard and Levy (2006, p. 9) state that “looking through the contents of all major” computer-assisted language learning (CALL) journals it is seen that “CALL is given a broad interpretation that reaches well beyond classroom language teaching” (p. 9).

Therefore, it is necessary to design strategies of making most of the settings outside the classroom. As one of the potential tools often associated with outside the classroom, movies or series are not used for language teaching purposes as much as they should (Zengin & Çubukçu, 2013).

Movies are mostly provided by on-line sources at websites where you can watch or download popular TV series or select movies from a wide variety of choices. While videos combine audio and visual themes, captions and subtitles support the audible words, expressions with the written form, as “the visual representation of words in video form is an important contributor to students’ increased word knowledge” (Neuman & Koskinen, 1992, p. 102).

The impact of watching movies with L1 subtitles or L2 captions on language acquisition has recently started to hold the attention of researchers especially from non-English speaking countries such as Perez et al., 2013; Zengin and Çubükçü, 2013; Winke et al., 2010. The assessment of this impact is still a confusing issue because of the difficulty of measuring different factors and dimensions. However, measuring the attitudes of language learners who are potential users of subtitled/captioned movies is feasible and this study aims to get a new scope on the issue by first discussing the importance of movies on the improvement of listening skill and vocabulary acquisition as well as learners’ cognitive ability considering various aspects of subtitles and captions in language learning environments.

BACKGROUND

Movies as an Audio-Visual Aid for Learning Language Communicatively

Movies or motion pictures are multiple media applications that integrate sound and image with texts usually based on dialogues. They create “diverse modalities of input” by using photography, animations, sounds, visual effects and texts (Hsu, 2014, p. 64). Because of all these instruments, they appeal to visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic learning styles. Movies provide viewers with scenes showing the kinesics (i.e. gestures and movements), chronemics (i.e. use of time) and proxemics (i.e. use of space), which are the clues of contextual communication based on what to say where, when and how. Movies are certainly not only based on images, but also textual parts, which are captions or subtitles. While watching captioned/subtitled movies or videos in the target language, L2 learners have to attend to two types of visual input (images and texts) as well as audio input (sounds) (Hsu, 2014, p. 64), which