Study on the effect of using subtitles for news listening

: No subtitles, during watching, after watching news

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**Introduction**

The importance of listening skill is growing and growing to meet communicative language environment for ESL/EFL students. Moreover, with the development of technology, English learners can contact authentic listening materials like movie, news, and shows at the same time all over the world through internet. These listening materials are considered as an important learning tool because they provide more real language environment to ESL/EFL learners. And various strategies and teaching methods were applied to enhance the EFL learners’ listening proficiency until now.

On the basis of my experience as English learner and teacher, I tried some strategies, such as dictation, shadowing, using subtitles, etc. in my listening classroom. Especially, using subtitles are on the issue whether it is beneficial to develop listening skills for ESL/EFL learners.

In this respect, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of L2 learners’ use of subtitles on English news listening. To examine the difference of using subtitle or not, and using subtitles at different setting, the participants are divided into three parts: Watching news without subtitles, using subtitles during watching news, and using subtitles after watching news.

The research questions for this study are:

1. To what extent does watching news without subtitle affect on the listening comprehension compared to using subtitle while watching news?

2. To what extent does using subtitle while watching news affect on the listening comprehension compared to using subtitle after watching news?
3. To what extent does using subtitle after watching news affect on listening comprehension compared to watching news without subtitles?

**Literature Review**

Hayati and Mohmedi (2011) studied the effect of subtitle on listening comprehension of EFL students in Iran. The participants for this study are 90 students among 200 in intermediate level. The treatment for this study was divided into three groups; English dialogue without subtitles, with Persian subtitles, with English subtitles. The data collection was conducted with six-sets of multiple-choice test after six weeks’ treatment to each group to check listening comprehension. According to the result, English subtitle group showed higher level than Persian subtitles group, next, Persian subtitles group outperformed the no subtitle group. English subtitles group showed better understanding of the DVD contents. This group commented that they referred to the subtitles when they need to confirm the meaning of some key words during watching. It seems that they do translation while they watching subtitles. Persian subtitles group reported that the Persian subtitles distracted their attention and hindered the focus on the listening to the sound in some degree.

Taylor (2005) researched the effectiveness of using captioned video on listening comprehension with the beginning level Spanish class students. The experimental group watched the video with captions and comparative group watched the same video without captions. In addition, the researcher compared the comprehension score between the first year students and third year students in both groups. According to the results, the third year students in caption group outperformed the first year students in the same group. Contrarily, the without caption group did not show difference between the third and the first year students. The interview showed that the three channels of video, audio and text rather caused the distraction or confusion.
to the first year students. However, third year students commented the better ability to use three channels. Generally, the all participants responded positively to the use of captions.

Winke, Gass and Sydorenko (2010) investigated the effects of captioning video on listening comprehension in foreign language learning. They also researched the ordering effects of captions: first captioning or second captioning. The participants were Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, and Russian language learners as second language at a college. The analysis was conducted with t-tests and two-way ANOVAs, it informed that captioning was more effective than without captioning. For Spanish and Russian learners, captioning first group showed better results than captioning second group however, Arabic and Chinese learners, captioning second group had better score than captioning first group. According to the interview following the experiment, the various foreign language learners commented that they used captions to increase their attention, improve processing, reinforce previous knowledge, and analyze language.

Bird and Williams (2002) researched whether captioning is a beneficial for language learning by analyzing the new word acquisition through sound and text. There were three setting for experiment: text with sound, text without sound, and sound without text. The researcher found out that the text and sound group showed better recognition memory than the other two groups. It means that the simultaneous exposition to the written and aural language caused more effective results.

**Methodology**

**Participants**

The participants for this study are EFL college students who are in their high intermediate to advanced level. The participants take listening test to examine their general listening level before experiment. The participants are divided into three groups based on the results of their
pre-test score. The pre-test works to divide participants with similar level into three groups to see the difference of treatment. Next, the listening materials are selected carefully in the respect of content, length, the accent of speakers to minimize the other factors which may influence the result of listening comprehension.

**Data Collection**

To examine the effect of subtitles on listening comprehension, I will divide participants into three groups and provide them three treatments, group A watches the English news without subtitles just as authentic materials, group B watches English news with subtitles at the same time, group C watches English news without subtitle, after then written subtitle is provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>News listening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>Without subtitles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B</td>
<td>Using subtitles during listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group C</td>
<td>Using subtitles after listening</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants take multiple choice and True/False question to check the effect of their treatment. They watch same English news which is similar to the one used in the experiment, and they take multiple—choice questions after watching news. The participants watch news material as authentic ones, without subtitle. The test is consisted of vocabulary, listening comprehension, and sentence structures.

Moreover, the participants were asked to answer questionnaire about the using subtitles for their news listening. It consisted of 6 scale answer choices and the respondents can select the proper answer to express their opinion.
Discussion

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.1000</td>
<td>.99443</td>
<td>11.3886</td>
<td>12.8114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.1000</td>
<td>.99443</td>
<td>10.3886</td>
<td>11.8114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18.0000</td>
<td>.94281</td>
<td>17.3256</td>
<td>18.6744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13.7333</td>
<td>3.23700</td>
<td>12.5246</td>
<td>14.9240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. ANOVA of the listening comprehension test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>278.067</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>139.033</td>
<td>145.500</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>25.800</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>.956</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>303.867</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 illustrates the results of the one-way ANOVA for the questionnaire. As can be observed, there is a significant difference among the performance of the three groups \([F=145.500, \ p<0.05]\). And it revealed that difference between groups were significant. In order to determine which group is superior to the other, a post hoc test was run. The post-test will be conducted to analyze data.
As shown in Table 3, group 3 showed a better performance than group 1 or group 2. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

In the mean difference section, the group 3 showed big differences between group 1, and group two. It means that the participants at group 3 got higher mean than group 1, and group 2. The participants who were provided subtitle after watching news showed higher listening comprehension proficiency. This group believed that the subtitles helped their understanding of news content. More specifically, participants commented that the subtitles enhanced their ability to notice, comprehend, spell and recall new English materials. The test outcomes and the questionnaire suggest that under similar circumstance, students who are provided script about their listening material after watching news will benefit more than watching news without subtitle, or watching news and subtitle at the same time. According to the questionnaire, the no subtitle group could not have chance to check out the words or expression about their news
watching, so their understanding remained uncertain. And subtitles during watching news group expressed some distracting factors because they need to figure out many things at once, such as news report, screen, sound, and subtitles. In this case, subtitles cannot lead better understanding of listening materials.

**Conclusion**

With the similar level participants, this study compared the comprehension level of participants in three groups: watching news without subtitles, watching news with subtitles, and watching news and then read subtitles. According to the result, using subtitles after watching news treatment is beneficial for the high intermediate or advanced level EFL students. For news watching, subtitles are distracting factors rather than helping comprehension because there are a lot of information like visual aid, picture, and sound effect etc. Therefore, using subtitles during watching news cannot provide enough time to check uncertain words or expressions for EFL learners.

As one of limitations for this study, it focuses on the advanced level students’ listening comprehension with the three treatments of subtitles; no subtitles, during watching, after watching, I cannot generalize the results to beginners of intermediate students in ESL/EFL.

For the further study, it is desirable to study with the other genre of listening materials, like movie, or show with the same treatment. The movie or show has slower speed than news report and they contain flow of story to follow, so it is interesting to compare the effect of using subtitles.
References


Appendix

Questionnaire

**Group A. Without subtitles**

1. The visual images (pictures, titles, subtitles) on the screen help me to understand the content of news.

   ( ) strongly agree   ( ) agree   ( ) neither agree or disagree   ( ) disagree

   ( ) strongly disagree   ( ) N/A

2. I focus on watching the visual images.

   ( ) strongly agree   ( ) agree   ( ) neither agree or disagree   ( ) disagree

   ( ) strongly disagree   ( ) N/A

3. I focus on listening to the news report.

   ( ) strongly agree   ( ) agree   ( ) neither agree or disagree   ( ) disagree

   ( ) strongly disagree   ( ) N/A

4. I have difficulty to understand the contents of news.

   ( ) strongly agree   ( ) agree   ( ) neither agree or disagree   ( ) disagree

   ( ) strongly disagree   ( ) N/A

5. I think the subtitle will be helpful if provided.

   ( ) strongly agree   ( ) agree   ( ) neither agree or disagree   ( ) disagree

   ( ) strongly disagree   ( ) N/A
6. I think looking at subtitle during watching the news will be helpful for understanding the news content.

( ) strongly agree  ( ) agree  ( ) neither agree or disagree  ( ) disagree  
( ) strongly disagree  ( ) N/A 

7. I think looking at subtitle after watching the news will be helpful for understanding the news content.

( ) strongly agree  ( ) agree  ( ) neither agree or disagree  ( ) disagree  
( ) strongly disagree  ( ) N/A 

Group B. With subtitles during watching news

1. The visual images (pictures, titles, subtitles) on the screen help me to understand the content of news.

( ) strongly agree  ( ) agree  ( ) neither agree or disagree  ( ) disagree  
( ) strongly disagree  ( ) N/A 

2. The subtitles help recognize the words what I do not understand clearly watching the news.

( ) strongly agree  ( ) agree  ( ) neither agree or disagree  ( ) disagree  
( ) strongly disagree  ( ) N/A 

3. The subtitles help me recognize the expressions what I do not understand clearly watching the news.
NEWS LISTENING SUBTITLES

( ) strongly agree  ( ) agree  ( ) neither agree or disagree  ( ) disagree

( ) strongly disagree  ( ) N/A

4. The subtitles disturb me while I am watching the news.

( ) strongly agree  ( ) agree  ( ) neither agree or disagree  ( ) disagree

( ) strongly disagree  ( ) N/A

5. I focus on listening to the report than reading the subtitles.

( ) strongly agree  ( ) agree  ( ) neither agree or disagree  ( ) disagree

( ) strongly disagree  ( ) N/A

6. I focus on reading the subtitles than listening to the report.

( ) strongly agree  ( ) agree  ( ) neither agree or disagree  ( ) disagree

( ) strongly disagree  ( ) N/A

Group C. With subtitles after watching news

1. The visual images (pictures, titles, subtitles) on the screen help me to understand the content of news.

( ) strongly agree  ( ) agree  ( ) neither agree or disagree  ( ) disagree

( ) strongly disagree  ( ) N/A

2. The subtitles help me recognize the words what I did not understand clearly watching the news.
3. The subtitles help me recognize the expressions what I do not understand clearly watching the news.

4. I think the subtitle will be helpful if provided.

5. I think looking at subtitle during watching the news will be helpful for understanding the news content.

6. I think looking at subtitle after watching the news will be helpful for understanding the news content.