The effects of pedagogical and authentic films on EFL learners' vocabulary learning: The role of subtitles

[1]Mohammad Alipour, [2]Bahman Gorjian*, [3]Lida Gholampour Kouravand

[1]Department of TEFL, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Khouzestan, Iran
[2]Department of TEFL, Abadan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Abadan, Iran
[3] Department of TEFL, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Khouzestan, Iran

*bahgorji@yahoo.com

Abstract-The present study attempted to investigate the effects of pedagogical and authentic films on English as foreign language learners' vocabulary learning and to find out the role of English and Farsi subtitles and no subtitles on vocabulary learning. To achieve these purposes out of 90 participants, 40 language learners were selected and divided into two homogenous groups as the pedagogical and authentic groups based on a proficiency test. The participants were given 12 sessions of instruction on how to gain vocabulary elicited from the films. Then they sat for post-test at the end of treatment period. The participants were examined based on the vocabulary achievement multiple-choice tests. The results of the post-test based on the findings of t-test showed that authentic group generally performed better than pedagogical group in vocabulary learning. Based on the findings of One-way ANOVA and Post-hoc Tuckey test, the results also indicated the better performance of those learners who watched the films with English subtitles.

Key words- Pedagogical; authentic; films; vocabulary learning; subtitles

1.INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is generally a matter of remembering, unlike e.g. learning grammar which is a system based mainly on rules (Thornbury, 2004). In Iran, little attention has been paid to the effects of movies in English classrooms in general and vocabulary learning in particular. A number of researchers like Hayati and Mohammadi (2009) and Talavan (2007) have considered the relationship between watching films and prompting learners' listening skills, but little attention has been paid to the effects of authentic movies compared to pedagogical films to see which one is more effective in vocabulary learning, and also little attention has been paid to the role of English versus Farsi subtitles on English learners' vocabulary learning (Gorjian, Pazhakh & Parang, 2012).

The purpose of this study is to find out whether pedagogical or authentic films with English and Farsi subtitles and no subtitles are indispensable to help EFL learners' vocabulary learning.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Vocabulary Learning

Yoshi and Flaitz (2002) points to vocabulary learning as a vital part of each students' life which develop their future vocabulary storage. Most teachers are familiar with the fact that their students believe, or at least seem to believe, the direct word-for-word translations are possible. There is a temptation to think that a foreign language is nothing more than using new words for old things (Gorjian, Pazhakh & Naghizadeh, 2012). The important thing is to develop in the students an understanding that languages do not consist of words with equivalents from one language to the other. In their study, Kim and Gilman (2008) concluded that as vocabulary learning is often used with strategies such as word lists in which new words are presented with their translations and these strategies are outdated and irrelevant to students who are accustomed to visual stimuli. So, developers of vocabulary learning instruction and curriculum should reconsider their use of multimedia within their presentations (Gorjian, Alipour & Saffarian, 2012).

2.2. Authentic and Pedagogical Materials in Language Learning

Any teacher who has used a film with learners will have felt the thrill of excitement and the learners' anticipation of entertainment and enjoyment in the class (Mishan, 2005). According to him, film is the one that is designed to appeal most directly and fully to our emotions and also the one most clearly entrenched in learners' minds as a medium of entertainment. This means that the key issues relevant to the use of film for language learning all have to do with an effect. Koolstra and Beentjes (1999) define authentic material as

'appropriate' and 'quality' in terms of goals, objectives, learner needs and interest and 'natural' in terms of real life and meaningful communication.

In a research conducted by Chapple and Carties (2003), learners' responses to films, the focus was on films as an appropriate teaching material to be used in context-based instruction approaches in EFL classrooms in Asia (Zhang, Wu, Wei, & Wang, 2011). They considered films as pedagogically valuable material to be used in EFL classrooms due to providing a rich source of context and vocabulary for the EFL learners. Reese and Davie (1987) report studies which suggest that visual illustrations are most effective when they are accompanied by the script. Reese (1984) believes that subtitles either impede or have no effect on learning from news stories. He believes that the reason may be the limitations of single-channel processing, according to which humans can attend to only one channel at a time. Switching attention from spoken text to written text impairs performance when processing demands are heavy because some information is lost in the process. Mayer, Heinser, and Lonn (2001) found that English native speakers who watched the animation and listened to a concurrent corresponding narration in their first language had the ability to retain more information from the narration compared to those who also received captions as a third modality. They concluded that captions are distracting when audio is also present because they carry the same information, which follows the redundancy principle. Thus, according to the cognitive load theory, non-captioned videos will be easier to process than captioned videos. Koolstra and Beentjes (1999) sought to see the effect of the similarity between foreign and native languages on language acquisition. To this end, the participants were exposed to subtitled TV programs with soundtracks similar and dissimilar to their mother tongue. They found that language acquisition was highest for programs with soundtracks in languages similar to the native language. Using captions and subtitles to facilitate the comprehension of video materials is taken for granted by many teachers and researchers. Moreover, many educators believe that films with captions seem to provide a rich context for foreign language acquisition. It is also argued that viewers are generally quite motivated to understand what is shown and said on films when the subtitles are provided (Danan, 2004). It was also indicated that compared to films with no subtitles, those with Persian subtitles facilitated recognition of English words by supplying the meaning of the context in the student's native language (Hayati & Mohammadi, 2009). Stewart and Pertusa (2004) explored gains in vocabulary recognition made by intermediate students viewing films in Spanish with English subtitles and others watching the same films with Spanish subtitles. They reported that intralingual subtitles are more effective in enhancing vocabulary recognition.

Sydorenko (2010) studied the effect of modality of input and vocabulary acquisition on 26 learners of Russian at a large Midwestern university. The results of a mixed-design One-way ANOVA on vocabulary recognition test showed a non-significant main effect of test. Groups with captions scored higher on written than on aural recognition, while the VA group scored higher on aural than on written recognition. These indicate that there were no significant differences between written and aural translation for each group. Following the points made above, the current study carries on to provide answers to the following question: Is there any difference between pedagogical English films and authentic English films in terms of their effects on EFL learners' vocabulary learning?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

Participants of the current study were 40 learners who were selected from a population of 90 EFL learners studying English as a foreign language at English Institutes in Ahvaz, Iran. To select two homogeneous groups in terms of English proficiency, the researcher administered a sample of TOEFL proficiency test (Sharpe, 2004) to rank the learners from the higher to lower. Having done this, the first 40 learners whose scores were higher than the others were selected. Then they were divided into two experimental groups i.e., pedagogical and authentic, each including 20 learners. The participants aged from 20 to 28 studying the Top Notch series (Solsow & Ascher, 2007). The learners had studied English as a foreign language for almost one year at institutions of Ahvaz. These learners had no exposure to an English speaking community and had no contact with native speakers of English. The groups are introduced as follows:

Pedagogical group included 20 learners who watched the pedagogical movie during three parts. During the first three sessions they watched the first part of it with Farsi subtitles; in the next three sessions they watched the second part of that pedagogical movie with English subtitles, and during the last three sessions, the learners watched the last part of that pedagogical movie without any subtitles.

Authentic group also included 20 learners who were required to watch the authentic movie in three parts as well. In the first part which included three sessions the learners watched the authentic movie with Farsi subtitles, then they watched next part of that movie with English subtitles and finally they watched the third part of that same authentic movie without any subtitles.

3.2. Instrumentation

3.2.1. Tests

A sample Barron's TOEFL proficiency test (Sharpe, 2004) was administered to select two homogeneous groups of participants in terms of language proficiency. The reliability of the test was 0.87 based on the Alpha-Cronbach formula. The test contained 90 multiple-choice items; the learners were supposed to answer them in 85 minutes. In order to identify the effect of pedagogical film and use of subtitles on the learners' vocabulary

learning, three vocabulary post-tests were administered during the study to the learners of the first group who had watched the pedagogical film. Each of the tests consisted of 20 multiple-choice items on English vocabulary. Each test was administered after each three sessions and the learners were asked to answer them in 10 minutes. The vocabularies for the test items were selected from the practiced films with and without subtitles, and the tests were designed by the researcher using the British National Corpus to write the stems. The total score for each test was 20, each item one mark. The reliability of each test was met through the KR-21 formula. The reliability values of the pedagogical tests were 0.72, 0.78, and 0.85, and the reliability indices of authentic tests were 0.89, 0.77, and 0.82. At the end of the 9th sessions in each class, a vocabulary post-test was administered to each class and the results were compared to know the effect of watching pedagogical versus authentic films on the learners' vocabulary learning as a whole.

3.2.2. Movies

Considering 12 sessions for classes at the institute, the teacher was able to select one film for each class. The time of each class was one hour and a quarter and the time of each film was nearly one hour and a half. Therefore, the teacher could apply one film for each class. The teacher divided the films into three parts including the first part with Farsi subtitles, the second part with English subtitles, and the last part with no subtitles and devoted 15 minutes of every session to play every part of the films. The researcher decided to select animated film, Tangled, which was more appropriate and fun to the learners for the authentic group and Top Notch series for the pedagogical group.

3.3. Procedure

This study was conducted during the regular class time in institutes in Ahvaz. The first step was to make sure of the learners' homogeneity. Then the participants were randomly divided in two groups. One class was required to watch a pedagogical film while the other one an authentic movie.

During the treatment, in each session, the researcher devoted 25 minutes to watching the movie, practicing new words and talking about that part of the movie. Each movie was presented to the students for 15 minutes in every session. Then, the teacher worked on that part of the movie. After three sessions working on the movie with Farsi subtitles, the teacher took a vocabulary test consisting of 20 multiple-choice items. Three sessions directly as what has been done during the first phase, the teacher worked on the other parts of the movie but this time with English subtitles and another test had been taken. During the final three sessions the movie without any subtitles was presented to each class as the other sessions and then a test had been taken. During the process teacher used many techniques to teach new vocabulary items; for example, giving synonyms and antonyms of a word or asking students to look up the new vocabulary in a dictionary, demonstration, and etc. After practicing and revising the new vocabulary items, a discussion was held with the learners about the theme of the movie. The teacher asked some questions forcing the learners to use new vocabularies to answer. Finally, the results of the tests were compared to each other to know the importance of movies subtitles; if any, in vocabulary learning using One-way ANOVA and to know which one is more effective the researcher used the Tuckey test. Then to find out the effects of pedagogical and authentic films on EFL learners' vocabulary learning in general, an Independent Samples *t*-test was administered to each group and the results were compared.

4. RESULTS

All the tests which were conducted separately were combined and considered as one single test, that is, the mean for the two tests scores of each learner was calculated and then the Independent Sample *t*-test was applied. Table 1 illustrates the results of the *t*-test.

Table 1. Statistics for the pedagogical and authentic films

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.
Pedagogical	20	17.2000	2.33057	.028
Authentic	20	19.6500	3.95068	

Significant at ($p<0.05$)

The significance of the difference observed between the means investigated through the application of the *t*-test to the scores learners obtained in two vocabulary tests was .028. As presented in Table 1, the computed significance equals.028 which is smaller than the significance level set for the study (0.05). This substantiated the fact that there was a statistically significant difference between the pedagogical group and the authentic group confirming the effect of authentic films on the EFL learners' vocabulary learning. In order to determine the effect of pedagogical films with English and Farsi subtitles and no subtitles on EFL learners' vocabulary learning, One-way ANOVA was performed on the test scores of the three different phases with different modes of subtitling. Results indicated that the differences between the effects of pedagogical films with English and Farsi subtitles and without subtitles on EFL learners' vocabulary learning was statistically significant ($p<0.001$) as it is shown in Table2.

Table 2. Statistics for the pedagogical films

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.

Between Groups	88.433	2	44.217	7.424	.001
Within Groups	339.500	57	5.956		
Total	427.933	59			

Significant at (p<0.05)

Table 2 displays the results of the analysis of the effects of pedagogical films with English and Farsi subtitles and without subtitles on EFL learners' vocabulary learning. There were striking differences between the effects of subtitles in vocabulary learning. The hypothesis of the effects of subtitles on EFL learners' vocabulary learning was that there was not a significant difference between the effects of pedagogical films with English and Farsi subtitles and no subtitles on EFL learners' vocabulary learning. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected (p< .001). The results of Post-hoc Tuckey test also indicated the difference between the groups in the way that there was a significant difference between the presence of English subtitles and the lack of subtitles but there was not a significant difference between Farsi subtitles and English subtitles as it is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Statistics for the authentic films

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Between Groups	202.133	2	101.067	10.331	.000
Within Groups	557.600	57	9.782		
Total	759.733	59			

Significant at (p<0.05)

As shown in Table 3, results of One-way ANOVA indicated that the difference between the effects of authentic films with English and Farsi subtitles and no subtitles was significant (.000). In order to find out which groups performed better a Post-hoc Tuckey test was run to the three groups. There was a significant difference between Farsi subtitles and English subtitles; however, subtitled English films were more effective. Also there was a significant difference between English subtitles and no subtitles; however, the English subtitled group again performed better.

5.DISCUSSION AND ONCLUSION

English authentic films help the learners to enrich their vocabulary knowledge due to they are really a series of dialogues set in different situations. Even a short part of a film can help the learners improve their vocabulary a great deal (Zarei, 2008, Zhang & Wu, 2011a, 2011b). Thus, comparing pedagogical group with authentic group showed that the authentic group learners were more successful in EFL learners' vocabulary learning (Zhang & Wu, 2008).

Authentic materials such as films engage the learners in activities; thereby reduce anxiety and affective filter which allow the acquisition to take place (Hayati & Mohammadi, 2009). Furthermore, the findings in almost all of the studies advocate the use of subtitles and indicate the helpfulness of them in learning a foreign language. To sum up, this method is highly effective if the films which used are the learners' favourites and they should be selected based on the learners' language proficiency and background knowledge (Zhang, Wang, Wu & Huo, 2011). The researcher of this study suggests that this method can help learners with negative attitudes toward memorizing and learning new vocabulary items.

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Vitae

Bahman Gorjian obtained his PhD in TEFL from Research and
Science Center of Khurasgan University in Isfahan Province. In 2006, he was appointed Assistant Professor at TEFL Department, Abadan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Abadan, Khouzestan Province, Iran. He is currently working within several research areas covering TEFL, applied linguistics, psycholinguistics, individual differences and testing EFL. He can be reached at:
bahgorji@yahoo.com
Cell phone: 00989161310917