

Effective Use of the Media: Video in the Foreign Language Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Because there is no study in the existing literature to address the usefulness of video exposure to teach a foreign language (FL), the present article has tried to close this research gap. The study reveals the impact of unassisted video exposure on FL lexis and grammar acquisition, reading-based general comprehension and writing skill. The study first employs quantitative pre- and post-test surveys, and then qualitative in-depth interviews with students at the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana. The key finding is that a video format is useful for teaching/learning a FL. In terms of FL abilities, quantitative results indicate that writing shows greater acquisition effects than reading-based general comprehension. FL grammar was the least impacted upon, whereas vocabulary acquisition shows the most beneficial effects. The interviewees' reflections from in-depth interviews suggest that by exposing native speakers of Slovenian to subtitled video viewing optimal conditions for them to lower their extraneous cognitive load were created. The learners who learned the most were the ones who were adequately predisposed towards FL stimuli to improve their FL performance. Furthermore, video viewing induced lower levels of FL classroom anxiety compared with normal apprehension in FL class as well as the feeling of being able to claim responsibility for their own FL learning. These findings echo the outcomes of the studies that reinforced the positive effects of anxiety-free learning environment with a low affective filter of FL learners and equally low extraneous cognitive load. Moreover, the study confirmed the importance of the learners' high involvement in a FL stimulus that enables FL input to be internalized in form of FL intake. Moreover, the enhanced performance was achieved without any conscious knowledge of the underlying system, which may be seen as evidence of implicit FL learning.

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Introduction

Most media and communication sciences research focuses on the impact of the media on various audiences. However, only few studies are concerned with the media literacy of the audiences, and even fewer address the relevancy and applicability of the media on the processes of human learning (Cai and Lin, 2011; Lealand, 2009; Erjavec, 2012). Even more importantly, there is a dire need of such research in the field of teaching/learning a FL through video exposure. The most plausible explanation lies in the fact that such research tends to be commonly categorized under much broader areas comprising communication sciences, and didactical and linguistic research (e.g., Erjavec, 2012).

As regards the pedagogical implications of using the broadcasting media for English as a second language (ESL)/English as a foreign language (EFL), existing research evidence abundantly supports the usefulness of video for ESL/EFL purposes. Typically, studies so far have focused on examining the following parameters: adult vs. children FL acquisition, short-term vs. long-term effects, FL acquisition, acquisition of the second language (L2) vs. first language (L1), viewing TV subtitles vs. video subtitles or viewing with vs. without subtitles (e.g., Vanderplanck, 2010). Moreover, most of the previous research has dealt with a few areas only — namely, with the effects of video exposure on the acquisition of FL lexis (Al-Seghayer, 2001; Hulstijn, 2003; Yuksel et al., 2009) and on the FL listening/understanding and reading benefits (Markham et al., 2001; Kothari et al., 2002; Taylor, 2005). Essentially, FL vocabulary acquisition is assumed to be of paramount importance to FL learners' overall proficiency (e.g., Hulstijn, 2003), however, the outcomes of these studies still do not show conclusively that viewing videos allows for vocabulary long-term gains.

Previous studies have addressed the interaction between subtitled videos and a few of the issues examined in this study, however they have mostly dealt with receptive, not productive FL abilities, treating them separately, not in combination, and using just quantitative methods (Bueno, 2009; Kuppens, 2010). It seems that prior research has rarely addressed the issue of FL grammar acquisition via subtitled videos (Koolstra and Beentjes, 1999; Lee, 2002; Van Lommel et al., 2006). In the available literature, just Markham et al., (2001) have explored the development of FL learners' productive writing skill through subtitled videos, however the summary writing activity was performed in L1 and the study is quantitative only.

In view of this, and due to a lack of research on these issues, this study has tried to close this research gap by employing a Slovenian audio and English subtitles. This treatment condition was chosen to look into the impact of unassisted video exposure on the following: FL lexis and grammar acquisition, on reading-based general comprehension and FL writing skill. Moreover, our research tries to fill this gap by adopting an innovative approach, i.e., a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods as this is assumed to enable a researcher a deeper insight into the influence of such video exposure on learners' overall FL ability. The study is looking for the answers to the following research question: How well can viewing a native audio with English subtitles facilitate English language acquisition?

Theoretical Background

The Net-Gen and Video Viewing

Generation Y, also known as Net Generation or Millennials is the first generation to have grown up with the new information technologies as huge parts of their lives, relaxing, and also learning (e.g., Tapscott, 2009). As the 21st-century students in higher education of today, they are quite different from the preceding generations of traditional students (e.g., Thornton and Kaya, 2013). The other distinctive feature of the Net-Gen, and their parents, stemming from the new technologies, is excessive cravings for the visual media (e.g., Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Logically, as the all-pervasive digital media have been readily seized by the Net-Gen, they have also entered the global classroom environments. One way of using technologies to claim back the Net-Gen students' attention from the virtual world to real-life demands of learning could be exploring the potential value of the video as an instructional medium. In particular, research has shown that many features of the video could be beneficial for learning. Namely, they impact human learning and memory in a positive way, i.e., they appear to have an effect on the individual's ability to store the information from the video stimuli into the long-term memory and consequently retrieve this information (e.g., Thornton and Kaya, 2013). The medium of video, a combination of moving-talking images, could theoretically be used as a more effective stimulus for storing and encoding information than merely spoken or silent, printed words. Apparently, the reasons have been well researched in the expert literature. There is evidence that whether either verbal or pictorial material is verbally or pictorially encoded depends on the anticipation of what is to be done with the material (e.g., Nelson et al., 1977). However, in essence, pictorial encoding modality seems to be more effective than verbal and verbal material

presented in an auditory way more effective than the latter presented just visually in form of reading texts (e.g., Thornton and Kaya, 2013). Finally, the bimodal input typical of the video format, i.e., the integration of the visual and auditory/verbal encoding modalities, is undisputedly the most effective (Bird et al., 2002; Brown, 2007), especially if the video material is meaningful, relevant, emotional, humorous or otherwise distinctive (e.g., Thornton and Kaya, 2013).

Video Exposure as a Source of Contexts for Teaching/Learning a Foreign Language

Although FL teaching/learning has been traditionally primarily focused on standard teaching materials, i.e., textbooks, research has proven the benefits of using computer-based multimedia instruction and the impact of broadcasting media on FL proficiency (Koolstra et al., 2002; Kavaliauskiene et al., 2010). In contrast to the static lecture format, traditionally expected of teachers and lecturers, the video naturally seems to lend itself more readily to storing the information in the students' long-term memory. Learning a FL nowadays is not as a static experience for the Net-Gen anymore (e.g., Bueno, 2009) since they are actively watching, reading and listening, and thus acquiring information intentionally or unintentionally via in-class and out-of-class learning in passionate affinity spaces (e.g., Gee and Hayes, 2011).

Contemporary pedagogical theory claims there are substantial effects of affective factors on FL learning (Ellis, 2006; Dörnyei, 2009; Schmid, 2011). Several studies have stipulated, besides other factors, the importance of learners' attention in promoting learning of words (Schmidt, 2001; Robinson, 2003; Dörnyei, 2009). Apparently, attention will be raised also due to learning a FL in a novel way, for instance while viewing videos. FL learners seem to be relieved of FL classroom anxiety when they are not required to speak (Spielman & Radnofsky, 2001; Turula, 2002; Ellis, 2006), or during video exposure, when they projected more mental energy and assumed a much more positive attitude towards FL learning (e.g., Borrás and Lafayette, 1994).

In many western European countries where subtitling is the preferred option, there is evidence that subtitled videos impact positively the viewers' FL proficiency (Koolstra et al., 2002; Van Lommel et al., 2006). The effect of videos subtitled in English even appears to be equivalent to at least twenty years of traditional classroom-based instruction (e.g., Rupérez et al., 2009). **Reading activity, both extensive and intensive**, seems to be an automatically elicited response in viewers who start paying attention to the script in subtitles subconsciously, even with FL subtitles and independently of FL knowledge (d'Ydewalle et al., 1991; d'Ydewalle and

Van de Poel, 1999). Moreover, the processing of the subtitles, i.e., reading, and listening to the sound track, seem to be almost simultaneous, automatic and effortless processes (e.g., d'Ydewalle et al., 1999) during which details of the pictorial information are not missed while switching attention from one mode to the other.

Subtitled videos have apparently been proven to have a beneficial effect on creating a learners' low-anxiety environment and involvement in the message — the two prerequisites to creating a low affective filter and consequently allowing FL input in instead of blocking it out (Krashen, 1985; Danan, 2004). The prevalence of research on the usefulness of subtitled videos for FL teaching/learning/acquisition so far has looked into two areas: firstly, the impact of processing subtitles on the acquisition of FL vocabulary (d'Ydewalle et al., 1999; Pulido, 2004; Kuppens, 2010), and secondly, on the improvement of FL abilities (Markham and Peter, 2003; Pulido, 2004; Taylor, 2005). The emphasis on FL lexis improvement via subtitled videos is actually not surprising as vocabulary acquisition is considered paramount to achieving good overall FL proficiency (e.g., Hulstijn, 2003) and since most theorists of lexical development believe that the cocktail of multiple mechanisms is underlying the word-learning phenomenon (e.g., Kroll & Sunderman, 2003). Numerous researchers argue that acquiring new FL lexis requires frequent exposure to FL words in different forms (Ellis et al., 1993; Schmidt, 2001; Bird et al., 2002) which is actually in line with the current pedagogical trends of trying to foster FL vocabulary acquisition instead of teaching it explicitly and intentionally (Lee, 2004; Yuksel et al., 2009).

Methodology

The goal of this article is to present a systematic and detailed analysis of immediate, FL acquisition arising from processing of subtitles in video exposure. The present study first employs quantitative pre- and post-test surveys, and then qualitative in-depth interviews. The combination of both methods was deemed legitimate to obtain generalized and in-depth results (e.g., Dietz & Kalof, 2009). At the same time, qualitative interviews enabled a profound insight into the potential of using interlingual subtitling as a mode to promote FL acquisition.

Pre- and post-test surveys, useful for obtaining impact data for progress reports (e.g., Dietz & Kalof, 2009), were employed as the first method. Seventy seven students, all non-native speakers of English at the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana in the academic year 2012/2013, were invited to partake in the research. The average age of the respondents was 19, and, generally, they had had 8 to 10 years of general English instruction at the start of business English lectures in the second year. The data collection took place during the regularly scheduled class periods.

The decision was made to opt for reversed subtitling-L2 in a video exposure due to the alleged effectiveness of this subtitling format (e.g., Díaz-Cintas & Fernández Cruz, 2008). A video has been chosen as a medium for subtitling since it embodies the properties of oral and written language and has the ability to convey the language interactively (e.g., Gee & Hayes 2011). Pre-tests were administered before viewing a video clip, and, to evaluate FL retention from processing subtitles, immediate, not delayed FL acquisition assessment was made via an identical set of four post-tests. The quantitative results were analyzed with a view to whether the students achieved any progress or not. Accordingly, the mistakes on the pre-test that the students corrected after viewing the video were categorized as “improvement/ have improved”. On the other hand, two types of mistakes were categorized as “no improvement/ have not improved”: firstly, the mistakes on the pre-test that were retained after viewing the video and the correct answers which should have been left intact, but were changed into the wrong ones.

The topic of the video *Wulfy* (Luzar, 2007) deals with human isolation and features an elderly pensioner who takes his neighbour’s dog for a walk, but pretends the dog was his in order to try and meet people socially. While looking for a runaway dog, he makes friends with two young Jehovah’s witnesses from the USA, gets them drunk, and the next day prepares lunch for them. By choosing the video *Wulfy* with reversed subtitles-L2 optimal conditions for the native speakers of Slovenian were created: they were able to lower the unnecessary extraneous cognitive load and raise the desirable germane cognitive overload (Sweller et al., 1998). It is true they had to infer the meaning from both — linguistic clues from English subtitles and linguistic and non-linguistic clues from their mother-tongue audio, but the second activity took place effortlessly. The lexis and grammar from the video were evaluated as appropriate for B2 level of FL competence as set in the English syllabus at the Faculty of Economics and according to the CEFRL classification (2001), and secondly, they were adequate also due to the fact there are no more than one or two unknown words per 100 running words in easily understood context in order for learning to occur (Nation, 2005). The respondents’ FL reading skill was assessed as good enough not to hinder the processing of the subtitles.

English vocabulary and grammar from the reversed subtitles L2 were used as a basis for devising two identical sets of four pre- and post-tests comprising a multiple-choice vocabulary test, a grammar test, a writing test and a general comprehension test (Appendices 1 and 2). The distractors were included on the basis of the visual or phonetic similarity with the key word that was actually given in Slovenian, due to Slovenian audio, in otherwise English test. For instance, in the vocabulary test: What is correct spelling in English of Slov. *blagajniški račun*? a) receipt b) recipe

c) receipt; or, in the grammar test: What is the English expression for Slov. *Kaj boste spili?* a) What will you drink? b) What are you having? c) What are you drinking?; and, in the spelling test: How do we spell correctly in English Slov. *ses-tavine?* a) ingredients b) ingredients c) ingredients. χ^2 tests were used to determine significant differences between pre- and post-test according to lexis, grammar or comprehension regarding the topic of the video. The results were evaluated and analyzed using SPSS software. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, which was 0.87 and indicates that the measuring instrument is sufficiently reliable.

In-depth interviews were conducted (N=22) with a view to gaining deeper insights into the possibilities of using reversed subtitles L2 for FL acquisition and to find out the participants' feelings, experiences and perceptions on the use of subtitles for FL acquisition. In methodological literature it is widely recognized that in-depth interviews are the most likely way to get indispensable information about the research subjects (Schutt, 2001). Twelve interviewees were male and ten female. They participated in the research voluntarily, but only spoke on condition that complete anonymity would be guaranteed, so we labelled them using letters, and words that could identify them were omitted and replaced by ellipses. Key questions were the ones enquiring about the interviewees' opinions on learning a FL via interlingual subtitle processing and video viewing, their personal experience, on reasons for positive or negative attitudes and views on future perspectives of interlingual subtitle-processing for such FL learning. Interviews were conducted individually, and lasted from one to two hours. Since most of the students expressed the willingness to participate in the study if their complete anonymity was guaranteed, we labelled all our informants using letters, and words that could identify them were omitted and replaced by ellipses.

Results

First, quantitative and then qualitative results will be presented.

Results of Pre- and Post-tests

The results of the research showed that a Slovenian audio with English subtitles can facilitate English language acquisition for non-native speakers of English. The results show that subtitling did improve certain aspects of the participants' overall FL ability, so they performed better on the post-tests.

Table 1 Share of students with (non)improvement on general comprehension pre- and post-tests, X^2 test, $N=77$, sig. $p<0.001$.

General comprehension pre-test mistakes	General Comprehension post-test mistakes		Total
	improvement	non-improvement	
Zero	0	0	0 100%
One	0	1 100%	1 100%
Two	7 24.1%	22 75.9%	29 100%
Three	31 66%	16 34%	47 100%

The general comprehension pre-test consisted of three questions whereas the post-test includes an additional, fourth, summary-writing question. The students' replies were not categorized according to a number of grammatical mistakes but with reference to two other factors: firstly, whether the contents were satisfying or non-satisfying and secondly, whether the five pre-selected key words were mentioned and spelt correctly in each of the five sentences. The 'non-improvement' category comprises in itself also 'no answer' category. With a view to achieving that, the replies were looked into in terms of improvement/ non-improvement. Among the respondents with zero satisfying replies on the general comprehension pre-test ($N=47$ students), 66% have improved their answers after viewing the video while 34% have not. Among the respondents with one satisfying reply on the general comprehension pre-test ($N=1$ student), there is no improvement after viewing the video. Among the respondents with two satisfying replies on the general comprehension pre-test ($N=29$ students), 24.1% have improved after viewing the video while 75.9% have not. There were no students with all three satisfying replies.

The summary question required the students to summarize the contents of the video in five sentences, regardless of their length. No grammatical mistakes were taken into account and all the summaries with more or fewer sentences than five were eliminated. The remaining students' summaries (49) were categorized according to whether the summary adequately described the video contents. Without the students being notified and with a view to assessing the summaries appropriately, two prerequisites were set in advance, namely, mentioning five key events with five key words from the subtitles. As five plot milestones the students should have mentioned: a lonely elderly pensioner, his borrowing a neighbour's dog and losing it, making friends with

the two Jehovah’s witnesses while trying to find the dog and intoxicating them, preparing a lunch for them and trying to intoxicate them again, and lastly, his daughter’s refusal to stay for lunch and the fact that she only came to collect the tickets. As a second prerequisite, in each of these five plot milestones, five key words, not special or difficult in any way, from the subtitles were selected: *a loaf, take for a walk, an elder, Jehova’s, a turkey*. Altogether, ten points were allocated to these ten factors, one point for the satisfying contents in each sentence and one point for a correctly spelt key word. When a student was given one point, it was for mentioning the plot milestone without a pre-selected word, not the other way round.

The outcomes show that eleven students were able to reach almost all the points allocated for the summary, that is nine points, and thirteen students (N=7; N=6) performed only slightly worse, i.e., they earned eight and seven points respectively out of ten. Another thirteen students were still able to write adequate summaries to reach 60%. The remaining twelve students performed below 60%. To recap, after video exposure, and in terms of comprehensibility of their summaries as well as meeting the pre-set criteria, i.e., summarizing the video by mentioning five key events along with five pre-selected key words from subtitles, 76% of students (N=37) were able to summarize the plot of the video in terms of reaching a passing 60% result on the essay-writing task on their final end-of-term FL tests.

Table 2 Share of students with (non)improvement on writing pre- and post-tests, χ^2 test, N=77, sig. $p < 0.001$.

Writing pre-test mistakes	Writing post-test mistakes		Total
	improvement	non-improvement	
Zero	5 71.4%	2 28.6%	7 100%
One	7 29.1%	17 70.9%	24 100%
Two	34 79.1%	9 20.9%	43 100%
Three	3 100%	0	3 100%

The writing pre- and post-tests consisted of three multiple choice questions, each with three given answers. The maximum number of mistakes that the respondents could have made was three. Among the respondents with zero mistakes on the writing pre-test (N=7 students), 71.4% retained the correct answers after viewing the video versus 28.6% who have either retained the mistake or changed the correct

reply into a wrong one. Among the respondents with one mistake on the writing pre-test (N=24 students), there is 29.2% improvement after viewing the video versus 70.9% who have either retained the mistake or changed the correct reply into a wrong one. Among the respondents with two mistakes on the writing pre-test (N=43 students), there is 79.1% improvement after viewing the video versus 20.9% who have either retained the mistake or changed the correct reply into a wrong one. Among the respondents with three mistakes on the writing pre-test (N=3 students), there is 100% improvement after viewing the video.

The vocabulary pre- and post-tests consisted of fourteen multiple choice questions, each with three given answers to choose from. The maximum number of mistakes that the respondents could have made was fourteen.

Table 3: Share of students with (non)improvement on vocabulary pre- and post-tests, χ^2 test, N=77, sig. $p < 0.001$.

Vocabulary pre-test mistakes	Vocabulary post-test mistakes		Total
	improvement	non-improvement	
Zero	1 50%	1 50%	2 100%
One	5 71.4%	2 28.6%	7 100%
Two	7 63.7%	4 36.4%	11 100%
Three	13 72.3%	5 27.8%	18 100%
Four	17 100%	0	20 100%
Five	13 100%	0	13 100%
Six	6 100%	0	6 100%
seven	3 100%	0	3 100%

Among the respondents with zero mistakes on the vocabulary pre-test (N=2 students), there is 50 % improvement on the post-test after viewing the video (versus 50% who have not improved, i.e., 1 student retained the correct answer, and the other one changed it into a wrong one). Among the respondents with one mistake on the vocabulary pre-test (N=7 students), there is 71.4% improvement on the post-test after view-

ing the video versus 28.6% who have not improved. Among the respondents with two mistakes on the vocabulary pre-test (N=11 students), there is 63.7% improvement on the post-test after viewing the video versus 36.4% who have not improved. Among the respondents with three mistakes on the vocabulary pre-test (N=18 students), there is 72.3% improvement on the post-test after viewing the video versus 28.8% who have not improved. Among the respondents with four mistakes on the vocabulary pre-test (N=17 students), there is 82.3% improvement on the post-test after viewing the video versus 17.6% who have not improved. Among the respondents with five (N=13 students), six (N=6 students) and seven mistakes (N=3 students) on the vocabulary pre-test, there is 100% improvement on the post-test after viewing the video. The grammar pre- and post-tests consisted of eleven multiple choice questions, each with two or three given answers to choose from. The maximum number of mistakes that the respondents could have made was eleven.

Table 4: Share of students with (non)improvement on grammar pre- and post-tests, χ^2 test, N=77, sig. p<0.001.

Grammar pre-test mistakes	Grammar post-test mistakes		Total
	improvement	non-improvement	
Zero	0	0	0 100%
One	0	1 100%	1 100%
Two	10 66.7%	5 33.3%	15 100%
Three	14 77.7%	4 22.3%	18 100%
Four	16 80%	4 20%	20 100%
Five	18 100%	0	18 100%
Six	4 100%	0	4 100%
seven	1 100%	0	1 100%

There were no students with zero mistakes. Among the respondents with one mistake on the grammar pre-test (N=1 student), there is no improvement after viewing the video as the student retains the mistake. Among the respondents with two

mistakes on the grammar pre-test (N=15 students), there is 66.7% improvement after viewing the video versus 33.3% who are in the other category. Among the respondents with three mistakes on the grammar pre-test (N=18 students), there is 77.7% improvement after viewing the video versus 22.3% who are in the other category. Among the respondents with four mistakes on the grammar pre-test (N=20 students), there is 80% improvement after viewing the video versus 20% who are in the other category. Among the respondents with five (N=18 students), six (N=4 students) and seven mistakes on the grammar pre-test, there is 100% improvement after viewing the video.

Results of In-depth Interviews

The Learning Potential of a Slovenian Audio with English Subtitles

In in-depth interviews we first tried to gain insights into the interviewees' prevailing outlook on the issue in general. Secondly, we were able to elicit views on their personal experience with FL subtitle processing, as well as to obtain their viewpoints of the reasons for positive or negative attitudes. Additionally, also their unimpaired views on future perspectives of using a native audio with FL subtitles for FL learning purposes were looked into.

By and large, all interviewees (22) expressed positive opinions regarding the possibility of learning English via reading English subtitles. A typical example of these sentiments is voiced by a student E: 'It never occurred to me that I could learn simply by watching a film or a video with subtitles, which I in fact do quite often in reality; now, it all seems quite possible. Super!'

Although a quarter of students would in reality prefer a standard subtitling condition, i.e., an English audio with Slovenian subtitles, more than a half approve of the treatment condition used in the study as a particularly promising, novel FL learning activity. Since the auditory processing in the Slovenian language took place effortlessly, they did not mind the effort invested in reading English. Some of the interviewees voice an opinion that viewing such a video seems quite an efficient learning condition for the Slovenians. Moreover, they may be able to improve the writing and reading abilities, much better in fact than via processing an English audio without subtitles. According to slightly fewer than a half of students the reason may lie in the fact that a combination of a Slovenian audio with an English script seems to promote the atmosphere of learning a FL, whereas viewing a Slovenian or an English video without subtitles is more reminiscent of and conducive to leisure

time, enjoyment and fun. Prior to watching the video in question the interviewees had not been of the same opinion and none of them had tried learning a FL in such a way in class: ‘This is my first. I’ve never watched a Slovenian video with English subtitles so far. It would have probably seemed interesting at home as well, but I don’t think I would try and learn anything’.

When choosing between different mother-tongue-cum-L2 combinations of audio and subtitles, the majority of students claim that, to their mind, bimodal input L2 condition — the use of English audio and English subtitles, may be the most beneficial for them. Nevertheless, student H claims that ‘English subtitles in a Slovenian video change the whole feel of watching a film into studying, because you can’t help but learn — you hear the word, you see it, so you must remember, but unfortunately, you can’t remember too many words, what a pity!’

The Improvement of Foreign Language Abilities and Vocabulary

To the question what FL abilities, in their opinion, might show the greatest improvement while viewing such a video, a half of students expect the betterment of reading and a quarter of the writing. The others were indecisive, but stated that their overall FL proficiency in English could possibly benefit if they paid more attention to English subtitles. In view of this, they admit that the more studious attitude one maintains, the larger the FL gains. Admittedly, according to slightly more than a half of students, English grammar seems too difficult to learn in such a way, however, almost a half express the opinion that grammar enhancement and revision appear much more attainable. Or, in words of student C: ‘I haven’t learned much grammar from books and I really don’t see how I might learn from films’.

Regarding actual instances of grammar that they memorized, only a quarter of students remembered the exact examples: *Which is better?; I’ll toast to that.; Slovenia, where do your beauties stem from?*. Interestingly, quite proficient student C noticed the use of ‘would’ after ‘if’, mentioned this in an interview, and asked for clarification: ‘I saw ‘would’ after ‘if’ in ‘if you would listen to me’, and immediately thought that was wrong, but it probably can’t be, can it?’.

When asked about learning any new English vocabulary, the interviewees agree in principle, but admit memorizing meaningful phrases, not isolated words, appears to be easier. Inferring the meaning of unknown words from the Slovenian audio did not appear to disrupt the flow of reading subtitles in English, and seemed in fact quite enjoyable. Interestingly, quite a few were able to recollect the exact moments when they started paying attention to English subtitles. Namely, when they were especially interested in how certain Slovenian words were translated, either

new words or the ones they were just not familiar with their translation or spelling. According to student D, subtitles proved to be ‘a super aid to check words immediately’. Student M is quite surprised at the fact that she was able to ‘concentrate on English subtitles more because she automatically, quite by herself, followed the plot in Slovenian,’ as she puts it. The students’ replies to the question exactly which words they actually learned from the video Wulfy were however a bit more realistic – just a few remembered the exact words. They were not many, but exclusively the words unknown to them: *a wormwood, a medicinal herb, an oak, Jehova’s, the Lord, an animal shelter, to stem from, to drop by, to go wild, I’ll toast to that.*

In contrast, when their writing ability was tested in a summary writing, they used just one of these words in an immediate post-test summary, namely *Jehova’s*, but without an apostrophe, i.e., *Jehova*. Surprisingly, student C even remembered a Latin word *Quersus Crisolepis* for wormwood, allegedly due to a few reasons: firstly, the revelation that the lonely man must have been an expert in a certain area when he used to have a job, secondly, because Student C felt sorry for him since nobody seemed to care about a lonely man or his knowledge, and thirdly, due to the fact that he did not know the word in English and was interested in English translation. Apparently, Latin translation sounded melodic enough to be memorized. Student A’s reply, for instance, illustrates typical answers: ‘I thought the pre-test was really easy, and I felt like I knew most of the words while watching a video, and grammar, too, but I still made such stupid mistakes in both tests.’ Typically, the majority of interviewees stipulate various pre-requisites to learning FL vocabulary, such as: on condition they could watch such a video several times over longer periods of time or they would write down the new FL words from subtitles while watching a video or shortly after; if they also heard the words in English along with reading them in English; if they received targeted instruction or if there were structured preparatory language activities prior to viewing, and if the topic was familiar or seemed useful for their studies. Finally, some students were disappointed at English subtitles simply because they wish to improve their speaking and not their reading skill in English.

Reasons for Approving of a Slovenian Audio with English Subtitles

When asked about the reasons for appreciating video viewing, the interviewees’ replies were varied, nevertheless, a few stood out: viewing a FL video as pure entertainment, lower levels of anxiety, satisfaction arising from monitoring FL subtitles effortlessly, claiming responsibility for their own FL learning, a hope for using this method as a new FL learning tool for non-native speakers more frequently in class, and finally, saving time and money.

Practically all interviewees perceive watching films and videos as pure entertainment, completely separate from a FL study. As a consequence, they approached viewing *Wulfy* with equal anticipation, and managed to translate the same feelings of enjoyment into this FL learning experience. According to quite a few students, this is exactly why they liked *Wulfy* and would continue learning English in such a way. They managed not to lose interest and concentration in class, so it appears as if they intend ‘to try the same at home, just maybe watch more films with English subtitles because the feel is like you are not even trying to learn at all’, as student D claims.

According to more than a half of students, one of commonly stated reasons was less worry induced by video viewing compared with normal stress, apprehension and anxiety commonly present for them in FL class. For instance, student J loved ‘the atmosphere during video viewing because I was in class and it felt like a movie – for a change, that was super.’

Another quite frequent argument put forward by one third of students were subjective feelings of satisfaction arising from being able to read quite effortlessly English appearing along with Slovenian – apparently a huge benefit in keeping the concentration and interest till the end. The whole experience reminded a few of a similar satisfaction they had experienced when learning English as kids while watching English cartoons.

Some interviewees state that the novelty value is the very fact that attracted them to such a method of learning English. More precisely, they were in a position to break up with a traditional teacher-led instruction; secondly, they clearly felt they were in charge of their own FL learning, or, as student A puts it: ‘I could decide on my own whether to invest more or less effort into the activity and learn accordingly.’ Finally, video viewing seems quite a good means of self study. Student A realized that ‘simply by taking the video activity more seriously and reading the subtitles more carefully, I could learn more in quite a doable way.’

Only a few students realized that viewing such a video could be ‘a convenient way to learn a FL at home and save some time and money,’ as student E puts it. According to them, if approached studiously enough and with methodical note-taking, it appears to be affordable, less time-consuming and less costly in comparison with FL learning courses. Student I expresses his opinion that ‘the ongoing rates of language courses are really high, so I might start jotting things down while watching films with subtitles. It’s easier to do that when you already see the word in subtitles, so, I guess, I’ll have to just pay more attention.’

Discussion and Conclusion

A combination of different methods in the study, i.e., **quantitative surveys and qualitative in-depth interviews**, proved useful because it enabled us to validate the efficiency of the video format for FL teaching/learning, and secondly, to attain knowledge of the students' opinions on the use of such a treatment condition.

In the available literature, this is the first study to employ a Slovenian audio and English subtitles while attempting to monitor the effects of such a treatment condition on all FL abilities, FL vocabulary and grammar, and using qualitative pre- and post-tests and quantitative in-depth interviews. With a view to trying to prove the usefulness of subtitled videos for FL learning, we decided on a combination of a Slovenian audio and English subtitles.

The outcomes undoubtedly suggest added FL acquisition gains for the non-native speakers from the study from this treatment condition as the respondents were able to learn via video exposure. Despite the false impression that the students with fewer mistakes on the pre-test have learned less after viewing a video in comparison with those with more mistakes, they actually learned more: they were just confident enough not to be tempted to change the correct answers into the wrong ones on the post-test after video exposure. By and large, the study found that the fewer the mistakes on pre-tests, the smallest the progress after video exposure on post-tests, and vice versa. skill

In terms of FL abilities, writing shows greater effects than a reading-based general comprehension skill. The respondents were better able to retain the phonological information from the subtitles, and consequently improve their FL writing skill. FL grammar was the least impacted upon, however the results show that such a treatment condition may potentially enhance already existing FL grammar knowledge and exert mild effects on grammar acquisition/revision. The area of FL vocabulary acquisition shows the most beneficial effects. Essentially, the outcomes indicate that the treatment condition employed in this study may have a significant facilitatory impact on the short-term vocabulary/phrase acquisition.

How to account for these mildly perplexing results? In retrospect, the effects of the unassisted video exposure to a Slovenian audio and English subtitles appear lasting enough to provide two types of benefits to non-native speakers: firstly, mild, but immediate and explicit FL acquisition (e.g., Dörnyei, 2009), and secondly, adequate enhancement of already existing FL. The fact that the respondents with the most mistakes improved the most is not surprising as this category of students does not comprise the most or the least proficient students, but the ones who were able to

notice, view and process the subtitles with the most attention and motivation. Numerous studies in the processes of learning have shown that success in any kind of human learning is due to the fact that an individual is motivated to achieve a goal. Consequently, and despite not being easily observable, the role of an individual's noticing processes, attention (e.g., Robinson, 2003), motivation, affective states and attitudes for a FL learning has been a central issue in FL research for quite some time (e.g., Schmid, 2011). Motivation influences the degree of learners' effort to learn a FL, their actions, behaviours and orientations, so more motivated students seem to look for more opportunities to learn a FL — a video with subtitles certainly being one of them (e.g., Dörnyei, 2009).

The interviewees' reflections from the in-depth interviews confirm the outcomes of certain studies that looked into the beneficial effects of a low affective filter of FL learners, worry-free learning environment and learners' immersion in a FL stimulus (Krashen, 1985; Borras and Lafayette, 1994). Moreover, two factors from the study may appear to have a reassuring, calming and tranquillity-inducing impact on the respondents (e.g., Taylor, 2005), therefore they should be utilized more as possible novel FL learning tools — a video exposure itself as a carrier vessel for a FL input and an exposure to interlingual subtitles, whether it be in English or Slovenian. In the case of our study, a combination of English subtitles and a Slovenian audio seems to induce the atmosphere the students normally experience by leisure activities (e.g., Kuppens, 2010), thus lessening the levels of FL classroom anxiety (e.g., Ellis, 2006) and raising the feelings of positive excitement, pleasure, motivation and enjoyment for learning a FL. Moreover, the video format in the study did not raise the students' extraneous cognitive overload. On the contrary, it was actually abated by the manner in which the information is presented in the video format, thus leaving enough resources available to students to process the germane, schema related load, i.e., the learning of a FL (Sweller et al., 1998).

Many respondents from the study seem to look forward to studying a FL in formal settings via interlingual subtitles, mainly for two reasons: first, video exposure has apparently stirred in them a genuine sense of progress that is considered a crucial motivational factor in classroom-based FL learning (e.g., Klapper, 2006); secondly, they seem to anticipate larger FL acquisition gains than from single modality methods or textbooks.

Our research provided the students with an excellent practical confirmation that a video with such a treatment condition may promote FL learning without them exerting any conscious effort, especially not by memorizing any explicit, conscious rules about the underlying FL system. In other words, implicit FL learning took place,

and they were aware of it. According to the interviewees' claims, video viewing induced safe levels of FL classroom anxiety in our study compared with normal apprehension in FL class and the opportunity for the students to claim responsibility for their own FL learning. The study also specifically provides empirically-based evidence for the usefulness of the video format to lessen extraneous cognitive load during FL learning, and redirect the learner's attention toward increasing germane cognitive load.

Finally, the limitations of this study are the facts that it was restricted by place, time and a target group of learners as it was carried out during a certain period of time only in Slovenia and with a selected group of FL learners. Further empirical studies will need to examine the effects of longitudinal processing of FL subtitles for non-native speakers, though not necessarily lengthen the video viewing exposure time. Finally, the study employed only the video format, therefore also other digital media, for instance online media and social network sites, such as Facebook, should be investigated with a view to exploiting their usefulness for learning/teaching a FL.

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Učinkovita uporaba medija: Video na satu stranog jezika

Slavica Čepon

SAŽETAK

S obzirom na to da u postojećoj literaturi nema istraživanja koje se bavi korisnošću video zapisa pri učenju stranog jezika, ovaj će članak pokušati popuniti taj prazni prostor. Istraživanje otkriva utjecaj gledanja video materijala bez asistencije na stjecanje leksika i poznavanje gramatike stranog jezika, opće razumijevanje temeljeno na čitanju i vještinu pisanja. Istraživanje prvo koristi kvantitativne *prije i poslije* ankete, a zatim kvalitativne opširne intervju sa studentina Ekonomskog fakulteta u Ljubljani. Ključni pronalazak jest da je video format koristan za učenje, kao i poučavanje, stranog jezika. U pogledu sposobnosti upotrebe stranog jezika, kvantitativni rezultati pokazuju da je učinak stjecanja vještine veći kod pisanja nego kod općeg razumijevanja temeljenog na čitanju. Najmanje utjecaja bilo je na stjecanje gramatičkih vještina stranog jezika, dok stjecanje vokabulara pokazuje najviše korisnog učinka. Zapažanja intervjuiranih ukazuju da su izlaganjem izvornih govornika slovenskog jezika titlovanim video materijalima stvoreni optimalni uvjeti u kojima je smanjeno suvišno kognitivno opterećenje. Studenti koji su najviše naučili bili su oni koji su adekvatno predisponirani prema poticajima učenja stranog jezika kako bi se poboljšala njihova upotreba istog. Osim toga, gledanje video materijala inducira je nižu razinu nervoze u učionici u usporedbi s normalnom razinom na satovima stranog jezika, kao i osjećaj studenata da su u mogućnosti preuzeti odgovornost za vlastito učenje. Ovi pronalasci podudaraju se s ishodom istraživanja, koje je proizvelo pozitivne učinke okoline za učenje bez nervoze, s niskim afektivnim filterom učenika stranog jezika i jednako niskim suvišnim kognitivnim opterećenjem. Također, istraživanje je potvrdilo važnost visokog stupnja uključenosti studenata u učenju stranog jezika, što omogućuje da se materijali za učenje stranog jezika kod studenata internaliziraju. Povrh toga, poboljšana upotreba stranog jezika postignuta je bez svjesnog znanja o podložnom sustavu, što se može shvatiti kao dokaz implicitnog učenja stranog jezika.

Ključne riječi: mediji, gledanje video materijala, titlovanje, kognitivno opterećenje, strani jezik