

The Role of Watching English Subtitled Programs in The Development Of Second Language Pragmatic Competence

Zhikal SALIH¹

Doç. Dr. Türkay BULUT²

The current study examined whether using English subtitled programs which consist of idioms have an impact on enhancing English pragmatic competence for the fourth-year college students as foreign language (EFL) learners. They watched 20 English programs that consisted of idioms with target language (TL) subtitles. Two tests were utilized to gather the data of the study as a pre-test, post-test and a retention test which are a sit-down exam and a Multiple-Choice Discourse Completion Tests (MDCT). In order to analyze the obtained data of the study two t-tests and one one-way ANOVA were run. The results showed that watching English subtitled videos helped the EFL learners to become more competent pragmatically, raised the awareness of the students towards the cultural differences between the main and the target culture and improving pragmatic competence through watching English program with subtitles resulted in longer retention.

Introduction

One of the main goals that has been popular in the L2 classes is raising the learners' pragmatic competence awareness. Furthermore, the progress of pragmatics competence has become one of the most important aspects for EFL learners' communication success because pragmatics is the study of language that uses by a speaker in various social interactions and its impact in the communicative event on the other participants (Kasper, 1997).

Nowadays with the improvement of technology, learning a foreign language has become easier for learners because it is handy to teachers and learners to have access to the technological equipment that can help them improve their L2. Audio-visual materials are considered as a critical aid in motivating and simplifying language learning especially if it is subtitled with the TL.

¹ *Istanbul Aydın Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü*

² *Istanbul Aydın Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü*

Literature Review

Audio-visual materials can be used as a powerful source for reliable input such as television, video and film. Baltova (1994) talks about the positive effect of audiovisual material; it motivates viewers with its rich context. Rose and Kasper (2001), claim that utilizing video is one of the best ways that teachers can utilize to help learners notice and practice pragmatics. According to Rose (1994), using video in classroom can be used as an approach for raising pragmatics awareness. Arthur (1999) states that video can increase students' awareness of L2 cultures.

There are three information channels accessible to the viewers of the audio visual materials which they deliver the same content: non-verbal visual channels (visual), the auditory channels (sound), and the verbal visual channel (subtitles). According to Baltova (1999), joining these three channels make a better atmosphere for learning than watching a non-subtitled video. According to Danan (2004), TL subtitles can take a role as a facilitator for the viewers to comprehend what they are listening to in the L2.

As to the place of pragmatics in language teaching, Kasper (1997) states that competence cannot be taught, either pragmatics or linguistics, because competence is a skill type that every L2 learners own it. Routines of pragmatics are teachable to the beginner learners of foreign languages (Tateyama et al., 1997).

Abundant studies have scrutinized the teachability of pragmatic competence, and they mostly focused on the speech acts. Some other studies investigated the explicit and implicit methods. None of these studies have used subtitled video programs or idioms for fostering pragmatics competence in second language classrooms. The present study examines whether using English subtitled programs which consist of idioms and phrases have an impact on enhancing English pragmatic competence. Hence, the following research questions were designed:

- Will the students watching the programs with English subtitles be pragmatically more competent in English?
- Will improving pragmatic competence through watching English program with subtitles result in longer retention?
- Will using videos in the language classroom raise the awareness of the students towards the cultural differences between the main and the target cultures?

Methodology

The participants of this study consisted of 20 fourth-year college students of schools of language at Sulaimaniyah University in Iraq; they comprised of 11 male and 9 female. The mean of their age was 22. The participants were selected randomly and they were participated as one Group (Experimental Group). In this experimental study, a program named “English in a Minute” by The Voice of America (VOA) was used as a stimulus material (available online from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liKTSSKrD40>); the program consists of some English idioms with subtitles, in addition to the discussions of their meaning that helps the learners to learn when and where use these idioms.

Two tests were used to collect the data of the study as a pre-test and a post-test which are a sit-down exam that designed by the researcher and a Multiple-Choice Discourse Completion Tests (MDCT) which were used twice; first as a post-test and later as a retention test. The participants took a sit-down exam one week before the treatment started. They were asked to fill in the blanks. All the idioms that they were going to watch with subtitles were included in this test. In this test, the students were asked to choose the correct one in the blanks that suits that specific sentence. The treatment took four weeks in total; in each week they watched five one- minute videos. In each week we followed three stages: pre-watching questions, while watching, and post-watching. During the pre-watching, each participant separately were asked about the particular situations that they were going to watch later whether they know what idiom the natives use in these specific situations. During the while-watching stage, the video was paused for a while and the participants were asked whether they knew more idioms that could be used in such condition. During the post-watching stage, after watching the whole video the participants were asked whether they knew any idiom in their main culture similar to the English one that they watched and can be used in that particular situations. The participants should answer yes or no and if they replied yes then they have to write an example on a piece of paper.

Two weeks after the treatment was over the participants’ pragmatic competence was assessed by Multiple-Choice Discourse Completion Tests (MDCT). The MDCT in this study consisted of 20 various situations, and for each situation three different options were given; the given options were the idioms that they watched during the treatment. Three weeks later, the same MDCT test was managed as a retention test.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data in this study was gathered through a sit-down exam and MDCTs. The marks of the participants in the pre-test, post-test, and the retention-test were compared by running one-way ANOVA and two t-tests. Regarding the qualitative data, the participants' replies during the pre-watching, while-watching, and post-watching stages were noted down on a piece of paper by the researcher and calculated by Microsoft Excel (2007).

Regarding the first hypothesis the results from the t-test showed that the t value for the tests is 26.754 and $p= 0.00$ which is less than .05 ($P < .05$). Also, the results from one-way ANOVA showed that there is a significant variance between the three tests. Hence, it can be said that watching English subtitled programs had a positive effect on improving participants' pragmatic competence. This finding is in line with (Rose and Kasper 2001; Rose, 1994; Danan, 2004).

Table 4.1. One-Way ANOVA for Comparing Pre-Test, Post-Test, and Retention Test

S.O.V	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	932.731	2	466.365	2014.632	.000
Within Groups	13.195	57	.231		
Total	945.925	59			

Tablo 4.2. Paired Samples Test for Pre-Test and First MDCT

Mean	Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
			Lower	Upper				
Test1 - Test2	-59.25000	9.90415	2.21463	-63.88528	-54.61472	-26.754	19	.000

Table 4.3. Paired Samples Test for Test 2 and Test 3

Mean	Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
			Lower	Upper				
Test2 - Test3	.00000	3.24443	.72548	-1.51844	1.51844	.000	19	1.000

Regarding the second research question the results from t-test demonstrated that the t value for the post-test and the retention test is .000, and the $p=1.000$. Thus, the t-test analysis revealed that the participants performed similarly in the post-test and the retention test, which means that improving pragmatic competence through watching English programs with subtitles resulted in longer retention.

The last research question answered through noting down the students' replies to the questions that they were asked during the three stages on a sheet of paper. In the pre-watching stage only 16.75 %of the participants replied yes, in the while-watching stage only 10% of the participants replied yes, while in the post-watching stage after watching the videos 52% of the participants replied yes. Hence, it can be said that using videos inside language classroom raised the awareness of the students towards the cultural differences between the main and the target cultures. This outcome is in line with (Arthur, 1999).

Overall Remarks

The present study used English subtitled programs as a stimulus to Vexamine the impact of watching English subtitles programs on EFL

learners' pragmatic competence improvement. The outcomes revealed that through exposure to the English subtitled programs the participants' pragmatic competence improved. Furthermore, they could understand the TL culture. By raising EFL learners' awareness of pragmatic variances in the classroom, learners are better prepared to distinguish and remember them, then use them outside of the classroom.

Keywords: Audio-visual material, subtitles, pragmatic competence

References

- Arthur, P. (1999). Why use video? A Teacher's Perspective. *Visual Support in English Language Teaching*, 2(4), 4.
- Baltova, I. (1994), Impact of Video on the Comprehension Skills of Core French Students, *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 50 (3), 507-531.
- Baltova, I. (1999). Multisensory Language Teaching in a Multidimensional Curriculum: The Use of Authentic Bimodal Video in Core French, *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 56, 32-48.
- Danan, M. (2004). Captioning and Subtitling: Undervalued language learning strategies. *Meta*, 49(1), 67-77.
- Kasper, G. (1997). *Can pragmatic competence be taught?* Retrieved from <http://www.lll.hawaii.edu/nflrc/NetWorks/NW6/default.html>.
- Rose, K. (1994). Pragmatic consciousness-raising in an EFL context. In L.F. Bouton and Kachru, Y. (Eds.), *Pragmatics and language learning* 5, 52-63. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Rose, K. & Kasper, G. (2001). *Pragmatics in Language Teaching*. New York: Cambridge.
- Tateyama, Y., Kasper, G., Mui, L., Tay, H. and Thananart, O. (1997). Explicit and Implicit Teaching of Pragmatic Routines. In L. Bouton (Ed.), *Pragmatics and language learning*, Vol.8. Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign