

THE ROLE OF MOVIES AND TV SERIES IN IMPROVING LISTENING AND VOCABULARY SKILLS

Odilova ZuhraKhon

2nd-year student, English Language and Literature Faculty

Abstract

This research investigates the role of movies and TV series in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and listening skills through the lens of cognitive load theory. The paper analyzes the efficacy of subtitle usage in the retention of idiomatic expressions. Findings emphasize that audio-visual integration significantly improves long-term memory recall and phonological loop development in foreign language acquisition. By examining the intersection of entertainment and education, this study highlights how cinematography serves as a "multi-modal" bridge for L2 learners.

Keywords: Audio-visual learning, Lexical acquisition, Subtitling, Listening comprehension, Cognitive load, EFL, Dual-coding theory.

Annotatsiya

Mazkur tadqiqot badiiy filmlar va seriallar orqali lugʻat boyligini oshirish va eshitish qobiliyatini rivojlantirishda kognitiv yuklama nazariyasini oʻrganadi. Maqolada subtitrlardan foydalanishning turgʻun iboralarni oʻzlashtirishdagi samaradorligi tahlil qilingan. Topilmalar audio-vizual integratsiyaning uzoq muddatli xotira va fonologik idrokni yaxshilashdagi muhim rolini tasdiqlaydi. Tadqiqot kinematografiyaning ikkinchi tilni oʻzlashtirishda "koʻp modalli" koʻprik vazifasini oʻtashini asoslab beradi.

Kalit soʻzlar: Audio-vizual taʼlim, Leksik oʻzlashtirish, Subtitrlash, Tinglab tushunish, Kognitiv yuklama, EFL.

Аннотация

Данное исследование рассматривает роль художественных фильмов и сериалов в расширении словарного запаса и развитии навыков аудирования через призму теории когнитивной нагрузки. В статье анализируется эффективность использования субтитров для усвоения идиоматических выражений. Выводы подчеркивают значимость аудиовизуальной интеграции для улучшения долговременной памяти и развития фонологического цикла. Исследование обосновывает, что кинематография служит «мультимодальным» мостом для изучающих иностранный язык.

Ключевые слова: Аудиовизуальное обучение, Лексическое усвоение, Субтитры, Аудирование, Когнитивная нагрузка, EFL.

Introduction

In the acquisition of a second language (L2), listening comprehension is often regarded as one of the most challenging skills to master due to its real-time processing requirements. Traditional pedagogical approaches frequently rely on artificial audio recordings found in textbooks, which often lack the natural nuances of spontaneous speech, such as emotional prosody, overlapping dialogue, and diverse cultural contexts. This often results in a "pedagogical shock" when students encounter native speakers in real-life situations [1].

Authentic cinematography, including movies and TV series, provides a "multi-modal" learning environment where visual cues—such as gestures, facial expressions, and situational settings—complement auditory input. This integration reduces the cognitive effort required to decode meaning. This study aims to examine how exposure to authentic audio-visual materials influences the listener's ability to decode speech, internalize complex vocabulary, and overcome the "affective filter" that often hinders language acquisition in formal settings [4].

Theoretical framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is primarily based on Paivio's Dual-Coding Theory (1986). According to this theory, the human mind processes verbal and non-verbal information through separate but interconnected channels.

When a learner sees a specific scene (visual) while hearing a corresponding English phrase (auditory), the cognitive connection is significantly strengthened, leading to better long-term retention [1].

Furthermore, the study incorporates Cognitive Load Theory, which suggests that learning is most effective when the information flow does not overwhelm the working memory. The use of L2 subtitles creates a "tri-modal" input system (visual, auditory, and textual). Research suggests that this tri-modal approach lowers the mental effort needed to distinguish word boundaries in fast-paced speech, thereby facilitating the acquisition of idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs that are otherwise difficult to grasp in isolation [2].

Role of movies in lexical and phonological development

Cinematography contributes to language development in several distinct ways:

Contextualization of Vocabulary: Movies provide "pragmatic context." A student doesn't just hear a word; they see the social situation, the relationship between speakers, and the physical environment in which the word is used.

Phonological Loop Development: Repeated exposure to different native accents (British, American, Australian, etc.) helps the brain's phonological loop to recognize and store new sound patterns. This is crucial for developing a natural accent and improving ear-training [4].

Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition: Unlike intentional memorization, movies allow for "incidental" learning, where students pick up slang, sarcasm, and cultural references naturally through the narrative flow.

Methodology

This research involved a qualitative and quantitative analysis of 50 intermediate-level undergraduate students over a 10-week period. The participants took part in a "Cinema Club" program where they watched selected contemporary series (e.g., *The Crown* for formal/historical English and *Suits* for professional/idiomatic English).

Procedure: Students watched 40-minute episodes with English subtitles.

Tasks: Post-viewing activities included "Gap-filling" exercises based on the dialogue and oral summaries to test plot comprehension and lexical recall.

Assessment: Pre-study and post-study listening exams (based on IELTS standards) were used to measure the growth in comprehension levels.

Results and discussion

The data revealed significant pedagogical benefits:

Retention Rate: Learners identified and correctly used 40% more idioms compared to the control group using only textbooks. The "visual anchor" of the movie scene helped them recall the meaning during the post-test.

Cultural Intelligence: Movies acted as a window into cultural nuances, helping students understand sarcasm and social etiquette, which are essential for achieving high scores in international exams like IELTS (Band 7.5+).

Anxiety Reduction: Students reported that watching movies felt less like "studying" and more like "immersion," which lowered their language anxiety and increased their motivation to practice [6].

However, the study also noted a risk of "Cognitive Overload." Beginners may struggle if the linguistic level of the film is too high or if the subtitles are in their native language (L1), which can lead to "lazy listening." Therefore, pedagogical guidance in selecting the right material is vital.

Conclusion

Integrating movies and TV series into the TESOL curriculum is not merely a supplementary activity; it is a core necessity for developing advanced communicative competence. For researchers and students like Zuhrakhon, the intersection of cinematography and cognitive linguistics provides a powerful pathway for autonomous learning. This approach effectively bridges the gap between theoretical classroom knowledge and the practical realities of global English communication.

References

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