The Comparison between the Use of Audio-Visual Methods and Audio-only Methods in Improving Learners' Listening Proficiency in Chinese as a Second Language Classrooms

วิธีแบบสื่อวีดีทัศน์เปรียบเทียบกับสื่อโสตทัศน์เพียงอย่างเดียว เพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการฟังภาษาจีนของผู้เรียนในฐานะภาษาที่สอง

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***Chunyu Wang*[1]**

Abstract

Video has been widely used in teaching listening skills to second language learners. However, research on its use for the teaching of listening skills in Chinese as a second or foreign language (CSL/CFL) context is limited. This research aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of using audio-visual materials and audio-only materials in improving students' listening skills in CSL classrooms. The participants were divided into two groups, the control group (CG) (audio-only) and the experimental group (EG) (audio-visual), each containing 30 participants from different academic years. They were enrolled in the same Chinese listening class (HSK Level 4 to 5) at a university in Thailand. The data was generated using four question

[1] Lecturer, Pridi Banomyong International College, Thammasat University, Thailand
อาจารย์, วิทยาลัยนานาชาติปรีดีพนมยงค์ มหาวิทยาลัยธรรมศาสตร์ ประเทศไทย

Corresponding Author: chunyuthai@gmail.com

types, namely: 1) overall comprehension (OC), 2) true or false (T&F), 3) multiple choice (MC), and 4) vocabulary (VOC). The average scores from the term were subjected to Independent Samples T-tests. The results revealed a statistically significant increase in the average score of the EG group (OC/T&F/MC). In contrast, the CG group showed a significant difference from the EG group in terms of audio-only for the vocabulary questions (VOC). The study suggests that using audio-visual materials can be an effective method to teach listening skills in CSL/CFL, yet the results were inconclusive for the acquisition of vocabulary.

Keywords: teaching, listening comprehension, audio/visual, audio-only, Chinese as second language/ foreign language

บทคัดย่อ

การใช้สื่อวิดิทัศน์สำหรับการสอนทักษะการฟังถูกนำไปประยุกต์ใช้อย่างแพร่หลายในการเรียนภาษาต่างประเทศในฐานะภาษาที่สอง แต่กลับมีงานวิจัยด้านการใช้สื่อดังกล่าวสำหรับการสอนภาษาจีนในฐานะภาษาที่สองหรือภาษาต่างประเทศเพียงเล็กน้อย รวมไปถึงการใช้วัดผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการศึกษา วัตถุประสงค์งานวิจัยจัดทำเพื่อประเมินประสิทธิภาพการใช้สื่อวิดิทัศน์เปรียบเทียบกับการใช้สื่อโสตทัศน์เพียงอย่างเดียวเพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการฟังภาษาต่างประเทศของนักศึกษาสองกลุ่ม ได้แก่ กลุ่มควบคุม (สื่อโสตทัศน์เพียงอย่างเดียว) และกลุ่มทดลอง (สื่อโสตทัศน์และวิดิทัศน์) โดยแต่ละกลุ่มประกอบด้วยผู้เข้าร่วม 30 คน จากรอบปีการศึกษาที่ต่างกัน คัดเลือกจากการลงทะเบียนเรียนวิชาทักษะการฟังภาษาจีน (ระดับความรู้ HSK 4 ถึง 5) ณ มหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศไทย โดยที่ข้อมูลประกอบขึ้นจากคำถามทั้งหมดสี่ประเภท ได้แก่ แบบทดสอบวัดความเข้าใจโดยรวม แบบทดสอบชนิดคำตอบ

ถูก-ผิด แบบทดสอบชนิดปรนัยและแบบทดสอบประเภทคำศัพท์ คะแนนเฉลี่ยของแต่ละส่วนมาจากวิธีการทดสอบความแตกต่างค่าเฉลี่ย ผลการศึกษาพบความต่างที่มีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติต่อกลุ่มทดลอง ที่มีต่อแบบทดสอบประเภทวัดความเข้าใจโดยรวม แบบทดสอบชนิดคำตอบถูก-ผิด และแบบทดสอบชนิดปรนัย ในทางกลับกันไม่พบความต่างที่มีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติของกลุ่มควบคุมเช่นเดียวกับกลุ่มทดลอง ในส่วนของแบบทดสอบประเภทคำศัพท์ ผลการวิจัยสามารถแนะนำได้ว่าการใช้สื่อวีดิทัศน์เป็นวิธีที่มีประสิทธิภาพต่อการสอนภาษาจีนในฐานะภาษาที่สองหรือภาษาต่างประเทศ แต่ไม่สามารถสรุปได้ว่ามีประสิทธิภาพต่อกระบวนการเรียนรู้เรื่องของคำศัพท์

คำสำคัญ: การสอน การฟังเพื่อความเข้าใจ สื่อวีดิทัศน์ สื่อโสตทัศน์ ภาษาจีนในฐานะภาษาที่สอง/ภาษาต่างประเทศ

Introduction

Many researchers have focused on developing second language learners' listening skills . According to Lynch and Mendelsohn (2013), "listening is not merely an auditory version of reading, just as speech is not simply a spoken version of writing" (p180). It plays a vital role in the language acquisition process. Using a purely auditory method for teaching listening skills lacks visual cues and requires assumptions and rational analysis in order to understand the material.

Limited studies investigated listening skills in second language learning (Rukthong & Brunfaut, 2020) and even fewer researched the use of audio-visual materials for second language learners in Chinese as a Second Language or Chinese as a Foreign Language (CSL/CFL) classrooms. According to CNKI 中国知网, the most comprehensive research database in China,

out of 4,784 CSL/CFL research papers in the last decade, only 43 articles were dedicated to teaching listening, and seven were specifically about the use of audio-visual materials. In this research, the application of video materials were varied, ranging from primary teaching material to supplemental teaching materials and even purely for entertainment purposes.

The seven studies mentioned above, made use of clips from movies or TV dramas as supplementary teaching aids to increase learners' learning motivation and interest. They evaluated the impact on learners' overall mood and concentration rather than on their language acquisition. In the previous studies conducted by Wang (2019), Gou (2016), Lu (2014), and Ma (2016), there was no data collection or analysis done on language acquisition or improvement in various listening skills, nor were the participants divided into a control group and experimental group. However, a study by Xiao (2017) did research listening through the use of video with a focus on the subjects' content preference based on questionnaires. Even though the study's focus was not on memory, he did emphasize the importance of video to enhance memory performance. Zhang (2012) did similar studies utilizing questionnaires to measure the level of interest in audio-visual lessons, but like the previous five studies, they also lacked a comparative control group. Another study by Zhang (2013) did have a comparative control group. Further, it also used questionnaires to determine the level of listening satisfaction. Since all these studies focused on motivation rather than language acquisition, it is important to study the use of audio-visual materials to improve specific listening skills in a CSL/CFL setting.

A number of studies concerned the use of audio-visual materials in other foreign language classes, many of which

supported the use of audio-visual materials. Iftanti and Prastiyo (2021), for example, revealed that students who were exclusively exposed to audio-only materials in the classroom often experienced anxiety. Batty's (2021) findings also supported the use of visual cues in language tests. In addition, Kehanian (2013) discovered that visual learning could produce greater recall and permanence than auditory. In contrast to purely audio, audio-visual does not require learners to listen to certain sentences repeatedly, which can lead to psychological barriers (Lee et al.,2015). Li (2016) pointed out that visual elements can activate the audience's background knowledge. Memarzadeh and Shariati (2015) studied the use of video in the classroom and performed a listening comprehension assessment for second language teaching. The findings showed a significant improvement in the scores of the students as a result of their exposure to video materials from real-world sources. In a more recent study, it was shown by Hardiah (2019) that audio-visual materials allowed students to have focused concentration over a short period of time. The visual component supports effective listening and promotes learners' interest and comprehension. Additionally, it provides a visual illustration of the language even if they lack all of the necessary vocabulary.

Most research has agreed that visual component in teaching a second language is a valid factor for improving listening comprehension and provides students with more opportunities to recall specific details. However, not all research is in agreement with this. Bond (2012), for example, raised concerns about the role of audio-visual in teaching French as a second language and found that although learners preferred to use audio-visual materials, they were not effective in promoting language acquisition.

Listening difficulties include new vocabulary, common sayings and idioms, as well as more complex grammar. These are easier to understand through natural communication in realistic scenes that provide visual cues. In a language class, visual aspect is vital to provide a context in an attractive fashion. Audio-visual materials can help learners recall the impression of the language points more accurately, and they can recount the stories they have heard after listening.

Due to the nature of Chinese, listening is a significant challenge for Thai Chinese learners, most of whom do not have a background in Chinese. There are four major obstacles faced by Thais when learning the language. The first is that they are accustomed to learning by translating into Thai. Using popular translation tools often results in multiple and, most of the time, conflicting translations (Ewe & Min, 2021). The second is that they are accustomed to learning a language using strictly audio-only or written methods and are often unaccustomed to using listening skills without the aid of some form of text to guide them (Chayanuvat, 2021). The third is the tone differences between Thai and Chinese. Thai carries five tones, its intonation patterns, however, are different from those of Chinese (Xinyu, 2017). The rhetorical tone in Chinese, for example, sometimes represents a positive form, which may confuse learners and affect their listening comprehension (Tran & Duong, 2020). Finally, the naturally fast speed of Chinese speech makes it even more difficult for learners to comprehend what they are listening to without the added cues provided by audio-visual materials (Zheng & Samuel, 2019). In summary, the addition of visual cues from the audio-visual materials would improve learners' listening skills and comprehension.

Loon (2019) researched the use of clips from movies or other audio-visual media sources from textbooks in the

CSL/CFL listening course with Thai learners as the subjects. The accumulation of high-frequency vocabulary in a fun and enjoyable environment was observed. However, the research did not explicitly verify the achievement of learning goals through listening tests. Neither, did he specifically provide guidance to students during the learning process.

Objectives

The lack of studies investigating the use of audio-visual materials to develop listening skills in CSL/CFL settings became the writer's primary motivation for doing this research. Thus, this present research objective was to actually see if such materials could enhance learners' listening comprehension than audio-only.

Research Question

To achieve the goal outlined above, this study sought to address the following question: Is there a significant difference in learners' listening comprehension between those who were taught listening using audio-visual materials and those who were taught listening using audio-only materials in a CSL/CFL classroom?

Research Methodology

1. Participants

The subjects were Thai Chinese majored students aged 19 to 21 from a college in Thailand. Their first language was Thai, and all of them passed the university's entrance requirement of HSK (*Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi*) Level 4 to 5. The

students were enrolled in a compulsory Intermediate Chinese Listening course for Intermediate to Advanced learners. 30 students of the 2018 academic year in the control group (CG) were taught using audio-only materials while 30 students of the 2019 academic year in the experimental group (EG) were taught using audio-visual materials, making up a total of 60 participants involved in this study.

2. Study Design

In this study, Independent Samples T-tests were utilized to determine whether or not audio-visual materials were more effective in improving listening comprehension than audio-only materials. The study followed the university's syllabus requirements of a 15-week semester with two 2-hour classes per week.

3. Selection of Teaching Materials

I chose an audio-visual textbook, Happy Chinese 1: An Audiovisual Oral Chinese Course for Intermediate and Advanced Students (1 MP3 CD / 1 audio-visual DVD) (Wang, 2010) Peking University Press. The length of each TV episode and audio track was 9 minutes. Some of the criteria which motivated us to select this textbook included normal speaking speed, various types of practice questions, and an adequate plot of comprehension section. In addition, the content of the materials did not require any specialized knowledge from any specific academic field.

4. Teaching Environment

Students were not equipped with headphones for this study. It was done because there is a difference between how sound travels through the air as compared to direct input via headphones. The purpose of this was to improve listening skills and overcome

hearing obstacles and therefore simulate a natural listening environment. The use of headphones would thus have provided the students with an advantage normally not available in the real world.

5. Procedure

The textbook included four types of questions for the listening test. Examples are shown in Table 1. These questions, which were verified using the Item-Objective Congruence Index (IOC) and the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (α), were suitable for evaluating the teaching objectives of the course as well as for obtaining data for the purposes of this study. The listening test had two primary functions, including "skill assessment" and "authenticity assessment" (Ghorbanpour et al., 2021).

Table 1
Testing Question Types

NO	Abbrev.	Question Types
1	OC	Listen and answer, then use the answers to the questions to form a coherent passage of speech.
2	T&F	Determine whether the content of these sentences are true or false.
3	MC	Choose the correct answer.
4	VOC	Fill in the blanks with words or phrases.

The above four types of questions, hereinafter referred to as overall comprehension (OC), true or false (T&F), multiple choice (MC) and vocabulary (VOC), were used as the four points of evaluation. They were utilized to generate four sets of data comparisons between EG and CG. To ensure the validity and reliability of the questions used in the study, they were subjected to two validation tests. First, IOC was used to verify the validity and

appropriateness of the questions from the textbook using questionnaires from three experts in the field of teaching CSL/CFL. The results show that our questions were valid with a rating of IOC = 0.83 (greater than 0.5). The reliability of the questions was further confirmed using SPSS (V. 22) and the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (α) was 0.88, which is considered to be highly reliable.

The length of listening tests is an important factor to be considered in a listening comprehension class. Previously in a second language study, Hidri (2014) determined the optimal length of time to analyze language comprehension in a listening test was not to exceed a total of one hour. The duration of the listening test in this study which was 50 minutes long comprised a 9-minute media. It was played three times without subtitles. The students were given one minute to read the questions as shown in Table 2. The T&F and MC questions were combined together under a single listening since they did not require the students to write any Chinese characters. The OC and VOC questions were allotted additional time to allow an appropriate length required for the writing.

Table 2

Process Structure for the Listening Tests

Question Type	Pre-Read Questions	Listening Time	Time to Answer	Total Time
OC	01:00	09:00	15:00	25:00
T&F and MC	01:00	09:00	02:00	12:00
VO	01:00	09:00	03:00	13:00

Note: 50 Minutes in Total

The data was collected from the four question types in each lesson for both EG and CG. In our scoring measure, students were allowed to replace up to 3 Chinese characters with

Pinyin. The purpose of this was to minimize irrelevant factors such as writing skills from the evaluation as much as possible.

Considering the difficulties to standardize the scores for the subjective questions, a wider range of possible scores was required, up to a maximum score of 20. This approach ensured some measure of standardization, consistency, and justifiability (Bagheri & Karami, 2014). Table 3 below shows the score allocation for each type of question. We calculated the average score for each participant in EG and CG respectively from each of the four question types.

Table 3

Mark Allocation

Question Category	OC	T & F	MC	VOC
Subjective Tests	20			
Objective Tests		8	8	10

Note: Objective tests were scored 1 for each required answer, not based on the number of questions.

6. Data Analysis

The score of each participant was recorded and analyzed with SPSS (V. 22) using Independent Samples T-tests. I analyzed the required quantitative data and compared the scores of EG and CG. The data was divided into four groups based on the type of questions for descriptive statistical analysis of the listening comprehension question types. Independent teaching methods were applied to the two groups of 30 participants and the test results were collected throughout the academic terms.

Findings

An Independent Samples T-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of OC, T&F, MC, and VOC on the students' test scores of both groups, EG and CG. The results are shown in Table 4 to Table 7 below.

1. Positive Results from Audio-Visual

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for OC, T&F, and MC

Group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
OC	CG	30	16.06	2.476	.452
	EG	30	18.73	1.080	.197
T&F	CG	30	5.933	.9444	.172
	EG	30	7.133	.8995	.164
MC	CG	30	4.633	1.159	.211
	EG	30	5.766	1.040	.189

Table 4 shows the result of descriptive statistics analysis for audio-only (CG) and audio-visual (EG). The findings indicated that audio-visual had positive effects on the participants' listening with regards to the OC, T&F, and, MC questions.

Table 5

Results of Independent Samples T-Test (OC, T&F, and MC)

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
OC Audio-only	26.529	.000	-5.405	58	.000
Audio-visual			-5.405	39.65	.000
T&FAudio-only	.001	.977	-5.039	58	.000
Audio-visual			-5.039	57.86	.000
MC Audio-only	.343	.560	-3.986	58	.000
Audio-visual			-3.986	57.33	.000

As shown in Table 5, there was a significant difference in the scores of audio-visual (OC, t(58) =-5.40, p = 0.00, d = 1.49; T&F, t(58) = -5.039, p = 0.00. d = 1.31; MC, t (58) = -3.986, p = 0.00. d=1.03). These results suggest that audio-visual was more effective for OC, T&F, and MC than audio-only. Our results revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups $p < 0.05$.

2 Positive Results from Audio-Only

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for VOC

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
CG	30	7.866	1.279	.233
EG	30	6.066	1.460	.266

Table 6 shows the result of descriptive statistics analysis for audio-only (CG) and audio-visual (EG). The findings

indicated that audio-only had positive effects on the participants' listening with regard to the VOC questions.

Table 7
Results of Independent Samples T-Test (VOC)

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			**t-test for Equality of Means**		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Audio-only	.036	.851	5.078	58	.000
Audio-visual			5.078	57.01	.000

As can be seen in Table 7, there were significant differences in listening performance between audio-visual and audio-only for both groups; t(58)=5.078, p = 0.00. In contrast to the previous three question types, the results for the Vocabulary Listening skills showed that using audio-only materials could significantly improve comprehension compared to audio-visual materials. The improvement shown in this result indicates a statistically significant difference between the two groups $p < 0.05$, d = 1.32.

In addition to the improvements in listening skills, it was further found through the semester evaluation form that the students reported higher satisfaction with the use of the audio-visual materials. Each criterion was rated by the students between 0 (Not able to judge) and 5 (Excellent). The Independent Samples t-Test shows that there was a positive impact of audio-visual materials on the students' attitudes. There was a significant difference in the evaluation between audio-visual (M=4.76, SD=0.08) compared to audio-only; (M = 3.72, SD = 0.56); t (18) = -5.808, p = 0.00. The improvement in the

students' attitudes was significant for the use of audio-visual material according to the results, $p < 0.05$, $d = 2.58$.

Discussion

In this study, the data was collected in order to examine the effects of audio-visual and audio-only materials on learners' listening comprehension in a CSL/CFL classroom. Specifically, after audio-visual materials were employed, the subject's accuracy improved for comprehension. There were significant differences as shown in Table 5 between EG and CG ($p < 0.05$). Both approaches enhanced listening skills in CSL/CFL, however, the most striking observation from the data comparison was that audio-only showed a more significant result in vocabularies acquisition (Table 7).

The importance of audio-visual in foreign language education has been noticed by other researchers. In the teaching of listening skills, the utilization of audio-visual materials, provides more relevant and contextualized scene information with the content (Kim, 2015). Simply viewing behavior or body movement can promote better listening comprehension (Suvorov, 2015). The context provided by audio-visual materials allows the student to overcome the vocabulary barrier by reducing the discontinuity state in the listening process and thus improves overall comprehension. Namaziandost & Nasri (2019) also found that kinesics cues are important for transmitting information in second language listening. In particular, audio-visual materials can improve comprehension of some more abstract concepts, thus enhance the students' ability to predict the meaning and reduce the degree of difficulty (Chen & Chen, 2021). After all, the present research implies that

using audio-visual materials is effective in improving overall listening comprehension in CSL/CFL.

The results from the overall comprehension questions showed a significant improvement in the scores of those who were taught through the use of audio-visual materials. On average, the improvement of the mean scores was 2.7 points higher than that of the audio-only. Audio-visual greatly improved students' listening skills in CSL/CFL. This is consistent with the findings of a past study by Polat & Eristi (2019) in English as a second language.

The resulting scores for the true or false and multiple choice questions are shown in Table 5. The mean scores were 1.2 and 1.13 points respectively, higher than audio-visual, although the average scores were modestly improved (d = 1.31 & d =1.03). The total mean score of the two groups shows a modest improvement for the EG group with regards to the T&F questions (CG 5.9 out of 8 / EG 7.13 out of 8) as well as the multiple choice questions (CG 4.6 out of 8 / EG 5.7 out of 8).

The findings for the T&F and multiple choice questions provide evidence that the positive results were related to the students' understanding of the whole story. The second listening for both the audio-only and the audio-visual would help students gain a greater comprehension than from the first listening. It could be the reason why there is a smaller improvement between the audio-only and the audio-visual. In addition, these question types provided a limited number of choices and thus the students could use the process of elimination or guessing to increase their chances of finding the correct answer. In a study by Chang & Read (2013), they found that the accuracy of guessing the answer is improved for these question types. This may further explain the modest improvement using audio-visual. Despite

these factors, there was still an improvement in scores for the EG group, thus supporting the positive effects of audio-visual materials on improving listening skills. Chan et al., (2014) also noted improved comprehension using audio-visual for T&F and multiple choice questions. The above findings are consistent with a study by Hemmati & Ghaderi (2014) where they examined the same question types for English as a second language and found that audio-visual had a positive impact on students' listening skills.

The vocabulary questions (VOC) generated a contrary result compared to the other question types. They contributed a mean score of 7.86 to the CG group which was 6.06 points higher than that to the EG group which was only 1.8. Yildiz (2017) had a different perspective on the use of video to improve the learning of vocabulary. The significant difference found by Yildiz (2017) was likely caused by the fact that he presented the video with subtitles. Meanwhile, in this research, subtitles were not provided.

The vocabulary questions (VOC) require students to focus on the question text and use the blank and surrounding words to provide a frame of reference for participants to identify the missing content. When audio-visual is used for these questions, students may have split focus between listening, watching the video, and following the question text. This split attention for audio-visual may have been a contributing factor in the lower scores for the EG group. This negative impact may not be reflected in the semester evaluation form simply because the students found audio-visual more enjoyable and were unaware of such impact. As mentioned earlier, Thai students are used to learning language through an audio-only or written method. It is possible that the lower scores obtained by the EG group were the result of the students' varying levels to adapt to learning vocabulary using an audio-visual method. There is no sufficient evidence to conclude that using audio-visual for the vocabulary

(VOC) questions resulted in split attention and thus lowered scores. However, it is a reasonable assumption. Two other research papers (Elekaei et al, 2015; Basal et al, 2015) support this assumption and indicated that video distracts students when doing a listening test, which is also consistent with the finding of this study.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the impact of audio-visual materials and audio-only materials on listening effectiveness. Overall, it was found that audio-visual materials reduced the difficulty of comprehending the listening materials in CSL/CFL. Although there was evidence in this study that audio-visual materials can enhance listening comprehension, the finding revealed that audio-only listening had positive effects, especially for vocabulary questions (VOC). The improvement of listening skills for new vocabulary using audio-visual and audio-only is still inconclusive.

This study puts forward new aims that are worthy of further study in a listening CSL/CFL course in the future. Firstly, vocabulary is a key component of effective listening skills. Thus, it is necessary to conduct more research on acquiring strong vocabulary and listening skills. Additionally, since written Chinese is very different from other languages, the impact of using subtitles in listening materials on vocabulary acquisition is worth further study. Secondly, future research should concentrate on the investigation of integrating audio-visual materials into other types of courses, not just listening.

In teaching, audio-visual materials stimulate learners' interest and improve concentration. The positive impact on the attitudes of the students in the video class, although not the focus of

this study, is an interesting result that is also an important aspect for further study. Based on the results of this study, it is reasonably safe to say that overall, audio-visual materials are a more effective teaching strategy to use in a CSL/CFL listening class. The use of such materials can result in improved comprehension and increased learners' satisfaction.

Limitations and Recommendations

The study's focus and research methods are valid within the bounds of the teaching syllabus provided by the university. Even though there is evidence in this study that audio-visual materials can enhance listening comprehension, there are still many factors that were not within the scope of this study. The impact of some aspects that were not specifically considered in this study were different contexts and content, speaking speed, varied length of the media, the use of subtitles, etc. Secondly, the limitations of the provided text materials also limited the format for exam materials to simple vocabulary and syntactic structure. This limitation may result in the listening tasks not reflecting the participants' true listening skills.

The findings in this study provide a number of teaching areas that are worthy of future study. Firstly, for the VOC questions, it would be beneficial to further study the suggested split focus effect of audio-visual noted in this paper. Secondly, further research might explore the effect of different audio-visual content genres on listening comprehension. Finally, research concerning the impact of using subtitles on vocabulary acquisition could be very insightful.

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