

อิทธิพลของบทบรรยายในสื่อโสตทัศน์ต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ

Impact of Subtitles in Audiovisual Media on English Learning

ปิยภัทร ชัยชุมพู¹
Piyapat Chaichompoo¹

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาอิทธิพลของบทบรรยายที่ปรากฏในสื่อโสตทัศน์ ต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ สื่อโสตทัศน์ เช่น ภาพนิทรรศและรายการโทรทัศน์มีบทบาทสำคัญ ต่อผู้ชมในแง่ของการให้ข้อมูลข่าวสารและความบันเทิง ในปัจจุบัน สื่อโสตทัศน์เป็นหนึ่งในเครื่องมือ ในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษที่มีประสิทธิภาพ เนื่องจากผู้เรียนสามารถเข้าถึงสื่อประเภทนี้ได้ง่าย อีกทั้งยังสามารถถูงใจและกระตุ้นความสนใจผู้เรียนได้อีกด้วย นอกจากนี้ สื่อประเภทนี้ยังมีองค์ ประกอบที่สำคัญ คือ บทบรรยาย ที่ผู้ชมสามารถเลือกเปิด ปิด หรือเลือกภาษาที่ต้องการขณะ รับชมภาพนิทรรศและรายการได้ จากการบททวนวรรณกรรมที่เกี่ยวข้องทั้งในและต่างประเทศ พบว่า บทบรรยายในสื่อโสตทัศน์มีประโยชน์ต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษโดยช่วยให้ผู้เรียนจำ คำศัพท์ ลักษณะการใช้ภาษา รวมถึงสามารถพัฒนาทักษะการฟังและการอ่านของผู้ชมได้ ซึ่งสามารถอธิบายได้โดยทฤษฎีรัหสูตร กล่าวคือ การรับข้อมูล (ภาษาอังกฤษ) ทั้งภาพและ เสียงประกอบกันจะทำให้ผู้เรียนจำจำและเข้าใจข้อมูลนั้น ๆ ได้ ดีกว่าการรับข้อมูลซึ่งทางเดียว (ภาพหรือเสียง) ดังนั้น เมื่อผู้เรียนชุมภาพนิทรรศหรือรายการโทรทัศน์ภาษาอังกฤษพร้อมอ่าน บทบรรยายไปด้วย ผู้เรียนจะสามารถจดจำคำศัพท์และรูปแบบประโยคได้ดีขึ้นเนื่องจากผู้เรียน ได้ยินเสียงภาษาอังกฤษและเห็นบทบรรยายในเวลาเดียวกัน

คำสำคัญ: บทบรรยาย, สื่อโสตทัศน์, การเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ, ทฤษฎีรัหสูตร

¹ อาจารย์ประจำกลุ่มวิชาภาษาตะวันตก คณะศิลปศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยแม่โจ้ จังหวัดเชียงใหม่ (A lecturer of Western section, English department, the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Maejo University, Chiang Mai)
Email: nobsky14@gmail.com

Abstract

The objective of this article is to examine the impact of subtitles in audiovisual media on English learning. Audiovisual media like films and TV programs play an important role in our daily lives in terms of providing entertainment and information. Moreover, they become an effective tool for English learning since they are motivational, attentional and easy to access. One of the most significant elements of audiovisual media regarding English learning is subtitles. According to a number of previous studies, subtitles presented in English soundtrack films and TV programs are beneficial for learning English. They help learners recall vocabulary they hear in the media. Furthermore, they can enhance learners' listening and reading skills. This can be explained by Dual coding theory; learners can recall information better when it is delivered to multisensory channels which are visual and non-visual channels. Thus, when learners watch English soundtrack movies and TV programs with subtitles, they will remember English words, phrases, expressions, and sentences better as they see the subtitles (non-verbal) and hear the language (verbal) simultaneously.

Keywords: Subtitle, Audiovisual media, English learning, Dual coding theory

Introduction

In Thai education system, English is considered as a foreign language (EFL). English has become the compulsory subject from kindergarten to the university level. In the past, a teacher was a key person to teach the language face-to-face. Textbooks were mainly used as an instructional tool. Nonetheless, in the 21st century, learning language is something different. Besides studying in the classroom, learners can easily learn the language every time and everywhere. One of the most powerful tools which helps facilitate learners is audio visual media. It is undeniable that audiovisual media have become a part of our daily life. We can get some information, gain some knowledge, explore new experiences, be entertained, and also learn some new languages from them. Recently, audiovisual media like films and television have become an effective tool to enhance

students' language learning ability since they have a motivational, attentional, and affective impact on viewers (Baltova 1994). The media can arouse students' interests and can be used as language learning materials (Ebrahimi and Bazaee 2016: 286) Moreover, the media present real-life communicative situations which is advantageous for students (Talaván 2007: 5). Chang (2009) also supported that the media which provide both visual and verbal information can enliven students' learning attitudes since they feel that the lessons seem easier and more interesting, especially for those who don't have solid skills. Not only being used as an instructional tool in the classroom by teachers, but students can also access to these kinds of media by themselves outside the classroom. There are various elements in audiovisual media which can enhance viewers' language skills. One element which has been studied for a long period of time by many researchers in terms of language learning helper is subtitle which is usually provided in audiovisual media. From my experience in teaching English in the university for several years, English videos or some parts of films and TV programs with subtitles are being used in the class believing that it can help students get used to the language and comprehend the content. Nonetheless, after doing this for a long time in the classroom and spending some time reviewing a number of studies on this topic, it is found that subtitle is much more beneficial for language learners. This paper, thus, will focus on positive effects of subtitles on English learning, especially among EFL students.

Audiovisual media element: subtitle

According to Diaz and Anderman (2009: 10), subtitles are translated texts usually presented below the image of the movie or television screen. In addition, Luyken et al. (1991: 31) define subtitles as:

... condensed written translations of original dialogue which appear as lines of text, usually positioned towards the foot of the screen. Subtitles appear and disappear to coincide in time with the corresponding portion of the original dialogue and are almost always added to the screen image at a later date as a post-production activity.

Initially, subtitle was created for the hearing impaired, especially when the written text is in the same language as the audio. However, it has recently become a helpful tool for non-native speakers who are motivated to improve their language learning. Hofmeister, Menlove, and Thorkildsen (1992) discovered that 40 percent of people such as foreign students pay more attention to using subtitle for their learning than the hearing impaired. The study of Yabe (2015) agreed with Hofmeister, Menlove, and Thorkildsen's. It was found that international students were willing to pay for an online class providing subtitles as they realized that subtitles helped their foreign language learning. In addition, they are more relaxed when subtitles are available (Winke et al. 2010).

Traditionally, subtitles can be mainly divided into two types based on linguistic parameter (Díaz-Cintas 2006: 199).

1. Interlingual subtitling

It is the use of subtitles when dialogues and subtitles are in different language (Gottlieb 1997). There are two types of interlingual subtitling:

1.1 Standard subtitles

Standard subtitles are mother tongue subtitles appeared in foreign language movies. Subtitles are translated but they do not replace the original source text. In other words, they are synchronically presented in the subtitled version (Talaván 2007: 6). This type of subtitle is the most common for viewers when watching soundtrack films or TV programs. For example, an English soundtrack movie provides Thai subtitles for Thai watchers.

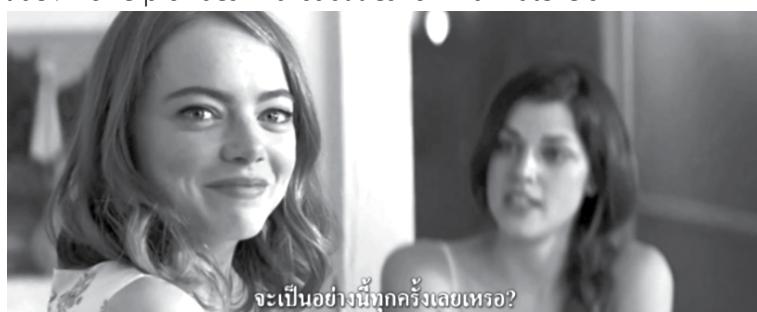


Figure 1. An example of standard subtitle presented in La La Land movie for Thai watchers

1.2 Reversed subtitles

Reversed subtitles refer to the use of foreign language subtitles in native language speaking programs. For example, Thai watchers watch Thai TV series with English subtitles.

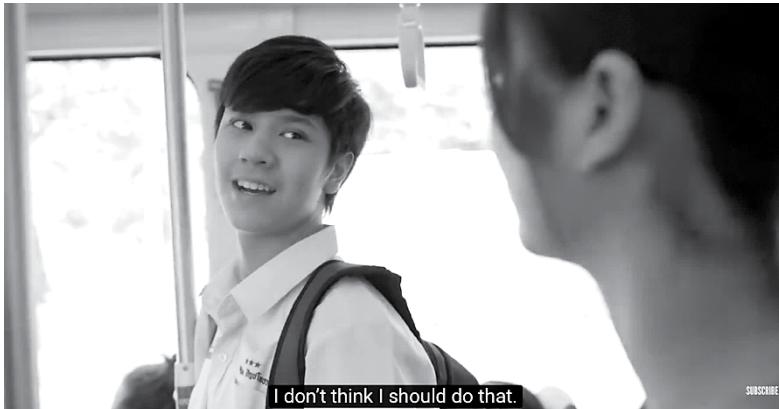


Figure 2. An example of reversed subtitles presented in Thai TV series
“รุ่นพี่ Secret Love”

2. Intralingual subtitling

Intralingual subtitling refers to the use of subtitles when both dialogues and subtitles are in the same language (Gottlieb 1997). This type of subtitles is sometimes known as bimodal subtitles. To illustrate, for Thai watchers, English soundtrack movie with bimodal subtitles is a soundtrack movie with English subtitles.



Figure 3. An example of bimodal subtitles added in Harry Potter movie watched by Thai watchers

Regarding the use of subtitles for English learning, each type of subtitles suits different groups of learners. It depends on their language proficiency. For instance, Vanderplank (1988) determined that intralingual subtitling increases viewers' comprehension as they can more access to humor, accents, and dialects. In addition, it can draw EFL learners' attention to unfamiliar phrases and words. Markham (1999: 327) suggests that this type of subtitle can help viewers develop their listening skills. However, it is recommended for advanced level learners who have solid reading abilities. In contrary, interlingual subtitling seems to be beneficial for beginners (Birulés and Soto 2016). This will be discussed further in the next part of this article.

However, it was found that both low and high proficiency language learners have positive attitudes towards subtitles (Taylor 2005). This article, thus, will discuss the positive impacts of subtitles (in overall) on learning English.

Dual Coding Theory

Certainly, it is difficult for non-native speakers to understand English soundtrack films or TV programs since they are not familiar with the language in terms of language structure, grammar, phonetics, and vocabulary (Chang and Read, 2006; Goh, 1999). However, Harji et al. (2010: 41) found that mass media such as video, film, or TV can help learners receive new language through multisensory channels, especially when audiovisual element like subtitles are added. This can be explained by Allen Paivio's Dual Coding Theory.

Dual Coding Theory (DCT) explains human behavior and experience in terms of dynamic associative processes that operate on a rich network of modality specific verbal and nonverbal (or imagery) representations. The theory suggests that "a combination of imagery and verbal information improves information processing".

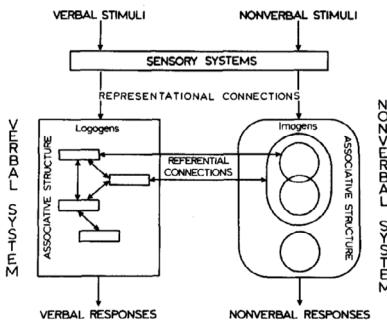


Figure 4. Verbal and nonverbal symbolic systems of Dual Coding Theory from Mental Representations: A Dual Coding Approach by Paivio (1986)

According to Figure 4, there is a connection between two sensory systems: verbal system and non-verbal system. Verbal systems known as “logogen” involves with information about the use of the word. Non-verbal system known as “Imagen” contains information that generates mental images. While human process information, these two systems overlap and also emphasize each other. Dual Coding Theory research focused initially on memory. It was found that a connection between verbal and non-verbal systems encourage recognition. Paivio claimed that Imagen or picture memory is superior. Whenever a picture is seen, that picture is represented in a word. Later, the theory has been applied to cognitive learning like language learning. A number of studies showed that students learn the language better when information is presented more than one channel: verbal and non-verbal. For example, Huang & Eskey (2000) found that when viewers read while listening to the media, they can learn the language. Guichon and McLornan (2008) also affirmed that auditory and visual input enhances viewers’ information comprehension through television. Regarding learning English from subtitled films and TV programs, when the media present information through both channels, Learners can see words (subtitles) and hear the language simultaneously. Furthermore, information from each channel will not interfere but encourage each other. The findings of Danan’s study in 2004

also confirmed that subtitles do not distract viewers from watching pictures onscreen since subtitle reading is likely to be an automatic behavior. (d'Ydewalle & Gielen, 1992: 416-7; d'Ydewalle & Pavakanum, 1992: 193-4). As a result, they recall and learn the language better.

Listening and reading comprehension

Since audiovisual media which are motivational and affective contain a lot of authentic oral languages. It can facilitate viewers' auditory processing (Ebrahimi and Bazaee, 2016: 287). When subtitles are added into these kinds of media, the media become more powerful in improving viewers' listening comprehension. A number of researchers found that subtitles provided in audiovisual media have a positive impact on listening comprehension. For instance, Kikuchi's study in 1997 showed that subtitled movies are more effective than non-subtitled videos in terms of improving overall listening comprehension. In addition, Markham (1999: 326) found that ESL students in the university gained benefits from watching second-language subtitled video in terms of listening comprehension. Subtitled films motivate students to learn English since it increases learners' listening comprehension skills. As a result, it leads to additional cognitive benefits and helps learners understand the dialogs in movies (Hasan 2000; King 2002; Danan 2004). Besides listening comprehension, learners are able to hear the new accent while reading subtitles provided in the same language of the film (Ebrahimi and Bazaee, 2016: 286). Hayati and Mohmedi (2009) investigated on this topic with 90 intermediate EFL students divided into three groups: watching a movie with English subtitles, with Persian subtitles, and no subtitle respectively. The result showed that the first group got higher score on the listening test. In Thailand, Chapakiya and Laohawiriyanon (2017) also paid attention to effects of watching subtitled documentary news on listening abilities of Thai students. 67 EFL beginner level students were divided into two groups. The first group was asked to watch an English documentary news with subtitles whereas the second group watched the news without subtitles. Then, both groups were tested on listening abilities. The finding revealed that the first group had higher score. Consequently,

it can be concluded that reading subtitles while watching can improve students' listening abilities.

Not only developing listening skills, but watching subtitles while watching films can also bridge the gap between listening skills and reading skills (Borrás & Lafayette, 1994). Both skills encourage each other. Garza (1991) stated that subtitles allow learners to use their reading skills to enhance their aural comprehension. According to Ebrahimi and Bazaee (2016), "Simultaneously, hearing and reading foreign words helps incorporate what you hear into your phonetic understanding of the language, so you can understand future words as they come up and familiarize yourself with the sounds of your new language". Ebrahimi and Bazaee's statement agreed with the study of Goldman (1993) who conducted an experimental research in order to examine whether English subtitles added in a video can improve EFL students' reading comprehension. The results reviewed that subtitles can improve students' reading comprehension skills, including literal recall, interpretation, drawing conclusions, making inferences, prediction, and critical thinking.

There are numbers of strategies recommended in order to gain benefits in listening and reading comprehension from watching soundtrack films and TV programs with subtitles. One effective strategy suggests watching soundtrack films and TV programs with subtitles. Then watch again without subtitles. In this stage, viewers will find that they can understand the dialogue better without subtitles. Eventually, watch with subtitles again in order to be able to listen to the dialogue and read the subtitles in the same time (Talaván 2007: 6). Nevertheless, it is noted that standard subtitles are recommended for EFL beginner or lower-intermediate students. In contrast, intralingual subtitling is suitable for intermediate to advanced English learners to adapt to English sounds and lead to their listening skills improvement (Birulés and Soto, 2016).

Vocabulary Acquisition

Audiovisual media like Films and TV programs do not only develop learners' listening and reading comprehension, but they can also encourage learners acquisition of new vocabulary, especially when subtitles are added as they encourage language memorability and consequently facilitate the learners' ability to use that language in the proper context (Garza 1991: 245). When soundtrack films or TV programs are provided with subtitles, there are the combination of visual and verbal information channels. This is very positive in terms of vocabulary learning as it improves the building of a mental image. EFL learners are able to acquire both old and new lexical terms more easily (Talaván 2007: 7). King (2002) also found that EFL students can learn new vocabulary and idioms via subtitled films. Moreover, they can also develop word recognition and vocabulary building.

There are various studies conducted on the effectiveness of subtitles on vocabulary learning. Neuman and Koskinen (1992) conducted a study with 129 ESL students watching English subtitled video. It was found that subtitles have a positive effect on vocabulary recognition and acquisition. In 1999, Koolstra and Beentjes did an experiment on two groups of Dutch learners. The findings showed that there was vocabulary acquisition among the group that watched English soundtrack television program with Dutch subtitles comparing to those who watched without subtitles. Moreover, Bird and Williams (2002) examined impact of sound and text presentation. It was found that subtitles provided can facilitate word learning. Later, Harji et al. (2010) conducted a study focusing on the effect of subtitles on EFL university students' vocabulary learning. 92 Iranian participants were divided into two group based on their English language proficiency level. The first group was assigned to watch a video episode with English subtitles while another group watched the video without subtitles. After watching the video, their vocabulary learning was tested. The findings showed that the first group got higher score of vocabulary test than the second group. This affirms that subtitles presented in the video enhance learners' vocabulary acquisition.

Nonetheless, it is suggested that watching subtitled movies have a positive effect on vocabulary learning when learners watch the movie more than one time in order to recognize new vocabulary, expressions and idioms (Koolstra and Beentjes, 1999). The suggestion affirms the findings of Markham, (1999: 323) that subtitles presented in the movie significantly improved the students' ability to identify the key words when they subsequently heard them again. Therefore, it can be said that subtitles have a positive effect on vocabulary learning among EFL learners.

Conclusion

According to previous studies mentioned in this article, learning English from audiovisual media such as films and TV programs is effective for EFL learners since the media can create a good learning atmosphere. Moreover, the element of the media like subtitles also has an impact on English learning. Besides assisting learners to comprehend the content of a soundtrack film or program better, subtitles are advantageous for vocabulary learning as well. Regarding vocabulary acquisition, when learners watch subtitled films or TV programs, they acquire vocabulary through visual and verbal channels. In other words, they see the written words while listening to the language. Receiving information through multisensory channels can improve the building of a mental image. Consequently, it develops word building and word recognition among learners. In addition, subtitles can enhance learners' listening and reading skills. They help increase learners' listening comprehension. Also, learners can hear the new accent while reading subtitles. Concerning reading skills, reading subtitles while listening to native audio, learners' reading comprehension skills, including literal recall, interpretation, drawing conclusions, making inferences, prediction, and critical thinking are improved.

Nonetheless, since learning English through subtitled films and TV programs can be done outside classroom by learners themselves, it is suggested that they should consider the suitable types of subtitles related to their language proficiency and purposes to gain benefits from watching subtitled films and TV programs.

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