

Utilizing video streaming services to promote L2 learning

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Introduction

Video streaming is an understudied topic in computer-assisted language learning (CALL) literature. While global subscribers to paid video streaming services such as Amazon Prime Video, Hulu, and Netflix reached over 500 million this year (Molla, 2019), research on the use of video streaming services in the context of second language (L2) learning is scarce. However, numerous studies have been conducted on the use of video with language learning. These studies point to the ability of captioned and subtitled video to promote developments in L2 listening and vocabulary learning. Accordingly, this paper details previous literature on the use of video with L2 learners and proposes ways video streaming services, namely, Netflix, can be used to promote L2 learning.

Video and language learning

As stated previously, extensive literature exists on the use of L2 video with language learners. Rather than produce a comprehensive review on the topic, only a selected list of notable studies will be detailed in this section. One of most significant studies conducted on the use of L2 video is a meta-analysis conducted by Montero Perez, Van Den Noortgate and Desmet (2013) on the effects of captioned video on vocabulary learning and listening comprehension in a L2. The researchers searched four databases as well as major CALL-related journals to find relevant literature on the topic. After identifying literature related to the use of captioned video for L2 learning (150+ studies), the researchers trimmed this list by excluding those that did not meet a set of five criteria. Ultimately, 13 journal articles and five doctoral dissertations were included in their meta-analysis. The researchers found that captions had a large effect on listening comprehension and vocabulary learning, with most studies indicating a medium to large effect size. In short, the captioning groups in the studies analyzed performed significantly better on listening comprehension and vocabulary assessments than control groups who did not view them. This meta-analysis presents a strong case

for the use of captioned L2 video to support vocabulary learning and listening comprehension. This suggests that the use of L2 captions when viewing TV programs and movies through video streaming services may also yield similarly positive results.

In another study, Montero Perez, Peters, Clarebout, and Desmet (2014) investigated four different L2 captioning options (no captions, full captions, keyword captions, and full captions with highlighted keywords) to examine their impact on incidental vocabulary learning and video comprehension. A total of 133 Flemish L2 French students were split into four groups under each captioning condition, and watched three video clips twice. Students' vocabulary knowledge and listening comprehension were assessed in multiple ways. While the students who viewed captions outperformed the control group (no captions), no significant differences were found in terms of vocabulary form recognition and clip association among these three groups. Only the keyword captioning and full captioning with highlighted keyword groups performed significantly better on vocabulary meaning recognition than the control group. Lastly, no significant differences were found in relation to video comprehension or vocabulary meaning recall amongst all four groups.

Peters, Heynen, and Puimège (2016) conducted two studies which focused on the efficacy of L1 subtitles and L2 captions on incidental vocabulary learning and also looked at the role of two variables –frequency of occurrence and vocabulary size – on word acquisition. Thirty-one secondary students in Belgium participated in experiment one while 30 students from a vocational school in the country were part of experiment two. In both studies, students were pre-and post-tested on L2 English vocabulary that appeared in the target videos (13-minute excerpt from a documentary in experiment one and an episode of *The Simpsons* in experiment two). Although non-significant results were found in relation to meaning recall, those that viewed L2 subtitles performed significantly better on vocabulary form recognition and form recall tasks compared to the L1 caption group. The results also revealed that frequency of occurrence and vocabulary size correlated positively with vocabulary learning. The results concerning vocabulary size are significant, as they demonstrate that learners with a limited a vocabulary size can benefit from the audiovisual input, which indicates that even beginner language learners can use video streaming services for vocabulary learning through the use of captions or subtitles.

An additional study which has examined L2 video is Pujadas and Muñoz's (2019) study on extensive viewing and preview tasks on vocabulary learning. A total of 106

secondary students in Spain participated and watched 24 episodes of an English-language TV series. The students viewed the episodes with either L1 or L2 on-screen text. Approximately half of them also took part in a vocabulary preview task before prior to watching each episode. According to the results of pre- and post-tests, the researchers found that all the students learned vocabulary through extensive viewing. Those that took part in the preview task also performed better, regardless of subtitle or caption type. Another significant finding was the learners with higher proficiencies before the treatment were able to make greater gains. It is also important to note that this study incorporated a year-long L2 video intervention. Most research on L2 video has focused on students viewing a single clip, episode or film, whereas this study evaluated vocabulary development after a year of video watching.

In a similar study, Rodgers and Webb (2019) investigated incidental vocabulary learning in an experimental group consisting of 187 Japanese university students who viewed 10 episodes of an American drama. The experimental group's relative gains were compared to a control group (n=73) which did not view the TV series. Pre-and post-tests were administered to assess both group's receptive vocabulary knowledge. Results from the tests indicated that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group on the vocabulary post-test. A positive correlation was also found between frequency of occurrence and vocabulary learning.

Language-learning activities with video streaming services

Interactive Video

Interactive video is one way you can incorporate Netflix into the language classroom. According to Netflix (2019), while viewing interactive video, “you can make choices for the characters, shaping the story as you go! Each choice leads to a different adventure, so you can watch again and again, and see a new story each time” (para. 1). Given the importance of interaction in L2 development (Long, 1996), interactive video may be a beneficial activity for language students. Additionally, interactive content may encourage students to pay more attention to the auditory and textual L2 input due to the fact that learners are prompted multiple times while viewing.

Extensive viewing

As the studies by Pujadas and Muñoz's (2019) and Rodgers and Webb (2019) have made clear, extensive viewing has the potential to help students acquire more vocabulary in the target language. However, although there has been much research on extensive listening (Alm, 2013) and extensive reading (Renandya, Rajan & Jacobs,

1999) in a L2, besides the two studies mentioned, less literature exists on the topic of L2 extensive viewing. When incorporating extensive viewing in the classroom, specific goals should be given to students. For instance, they could be given a listening comprehension task and listen for global or specific information. Another option would be to focus on vocabulary learning, thus, L2 captions would be ideal. In any case, the target video should align with students' needs, interests, and ability levels for any extensive viewing activity to be successful.

Conclusion

To sum up, based on the aforementioned research, there are concrete benefits to viewing subtitled or captioned video for L2 learners. Prior to the introduction of video streaming services, incorporating TV shows and movies in the L2 classroom was both costly and time-consuming (e.g., renting DVDs). However, these services have made quality video available to language learners of some of the most popular foreign languages, not just English. Users to these services can view video with audio and on-screen text in many languages, including (but not limited to) Spanish, French, Chinese, Italian, Korean, and German. For these reasons, video streaming services should be considered as a potentially useful tool for both language teachers and language learners.

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