



## Vocabulary Acquisition (Incidental) through Watching Subtitled Video Material

Alvin Rosales ✉

Department of Language and Literature, Far Eastern University-Manila, Philippines

### Article Info

#### Article History:

Received in 22  
August 2019  
Approved in 29  
November 2019  
Published in 30  
November 2019

*Keywords: Subtitle;  
Incidental Vocabulary  
Learning; Receptive  
Vocabulary Knowledge;  
Productive Vocabulary  
Knowledge; Vocabulary  
Knowledge Scale.*

### Abstract

Subtitle refers to the time-synchronized text on a video that translates the spoken audio to another language. This research deals with the effect of watching subtitled video material on the vocabulary acquisition (incidental) of the Filipino learners of English with an emphasis on the receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. The study was participated by 100 university students in a private higher education institution in the Philippines. The study used a pretest and posttest design in which the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale developed by Paribakht and Wesche (1993) was employed. The results show that there is a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest performance in vocabulary acquisition in terms of receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge of the participants. The findings imply the integration of subtitled video material in the teaching of vocabulary in Philippine classrooms because of its effectiveness which, up to this point, is not yet realized.

© 2019 Universitas Negeri Semarang

✉ Correspondent Address:  
132 Capillan Street, San Antonio  
Quezon City, Metro Manila 1105  
E-mail: [arosales@feu.edu.ph](mailto:arosales@feu.edu.ph)

ISSN 2252-6706

## **INTRODUCTION**

In learning English, students need to see that it covers the macro skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing; and to effectively learn all these, they need to see the importance of vocabulary as a language component because it can really affect the skills mentioned. In other words, without vocabulary, learning cannot be achieved.

The question then lies on whether Filipino students are motivated to learn English or even just learn vocabulary. One assumption would be “no” for some part, and the researcher being a language teacher has noticed such problem. Some would say that one cause of that is that English teaching is more teacher-centered.

The researcher came across students who shared their experiences inside the classroom as far as language teaching is concerned. They tend to withdraw themselves from it because how it is done is contrary to their interest. In other words, they get bored easily with the lesson and that they need something like attractive images or animations. One means by which these needs can be well served is multimedia technology. Multimedia can appeal to many types of learning preferences – some students profit more from learning by reading, some by hearing and some by watching.

Writing for UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education, Andresen and Brink (2013) state that some learners can consider multimedia as a means to acquire more knowledge and effective in improving learning (e.g. by enhancing motivation). This is probably because it promotes a greater involvement in the learning situation. Also, learners can represent multimedia as a way of speeding the learning process and reducing information overload.

Multimedia technology includes motion media, music, text material, graphics, illustrations, photographs and digital software (“Educational Technology,” 2017).

Motion media, like videos, is one common multimedia technology which the students are exposed to. They may watch it for academics, but most of the time for entertainment.

Since their first appearance, motion pictures have still got the interest of all people, from young to old. In the case of Filipino students, they now get hooked on watching subtitled films. Hollywood movies are not the only ones saved in their computers; there are also anime films from Japan and telenovelas from South Korea which are watched with subtitles in most cases.

Filipino students being movie lovers is what prompted the researcher to conduct the present study with the assumption that people can achieve learning from pleasurable activities, and since it is evident that subtitled video materials have become a part of their lives, the researcher used it as a main variable in connection to language learning, particularly to vocabulary learning.

Sabouri and Zohrabi (2015) concluded that the use of subtitled films can promote students’ engagement in language learning and can improve retrieval of new vocabulary words in learning English among foreign learners. Baltova (1999) found that watching subtitled video material helped the learners acquire more vocabulary. Gorjian (2014) stressed that learners of English as a foreign language have improved their comprehension of the content of the video, and have increased their vocabulary knowledge through the subtitles, especially if the video is watched significantly.

Though there are already foreign researches conducted on subtitle or subtitling or the like, the researcher also considered that there is only a few studies known to the researcher on the effect of watching a subtitled video material on second language vocabulary learning, and there is no study in the Philippines as far as the researcher’s record is concerned on the effect of watching a subtitled video material on vocabulary acquisition with an emphasis on the two aspects of vocabulary knowledge: receptive and productive. Receptive vocabulary refers to the words that learners recognize and understand, while productive vocabulary is the utilization of the words. Though the latter can be written or spoken, yet in the study, the written production was only considered.

## **METHODS**

### **Participants**

The participants of the study were 100 tertiary students, mostly aged 18-20 and enrolled in the Technical Writing classes of the researcher in a private HEI in Manila, Philippines.

Technical Writing is the last English subject to be taken in the institution. Thus, it was assumed that the students enrolled in this subject are at least knowledgeable about the fundamentals of English which they have already taken in the previous semesters. They may not be highly proficient on the target language, but when compared to the other students who are yet to take the subjects that they have already taken, they are more knowledgeable for the most part. This consideration has something

to do with the written production of the participants which was an important element in the pretest and posttest.

**The Instruments**

One subtitled film and the Vocabulary knowledge Scale (for the pretest and posttest) were employed in the study.

*Subtitled Film*

As for the subtitled film, the researcher used “El Pasajero, a 37-minute Spanish short film which he downloaded from Youtube. El Pasajero, first released in 2008, is an award-winning film in the International Film Festival. It was directed by Andres Faucher and starred by Jorge Palacios and Dimas Gonzalez. El Pasajero (“The Passenger” in English) is about a taxi driver and his passenger. Using a gun, the desperate taxi driver attempts to rob his passenger who offers to buy the gun which will lead to an event that no viewer will ever expect.

The researcher purposefully selected the film because no one among the participants has ever watched it prior to the testing.

*The Vocabulary Knowledge Scale*

For the pretest and posttest, the researcher used the same instrument which was the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale developed by Paribakht and Wesche (1993) to measure the vocabulary knowledge of the participants along with their receptive and productive knowledge. This scale is a control scale of how well words are known and what control one has over them. The Vocabulary Knowledge Scale format falls into the following five categories:

1. I don't remember having seen this word before.
2. I have seen this word before, but I don't think I know what it means.
3. I have seen this word before, and I think it means \_\_\_\_\_. (meaning/synonym/translation)
4. I know this word. It means \_\_\_\_\_. (meaning/synonym/translation)
5. I can use this word in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_. (If you do this section, please also do category

In scoring the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale, the researcher used the rubric showed in Table 1.

**Table 1. The Rubric in Scoring the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale**

<b>Receptive Vocabulary Knowledge</b>	
<b>Score</b>	<b>Meaning of Score</b>
0	The word is not familiar at all.
0	The word is familiar but its meaning is not known.
0	An incorrent meaning or synonym or translation is given.
1	A correct meaning or synonym or translation is given.
<b>Productive Vocabulary Knowledge</b>	
<b>Score</b>	<b>Meaning of Score</b>
0	The word is not used in sentence writing.
0	The word is not used with semantic appropriateness in a sentence.
1	The word is used with semantic appropriateness in a sentence.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

The procedure was carried out in three phases: first, administering the pretest; second, watching of the video material, and third, administering the posttest.

#### *First Phase*

The Vocabulary Knowledge Scale was used in administering the pretest to measure vocabulary knowledge of the participants, along with their receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. The test has five target vocabulary words from the film which are low frequency words. Two of them are adjectives; another two are nouns; and one is a verb.

Regarding the pretest, the researcher told the participants not to use any kinds of dictionary, and not to talk to any participants during the test. This could make sure that their answers are actually based on their background knowledge of the vocabulary items.

After they answered the pretest, the participants were told not to check the words in a dictionary and not to discuss them among themselves inside and outside the testing area. This could make sure that their answers on the posttest later would be based on the vocabulary knowledge gained from watching the subtitled video material presumably.

#### *Second and Third Phase*

The second (watching the subtitled video material ) and the third phase (posttest) took place a month later. Yuksel and Tanriverdi (2009) suggested that a pretest and a posttest must be separated by a longer period.

To achieve the objective of the study which is on the subconscious learning of the vocabulary items from watching the subtitled video material, the researcher made sure that the participants were unaware that they would be tested after watching (posttest).

The participants watched the film twice, however on the second time there are few scenes that were skipped or disregarded like in the opening and in the end which do not actually detract from the purpose of the study. Sabouri and Zohrabi (2015) stated that subtitled movies could have an effect on vocabulary recognition if learners watch the movie more than once.

After watching, the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale with the same vocabulary items was used in administering the posttest to measure the receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge of the participants.

In the study, the researcher used a basic statistical tool, the Mean. He also used the frequency and percentage distribution of the participants based on their pretest and posttest performance in vocabulary acquisition in terms of receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge.

For the statistical hypothesis test, the researcher used the Z-test, a basic inferential statistical tool to see if there is a difference on the receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge of the participants before and after watching the subtitled video material.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **The Performance in Vocabulary Acquisition before Watching**

As shown in Table 2 below, the mean score for the receptive vocabulary knowledge of the target words of the participants was 1.51. The result shows that half of the participants was able to give the correct meaning of the word 'salsa'. This means that 'salsa' having the highest frequency is the least difficult word that could be given a correct meaning. Salsa in the study refers to a type of music or a form of dancing. An example of that in a sentence is 'Hector and Alfredo are dancing salsa'. Out of the 5 target words, 'temperamental' got the lowest frequency that no participant or 0% of the participants got its correct meaning/synonym. In the study, temperamental refers to a performance being unpredictable. An example of that in a sentence is 'His temperamental computer always annoys him; sometimes it would start and sometimes it would not'.

**Table 2. Students' Receptive and Productive Vocabulary Knowledge (Pretest)**

Target Words	Receptive		Productive	
	f	%	f	%
temperamental	0	0	0	0
salsa	50	33.11	12	42.86
fleeting	10	6.62	4	14.29
tropic	43	28.48	4	14.29
devalue	48	31.79	8	28.57
Total	151	100	28	100
Mean	1.51		0.28	

For the productive vocabulary knowledge, the participants were tested if they could write the five target words: temperamental, salsa, fleeting, tropic and devalue with semantic appropriateness in a sentence. And as shown, the productive vocabulary knowledge of the target words of the participants has the mean score of 0.28. The result shows that only twelve of 100 participants were able to write the word 'salsa'. Next to that is 'devalue' which was used by only 8 of the participants. 'Tropic' and 'fleeting' were used by only 4 participants and for 'temperamental', no one was able to use it with semantic appropriateness in a sentence.

#### **The Performance in Vocabulary Acquisition after Watching**

After watching the subtitled video material, the mean score of the receptive vocabulary has increased to 3.39 while the mean score of the productive vocabulary has increased to 2.93 as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Students' Receptive and Productive Vocabulary Knowledge (Posttest)**

Target Words	Receptive		Productive	
	f	%	f	%
temperamental	28	8.26	25	8.53
salsa	97	28.61	92	31.40
fleeting	36	10.62	26	8.87
tropic	83	24.48	4	22.53
devalue	95	28.02	8	28.67
Total	339	100	293	100
Mean	3.39		2.93	

The result shows that for on the receptive vocabulary knowledge of the participants, 'salsa' got the highest frequency of 97 while the lowest is 'temperamental' with the frequency of 28. On the productive vocabulary, salsa also got the highest frequency of 92, while the lowest is still 'temperamental' with the frequency of 25.

#### **The Difference between the Pretest and Posttest on the Receptive and Productive Vocabulary Knowledge**

As shown in Table 4.1, the z-Test value of -13.20 was obtained for the receptive vocabulary knowledge, and is smaller than the alpha value, and is significant.

**Table 4.1. Differences between the Pre-test and Posttest (Receptive)**

Test	Mean	SD	Alpha Value	Z Value
Pretest	1.51	1.06	0.05	-13.20
Posttest	3.39	0.95		
Decision: Rejected				
Remark: Significant				

On the difference between pretest and posttest performance in terms of productive vocabulary knowledge of the participants, Table 4.2 shows the z-Test value of -19.84 which is smaller than the alpha value of 0.05, and is also significant.

**Table 4.2. Differences between the Pre-test and Posttest (Productive)**

Test	Mean	SD	Alpha Value	Z Value
Pretest	0.28	0.62	0.05	-19.84
Posttest	2.93	1.81		
Decision: Rejected				
Remark: Significant				

The results on both the receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge of the participants after watching the subtitled video material mean that there is significant difference between the pretest and the posttest performance in the receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge of the participants of the target words. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

## DISCUSSIONS

Watching subtitled video material, as shown in the results of the study, has a positive effect on the vocabulary acquisition of the learners of English as second language in terms of their receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge which is also translated as “there is a significant difference between their pretest and posttest performance in both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge”.

Another significant thing shown in the results is that the performance in the receptive vocabulary knowledge of the target words of the participants is greater than their productive vocabulary knowledge. This is what exactly Songbo (2010) pointed out that receptive vocabulary knowledge is usually larger than the productive. Receptive vocabulary being larger in size than the productive vocabulary was identified by Harmer (2001) as passive vocabulary of words. Passive vocabulary of words, though known by the learners, yet they cannot produce them, and in the case of this study, in writing.

Speaking of receptive vocabulary being larger than productive, Loewen and Sato (2017) concluded that knowledge of the different word knowledge aspects seems to be more robust and be acquired earlier than productive knowledge. The mean score that the participants gained for their productive vocabulary knowledge of the target words was 0.28. This result actually shows what Loewen and Sato (2017) pointed out, and if it would be tried to see the difference between the receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge of the participants of the target words in the pretest, 24.6% would be the result, so it would mean that the receptive knowledge of the participants is 24.6% larger than their productive vocabulary knowledge. In other words, receptive vocabulary knowledge is four times larger than productive vocabulary knowledge.

From the results gathered, it can be inferred that because the learner recognizes and understands the word does not necessary mean that he or she can produce it. However, it should be noted that after watching the subtitled video material, the productive vocabulary knowledge of the participants was so close to their receptive vocabulary knowledge which can be considered a substantial increase.

## CONCLUSIONS

It was revealed that the receptive vocabulary knowledge of the participants was larger than their productive vocabulary knowledge which is also pointed out in the past studies. This is the case before and after watching the subtitled video material.

In the results obtained, it was found out that there was a considerable improvement on both the receptive and productive knowledge of the participants after watching the subtitled video material. And, it was revealed that there is a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest on both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge; thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

This study also suggests multimedia facilities to be provided in both private and public schools in the Philippines which are needed in the use of subtitled video material in the teaching of vocabulary.

## REFERENCES

- Ahmad, J. (2011). Intentional vs incidental vocabulary learning. *Interdisciplinary. ELT Research Journal*, 1(1), 71-79.
- Andresen, B. B., Brink, K., & UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education. (2013). *Multimedia in education: Curriculum*. Moscow: UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education
- Baltova, I. (2019). *The effect of subtitled and staged video input on the learning and retention of content and vocabulary in a second language*. (Doctoral dissertation). University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada.
- Barcroft, J. (2009). Effects of synonym generation on incidental and intentional L2 vocabulary learning during reading. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43(1), 79-103.
- Biswas, Ranjita (2005). *Hindi film songs can boost literacy rates in India*.
- Chai, J. & Erlam, R. (2008). The Effect and the influence of the use of video and captions on second language learning. *New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics*, 14(2), 25-44.
- Education Technology. (2017). *Educational multimedia*. Retrieved from <http://uca.edu/legal/educational-multimedia/>
- Faraj, A. (2015). Effective strategies for turning receptive vocabulary into productive vocabulary in EFL context. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(27), 10-19.
- Ghabanchi, Z., & Ayoubi, E.S. (2012). Incidental vocabulary learning and recall by intermediate foreign language students: the influence of marginal glosses, dictionary use, and summary writing. <https://doi.org/10.19030/jier.v8i2.6828>
- Gorjian, B. (2014). The effect of movie subtitling on incidental vocabulary learning among EFL learners. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 4(9), 1013-1026.
- Groot, P. (2000). Computer assisted second language vocabulary acquisition. *Language Learning and Technology*, 4(1), 60-81.
- Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching*, 3rd Edition. London: Pearson Education.
- Henriksen, B. (1999). Three dimensions of vocabulary development. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 21(2), 303-317.
- Loewen, S. & Sato, M. (Eds). (2017). *The Routledge handbook of instructed second language acquisition*. Abingdon-on-Thames, Oxfordshire: Routledge
- Nasab M., & Motlagh S. (2017). Vocabulary learning promotion through English subtitled cartoons. *Communication and Linguistics Studies*, 3(1-1), 1-7. Nation, P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Paribakht, T. & Wesche, M. (1993). Reading comprehension and second language development in a comprehension-based ESL program. *TESL Canada Journal*, 11(1), 09-29. <https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v11i1.623>
- Richards, J. & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics*. Malaysia: Pearson Education.
- Sabouri, H. & Zohrabi M. (2015). The impact of watching English subtitled movies in vocabulary learning in different genders of Iranian EFL learners: *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, 3(2), 110-125.
- Schmitt, N. (2008). Review article: Instructed second language vocabulary learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 12(3), 329-363.
- Senate (n.d.). Republic Act No. 10905. Retrieved from [https://www.senate.gov.ph/republic\\_acts/ra%2010905.pdf](https://www.senate.gov.ph/republic_acts/ra%2010905.pdf)
- Shahraki H. & Kassaian, Z. (2011). Effects of learner interaction, receptive and productive learning tasks on vocabulary acquisition: An Iranian case. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 15, 2165-2171.
- Shahrokni, S. A. (2009). Second language incidental vocabulary learning: The effect of online textual, pictorial, and textual pictorial glosses. *Iran University of Science and Technology (IUST)*.
- Songbo, Z. (2010). Comparing receptive and productive academic vocabulary knowledge of Chinese EFL learners. *Asian Social Science*, 6. 10.5539/ass.v6n10p14.
- Souleyman, H. M. (2009). *Implicit and explicit vocabulary acquisition with a computer-assisted hypertext reading task: Comprehension and retention (Doctoral Dissertation)*. The University of Arizona Publisher.
- Yali, G. (2010). L2 vocabulary acquisition through reading: Incidental learning and intentional learning. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 33(1), 74-93.
- Yildiz, T. (2017). The Effect of videos with subtitles on vocabulary learning of EFL learners. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 7(9), 125-130
- Yuksel, D. & Tanriverdi B. (2009). Effects of watching captioned movie clip on vocabulary development. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology – TOJET*, 8(2), 48–54.