

Improving Vocabulary and Listening Comprehension via Watching French Films without Subtitles: Positive Results

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Abstract : This study is based on more than fifteen years of experience of teaching a foreign language, in my case French, to the English-speaking students. It represents a qualitative research on foreign language learners' reaction and their gains in terms of vocabulary and listening comprehension through repeatedly viewing foreign feature films with the original soundtrack but without English subtitles. The initial idea emerged upon realization that the first challenge faced by my students when they find themselves in a francophone environment has been their lack of listening comprehension. Their inability to understand colloquial speech affects not only their academic performance, but their psychological health as well. To remedy this problem, I have designed and applied for many years my own teaching method based on one particular French film, exceptionally suited, for the reasons described in detail in the paper, for the intermediate-advanced level foreign language learners. This project, conducted together with my undergraduate assistant and mentoree J-R Ancheta, aims at showing how the paralinguistic features, such as characters' facial expressions, settings, music, historical background, images provided before the actual viewing, etc., offer crucial support and enhance students' listening comprehension. The study, based on students' interviews, also offers special pedagogical techniques, such as 'anticipatory' vocabulary lists and exercises, drills, quizzes and composition topics that have proven to boost students' performance. For this study, only the listening proficiency and vocabulary gains of the interviewed participants were assessed.

Keywords : comprehension, film, listening, subtitles, vocabulary

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