



Reading 431

Answer the questions about an abstract from the article written by Stuart Webb and Elke Peters (published: June 28, 2020).

Watching foreign-language TV during the coronavirus pandemic can help you learn a new language

With university classrooms and language schools closed because of the pandemic, language students must find new ways to practise and improve. In recent years, an increasing number of applied linguists have been advocating regular TV viewing to learn English.

Research shows that students are motivated to learn language through watching foreign language television programs. In the world of professional sports, baseball players, ice-hockey players and football managers have also claimed that television was a key resource for their language development.

Surprisingly, television has played a relatively small role in the language learning classroom. Our research has shown that students learn new words and phrases through watching television, and the amount of learning may be similar to what is learned through reading.

Subbed vs. dubbed

There is now increasing evidence that language learners can improve their comprehension skills, pronunciation and grammar through watching TV.

Research reveals that language learners who frequently watch foreign-language TV programs outside of school tend to be better at reading, listening and vocabulary. This holds for language learners in primary schools, secondary schools, at university even for young kids who have not had any English lessons yet. TV has also proven beneficial for children with more than one language to improve their English-language skills.

A survey by the European Commission on the use of subtitles to encourage language learning and improve the mastery of foreign languages showed that regions that use subtitles to make foreign-language TV shows and movies accessible — like Sweden, Denmark or Flanders — have substantial benefits in terms of language learning compared to dubbing countries, like France or Germany, because subtitles are more widely available, and in more languages, than dubbing.

Although research indicates that simply watching television programs may contribute to second language learning, initially television may be challenging for people to understand and enjoy. This is perhaps the reason why books and articles, which can be easily written or simplified according to the level of students, are recommended and used much more often for learning.

TV watching for language learning

The following principles were designed to optimize the potential of television for learning and encourage students to continue learning with television.

First, the aim of television viewing in a second language should be the same as in the first language: to inform and enjoy. It is not necessary that every word, sentence or phrase is understood. The goal should be to have an understanding sufficient to motivate further viewing. Comprehension should improve over time with greater exposure to spoken input.

Second, regular TV viewing is central to learning. We tend to make very small gains through encountering input, but these gains can become meaningful as they accumulate through encountering more and more input. This means that we learn very little through watching TV for an hour but can make great gains through viewing a large amount of television. For second language learning, binge watching programs is a good thing!

Third, because understanding television will be difficult initially, it is important to use strategies to support learning. For example, students might try to progress from viewing episodes initially with first-language subtitles, then with second-language subtitles, and finally without subtitles to support their comprehension. Another way to boost comprehension is to watch the same episode multiple times, because research shows that comprehension and language learning increase through repeated viewing of the same content.

Many parents might recognize that their children have learned new words and phrases through viewing the same movies again and again.

A final strategy is watching one program in sequence from the first episode. Sequential or “narrow viewing” will improve our understanding of subsequent episodes, because we quickly gain knowledge of the characters, their relationships and story arcs as they develop. By following these principles, students may achieve greater success in language learning with television.

1 All the linguists support the idea of studying foreign languages using TV.

A True

B False

C Not stated

2 People in non-English-speaking countries study English more effectively via TV.

A True

B False

C Not stated

3 These 3 given principles are proved to be effective.

A True

B False

C Not stated

4 A big amount of time spent on watching TV increases the chance of having good results in comprehension.

A True

B False

C Not stated

5 It doesn't matter if you watch programs and series in chronological order or not.

A True

B False

C Not stated

Keys

1. B
2. A
3. C
4. A
5. B