IMPROVING EFL STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF ENGLISH DIALECTS BY WATCHING ENGLISH MOVIES OF DIFFERENT DIALECTS WITHOUT SUBTITLES

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Abstract

This study demonstrates that exposing EFL students to English movies of different dialects without subtitles significantly improves their understanding of English dialects. A quasi-experimental design with 10 Indonesian university students was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the method. The treatment group's significant improvement in speaking and listening skills over the control group underscores the value of immersive and naturalistic language learning experiences. These findings suggest that incorporating non-subtitled English movies into EFL curricula can provide students with practical, real-world language exposure that enhances their linguistic and intercultural competence. Therefore, it is recommended that educators incorporate non-subtitled English movies into their teaching strategies to create engaging and authentic learning experiences, improve language comprehension, foster collaborative learning, and increase student motivation.Future research could explore the long-term effects and broader applicability of this method.

Keywords: English movies; EFL students; teaching strategies

Introduction

Mastering English as a foreign language (EFL) requires not only the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary, but also navigating the diverse range of English dialects shaped by regional, cultural, and historical influences. English films, especially those depicting different dialects, provide an authentic and engaging platform for EFL students to hone their listening skills by exposing them to subtle variations in

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pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary. This immersive learning experience provides rich, contextualized input that helps students understand and adapt to different dialects, providing a more dynamic and realistic exposure to the language than traditional classroom exercises.

Traditional EFL instruction, which relies heavily on textbooks and structured practice, often falls short of providing learners with authentic exposure to the diverse linguistic landscapes they are likely to encounter in real-world contexts. Textbooks typically standardize English, presenting a homogenized version that lacks the richness and variability of actual spoken dialects. This standardized approach can leave learners unprepared for the linguistic diversity they will encounter outside the classroom, creating a significant gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Groundbreaking theories in language acquisition emphasize the importance of exposure to authentic language use. Stephen Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis posits that learners acquire language most effectively when exposed to input that is slightly beyond their current level of proficiency, but still comprehensible. This theory suggests that EFL students benefit from exposure to a variety of English dialects in real-world contexts. In addition, Long's (1996) interaction hypothesis emphasizes the role of interaction in language learning, arguing that conversational exchanges provide essential opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning and receive feedback. These interactions are often lacking in traditional, textbook-based learning environments.

In addition, Gass and Mackey's (2020) research underscores the value of immersion in naturalistic contexts. Their work shows that immersive experiences, where learners are surrounded by the target language in meaningful contexts, significantly enhance language acquisition. This immersion provides learners with continuous exposure to the nuances and variations of the target language, promoting deeper linguistic and cultural understanding. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory also supports this approach, emphasizing the importance of social interaction and cultural context in cognitive development, including language learning.

Based on these theories, this paper proposes a novel approach to supporting EFL students' comprehension of English dialects by utilizing the immersive power of English movies. Specifically, this study advocates the use of films with diverse dialects as a tool to enhance learners' listening and dialect recognition skills. By immersing students in subtitle-free environments where auditory cues are paramount, this approach aims to cultivate a heightened sensitivity to the nuances of English spoken in different regions. This method is consistent with Krashen's emphasis on comprehensible input, Long's focus on interaction, Gass and Mackey's advocacy of immersion, and Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective.

This paper aims to promote immersive learning experiences that reflect real communicative situations by using English movies with different dialects. Such exposure not only familiarizes students with diverse linguistic patterns but also with the

cultural contexts of these dialects, fostering a deeper understanding of language use in various social settings. This approach enhances learners' communicative competence and intercultural communication skills, equipping EFL students to navigate intercultural encounters with confidence and fluency. This innovative method addresses the limitations of traditional EFL instruction by providing authentic, immersive learning experiences that improve EFL students' comprehension and practical language skills.

Literature Review

Watching English Movies as a Way to Learn Dialect

Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) posits that language acquisition is most effective when learners are exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current proficiency level, referred to as "i+1". This input should be rich, meaningful, and contextually embedded. Exposing EFL students to unsubtitled English movies is consistent with Krashen's hypothesis by providing natural, challenging language input that promotes language acquisition. The richness of the films, which include different dialects, idioms, and cultural references, significantly enhances learners' language proficiency. Similarly, Gass and Mackey (2020) argue that immersion in authentic linguistic environments facilitates the development of communicative competence by exposing learners to the full range of language functions and discourse structures in real-world interactions. Exposure to different dialects in films promotes active engagement and deeper internalization of linguistic structures and cultural norms, often more effectively than traditional classroom instruction.

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) emphasizes the role of social interaction and cooperative learning in language development, emphasizing that learning occurs through interaction with more knowledgeable others. Watching English movies without subtitles fosters a collaborative learning environment where learners work together to negotiate meaning and interpret language input, which is consistent with Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is the difference between what learners can achieve independently and what they can achieve with support. This method provides challenging language input that, with guidance, helps learners expand their language repertoire. In addition, Robert Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (1985) emphasizes the importance of motivation and attitudes in language learning. Watching English films can increase learners' motivation by providing enjoyable, meaningful language exposure, fostering positive attitudes toward learning English, and increasing their curiosity and engagement. Taken together, these theories support the use of non-subtitled English films to improve EFL students' understanding of dialects, and to enhance their language proficiency, communicative skills, and motivation.

Methodology

This research adopted an experimental quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental research design known as pre-test - post-test control group design. According to Harris et al. (2006), quasi-experimental study designs, often referred to as non-randomized pre-post intervention studies, are common in the medical informatics literature. However, little has been written about the advantages and limitations of the quasi-experimental approach as applied to informatics studies. The data analysis technique used was descriptive statistics to assess the impact of the intervention. According to Vetter T. R. (2017), descriptive statistics are specific methods that are basically used to calculate, describe, and summarize collected research data in a logical, meaningful, and efficient manner.

The study involved a total of 10 participants, all of whom were EFL learners at a university in Indonesia, divided equally into a control group and a treatment group. Prior to the intervention, a pre-test was administered to both groups to determine baseline levels of English dialect comprehension. Following the pre-test, the treatment group was exposed to the intervention, which consisted of watching English movies in various dialects, including British and American dialects, without subtitles for one week. Meanwhile, the control group received no intervention.

After the intervention period, a post-test was administered to both groups to measure any changes in their ability and insight into English dialects. The data collected from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using descriptive statistics to compare the performance of the control and treatment groups, thereby evaluating the effectiveness of watching English movies without subtitles as a method for improving EFL students' understanding of English dialects.

Results

On the first day of the study, both the control and treatment groups underwent a pre-test to determine their baseline ability to understand and produce English dialects. The pre-test consisted of a Speaking Test, which assessed participants' fluency in pronouncing British and American English accents, and a Listening Test, which assessed their ability to identify and analyze these accents as spoken by native speakers. In the control group, the Speaking Test results showed a grade distribution with two students scoring a B and three students scoring a C. The Listening Test results varied, with scores ranging from 7 to 10 correct answers out of 15. In the treatment group, the Speaking Test results were predominantly C grades, with one student scoring a B. Their Listening Test scores ranged from 6 to 8 correct answers out of 15, indicating a similar level of proficiency as the control group.

Following the initial assessment, the treatment group underwent a week-long intervention in which they watched English movies with British and American dialects without subtitles. This immersion was designed to improve their listening and

pronunciation skills by providing rich, authentic input consistent with Krashen's input hypothesis. The control group, on the other hand, continued with their regular activities without any additional exposure to different English dialects. After the intervention period, both groups were given a post-test with new questions but the same format as the pre-test.

The post-test results showed a significant improvement in the performance of the treatment group. On the Speaking Test, students in the treatment group showed significant progress, with two students scoring an A and three students scoring a B. This contrasted sharply with the results of the control group, which remained unchanged from the pre-test, with the same distribution of B and C score. The listening test scores for the treatment group also improved significantly, with scores ranging from 10 to 13 correct answers out of 15. The control group, however, showed only marginal improvement, with scores increasing slightly to a range of 8 to 11 correct answers out of 15.

Test Group	Student	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Speaking	Listening	Speaking	Listening
Control	1	B	10/15	B	11/15
Group	2	B	9/15	B	9/15
	3	C	7/15	C	8/15
	4	C	8/15	C	8/15
	5	C	8/15	C	9/15
Treatment	1	C	8/15	A	13/15
Group	2	C	8/15	B	13/15
	3	B	7/15	B	12/15
	4	C	8/15	A	11/15
	5	C	6/15	B	10/15

Table 1. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Results

The results suggest that the intervention had a significant impact on the treatment group's ability to understand and produce English dialects. The significant improvements in both speaking and listening skills of the treatment group highlight the effectiveness of using non-subtitled English movies as a pedagogical tool for improving EFL students' comprehension of different dialects. These findings support the literature review of the study and demonstrate that immersive, contextually rich language input can facilitate language acquisition more effectively than traditional methods.

Discussion

The results of this study show significant improvements in the treatment group's understanding of English dialects after watching English movies in different dialects without subtitles. The pre-test results showed that both groups started with relatively similar levels of speaking and listening skills. However, the post-test results showed a

significant improvement in the treatment group, especially in listening skills, which is consistent with Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis. According to Krashen, language learners acquire new languages most effectively when they are exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current level of proficiency ("i+1"). By immersing EFL students in subtitle-free environments with diverse English movies, they received rich, meaningful, and challenging input that promoted deeper language acquisition.

In contrast, the control group showed only marginal improvements in both speaking and listening skills. This limited progress suggests that traditional methods of language instruction may not provide the same level of engagement and challenge necessary for significant language development. Gass and Mackey's (2020) research on immersion in naturalistic contexts supports these findings and highlights the effectiveness of immersion in authentic language environments. The treatment group's significant gains in listening comprehension demonstrate the value of exposure to real-world language use, where learners must actively engage with and interpret spoken language without relying on subtitles. This immersive approach promotes the processing and internalization of linguistic structures and cultural norms that traditional classroom instruction often fails to replicate.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) provides further insight into the effectiveness of this pedagogical approach. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social interaction and cooperative learning in language development. Watching English films without subtitles facilitated collaborative sense-making in the treatment group as learners worked together to negotiate meaning and interpret language input. Peer interaction and discussion allowed them to clarify misunderstandings, exchange ideas, and co-construct knowledge about English dialects. This collaborative process is consistent with Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners achieve more with guidance and support than they could on their own. The significant improvement of the treatment group suggests that such an environment effectively extends their ZPD, allowing them to scaffold their understanding and gradually expand their linguistic repertoire.

The improvement in the treatment group's listening skills is also consistent with Gardner's socio-educational model of second language acquisition (1985), which emphasizes the importance of motivation and attitudes in language learning. Watching English movies without subtitles provided meaningful and enjoyable language input, which increased learners' motivation and positive attitudes toward learning English. The cultural richness and linguistic diversity presented in the films likely fostered a sense of curiosity and engagement, encouraging learners to actively participate in their language learning journey. This increased motivation is crucial for sustained language development, as it leads learners to invest more effort and time in their studies.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of research supporting innovative and immersive language teaching methods. By combining Krashen's input hypothesis, Gass and Mackey's immersion research, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and Gardner's socioeducational model, this study highlights the multiple benefits of using unsubtitled English movies as a pedagogical tool. The significant improvements observed in the treatment group's listening and speaking skills underscore the potential of immersive, authentic, and engaging learning experiences to enhance EFL students' understanding of English dialects. These findings suggest that educators should consider incorporating such methods into their curricula to bridge the gap between traditional language instruction and practical language use, ultimately promoting more effective language acquisition and intercultural competence.

Conclusion

This study shows that exposing EFL students to English movies of different dialects without subtitles significantly improves their understanding of English dialects, especially in listening comprehension. The findings are consistent with Krashen's input hypothesis, which states that language learners benefit most from comprehensible input slightly above their current proficiency level. By immersing students in authentic and challenging language environments, this approach provides rich and meaningful input that promotes deeper language acquisition. In addition, the collaborative learning encouraged by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and the increased motivation supported by Gardner's socioeducational model further support the effectiveness of this method. The treatment group's significant improvement in listening skills underscores the value of immersive and naturalistic language learning experiences, while the control group's marginal gains highlight the limitations of traditional language teaching methods. These findings suggest that incorporating unsubtitled English movies into EFL curricula can provide students with practical, real-world language exposure that enhances their linguistic and intercultural competence. Therefore, it is recommended that educators incorporate subtitled English movies into their teaching strategies to create engaging and authentic learning experiences, improve language comprehension, foster collaborative learning, and increase student motivation, while future research could explore the long-term effects and broader applicability of this method.

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