

## AUDIOVISUAL NEWS, CARTOONS, AND FILMS AS SOURCES OF AUTHENTIC LANGUAGE INPUT AND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ENHANCEMENT

Taher Bahrani

Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya, Malaysia  
Department of English, Mahshahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mahshahr, Iran  
Email: taheerbahrani@yahoo.com

Tam Shu Sim

Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya, Malaysia  
Email: tamss@um.edu.my

### ABSTRACT

In today's audiovisually driven world, various audiovisual programs can be incorporated as authentic sources of potential language input for second language acquisition. In line with this view, the present research aimed at discovering the effectiveness of exposure to news, cartoons, and films as three different types of authentic audiovisual programs on improving the language proficiency of low level language learners. To this end, 60 low level language learners were selected based on a language proficiency test and were assigned into three groups as group one, two, and three randomly. During the study which lasted for 10 weeks, the first group of the participants had exposure to a sample selected audiovisual materials from news, the second group of the participants had exposure to a sample selected audiovisual materials from cartoons, and the third group of the participants had exposure to a sample selected audiovisual material from various films. At the end of the study, another sample language proficiency test was administered to all the three groups to find out which group could gain significant language proficiency improvement. The results of the post-test were indicative of the fact that group one (news) failed to improve its language proficiency. In contrast, groups two (cartoons) and three (films) could improve their language proficiency. More importantly, the cartoon group participants' improvement was more significant than that of the film group. The results showed that audiovisual programs generally are a great source of language input for teaching purposes. However, more caution should be given to the selection of the type of audiovisual programs for low level proficiency learners. Cartoons and films with good story lines seem to motivate the learners to absorb the language input better and have a significant effect on the language improvement.

**Keywords:** news, cartoons, films, authentic language input, language proficiency

### INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, the world of educational technology has witnessed a rapid development in various audiovisual technologies which offer many possibilities for the teachers to construct activities around listening to various authentic programs, watching related videos, and holding conversations in real world. Considering this issue, the use of authentic materials to provide the necessary language input in foreign/second language learning has a long history. For example, Sweet (1899) is considered as one of the first linguists who made use of authentic texts in his books because he was aware of their potential advantages over contrived materials. Authentic language input is any materials in English which have not been specifically produced for the very purpose of language teaching. Examples of these materials are films, songs, stories, games, and play. Although these materials are not made for language teaching purposes, they contain the characteristics of language used by the native speakers (Taylor, 1994). In the same line, Gilmore (2007) defined authentic language input as the language conveying a real message which is produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience. Nunan (1999) also defined authentic language materials as spoken or written language materials that have been produced in real communication not specifically for language teaching. Nunan (1999) further highlighted the assumption that authentic language input can be extracted from many different sources including TV and radio broadcasts, recorded conversations, meetings, and newspapers.

From the linguistic point of view, authentic language input refers to the use of authentic materials from the target culture which is presented in the target language such as different programs, for example, news, films, songs, soap opera, and comedy as audiovisual mass media materials provided by various technologies. In this relation, desktop technologies such as computers and non-desktop technologies such as TV and radio can provide easy access to authentic audiovisual language input for language learners in both EFL and ESL contexts. Examples of audiovisual materials can include different print materials accompanied by related video and audio supplements, audiotapes and CDs with accompanying textbooks, and videotapes with textbooks.

There is a general agreement among foreign/second language instructors that authentic language input can be utilized in second language learning. According to many scholars (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990; Brinton, 1991;

Gebhard, 1996; Gilmore, 2007; Martinez, 2002; Melvin & Stout, 1987; Nunan, 1999; Porter & Roberts, 1981; among others), there are many advantages associated with authentic language materials which make these materials pedagogically valuable sources of great amount of exposure to the target language.

With regards to this, Martinez (2002) provided a number of sound advantages for incorporating authentic language materials for language teaching. An initial advantage is that authentic language materials provide a wide range of language change of the target language. For example, through listening to authentic songs and stories in the target language, language learners will be able to hear dialectal differences of various countries that speak the target language (Martinez, 2002). These dialectal variations from one target language speaking country to the next can be used for a class discussion. Brinton (1991) underscored the point that authentic materials from media can reinforce the direct relationship between the language classroom and the outside world for the students.

Melvin and Stout (1987) found an overall increased motivation to learn in the students when they use authentic language materials for the study of culture. As the language learners gained more confidence working directly with authentic materials, they also reported an increased understanding of the practical benefits of being able to use the language in real world scenarios. Melvin and Stout (1987) went on to state that authentic language input would be helpful for language learners to practice skills they might need outside the classroom and learn about cultures on their own. In relation to the motivating aspect of authentic materials, Nunan (1999) and Gilmore (2007) acknowledged that it is essential for language learners to have exposure to various kinds of authentic language material because it helps to motivate them by bringing the content and the subject matter to life. Moreover, it enables them to make the important connections between the classroom world and the real world outside the classroom setting.

Besides the above-mentioned benefits of authentic materials, limited drawbacks have been stated by few researchers. Martinez (2002) underlined the problem associated with the utilization of authentic language materials in the classrooms with different language proficiency levels. According to Martinez (2002), the authentic language materials which are used for language learning may be too culturally biased and the vocabulary may be irrelevant to the language learners' needs. More importantly, low level language proficiency or beginner level language learners may have a hard time interpreting what they hear or read because of the mixed structures that are used. Other researchers such as Widdowson (1996) also argued that there are some difficulties associated with the use of authentic materials such as the difficult vocabulary used which may demotivate language learners. Much of the difficulty language learners experience with the use of authentic language materials originates from the students lack of familiarity with authentic language input and the processing strategies required for comprehending it (Bacon & Finneman, 1994).

In the view of the above, the present research aims at discovering the effectiveness of exposure to news, cartoons, and films as three types of authentic audiovisual mass media programs on developing the language proficiency of low level language learners.

## **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

The growth of various audiovisual technologies in transforming the process of learning is unbelievable (Mayya, 2007). In today's audiovisually driven world, audiovisual devices such as satellite and conventional televisions can offer easy access to authentic programs which are considered to be a rich source of language input for SLA. The immediacy of current affairs programs ensures that learners' exposure to the language is up-to-date and embedded in the real world of native speakers. Indeed, by recognizing the limitations in the environment in EFL and some ESL contexts to provide language input in a social situation, various audiovisual technologies can be incorporated as sources of authentic language input (Bahrani & Tam, 2012). With regards to this, there are unlimited sources of authentic language materials such as TV commercials, quiz shows, cartoons, news clips, comedy shows, films, soap operas, songs, and documentaries that language teachers and learners can utilize for language learning purposes (Gebhard, 1996).

In view of the above, the review of the literature on the integration of different audiovisual programs that provide authentic language input into language learning underscores the pedagogical value of such materials for the very purpose of language teaching. For the purpose of the present research, some studies which have particularly focused on the use of news, cartoons, and films as authentic language input to develop language learning are reviewed.

Audiovisual news as pedagogically valuable and rich source of authentic language input to be utilized for language learning has attracted the attention of many qualitative as well as quantitative studies since the 1970s

(Baker, 1996; Beach & Somerholter, 1997; Bell, 2003; Berber, 1997; Blachford, 1973; Brinton & Gaskill, 1978; Mackenzie, 1997; Poon, 1992; to name only a few). Almost 40 years ago, Blachford (1973) emphasized the implicit pedagogical value embedded in TV news episodes anecdotally. As audiovisual mass media news consistently includes the same words and utterances, the lexico-syntactic feature of news genre is what makes audiovisual mass media news a valuable source of vocabulary input for language learning (Blachford, 1973).

A few years later, Brinton and Gaskill (1978) conducted a study on the effect of listening to TV news programs on improving EFL/ESL students' listening comprehension. The study was conducted in Germany as an EFL context and in the United States of America as an ESL context where videotaped news broadcasts from TV as a source of authentic language input were incorporated in advance EFL/ESL classes once a week for approximately six months to find out whether or not any improvements would be achieved on listening comprehension.

With regard to EFL students' difficulties comprehending fast speech, Brinton and Gaskill (1978) noted that when EFL/ESL learners encounter the rapid native speech, they often fail to comprehend it mainly because of their insufficient amount of exposure to TV and radio news. According to Brinton and Gaskill (1978), classroom materials which are used to enhance listening comprehension are not sufficient enough to help the language learners cope with rapid speech. For that reason, TV news language input has the potential to improve the listening skill because different newscasts bring reality into the classroom and enable the students to focus on substantive issues. Additionally, because of the recycling feature of vocabulary in different audiovisual mass media TV news, EFL/ESL language learners can become more familiar with many contextualized vocabulary items during a long period of exposure.

In the 90s, similar studies empowered by quantitative data also focused on using TV news to improve listening comprehension (Baker, 1996; Poon, 1992). Poon (1992) investigated the effectiveness of listening to news on listening comprehension in English as a second language (ESL) context as compared with the effectiveness of non-news listening materials. The participants of the study were 66 language learners in diverse disciplines, 34 in the experimental group and 32 in the control group. During the period of study, the experimental group was taught by incorporating the recordings from audiovisual mass media news materials. In contrast, the control group was taught using several non-news listening materials including commercial listening comprehension materials. The results of the study indicated that the experimental group participants made more progress in their listening than the control group. Baker (1996) also found out that the use of TV news in EFL classes can enhance listening comprehension.

To go further, the possibility of using audiovisual news reports as authentic language materials for lower proficiency levels of EFL/ESL learning was the focus of a research conducted by Mackenzie (1997). The study rejected the assumption that because the reporters speak too fast, the content is too complex, and the vocabulary is too difficult, TV and radio news cannot be used at lowest levels of EFL situations. As a matter of fact, Mackenzie (1997) highlighted the point that with the careful selection of TV news items and applying some simple techniques, news reports can be used even at elementary or intermediate levels. In order to support his claims, Mackenzie (1997) shared his own experience of using TV news stories with careful selection of the news items and some techniques with elementary and intermediate levels at the Simul Academy in Japan. However, no empirical evidence was provided to prove that low level language learners can also improve their language proficiency or a particular skill through exposure to audiovisual news materials.

The effectiveness of exposure to audiovisual news materials and non-news materials on improving the speaking proficiency of intermediate language learners was also the focus of a more recently conducted study by Bahrani and Tam (2011). The research was conducted with 60 intermediate language learners who were divided into two groups as group one and group two. During the experiment, the participants in the first group were exposed to authentic materials from audiovisual news while the second group of participants was exposed to non-news materials. The findings of the research indicated that exposure to audiovisual news promotes intermediate language learners' speaking proficiency more than exposure to non-news materials.

Unlike news, the pedagogical value of cartoons as authentic language materials has been the focus of limited number of anecdotal studies (Clark, 2000; Doring, 2002; Rule & Ague, 2005). In an anecdotal study conducted by Clark (2000), it was highlighted that cartoons can engage the attention of the learners and present information in a non-threatening atmosphere. Besides, cartoons have the potential to encourage thinking processes and discussion skills (Clark, 2000). Another study was carried out by Doring (2002) focusing on the effect of exposure to cartoons on language learning. The results of the study were indicative of the fact that the language learners who had exposure to cartoons could produce oral answers that were very proactive and interesting in

different discussions held in the classes. Moreover, the discussions were rich and the students had high confidence. It seems that the high confidence that the language learners acquired was due to exposure to cartoons which created low affective filter atmosphere for learning.

In the same line, Rule and Ague (2005) conducted a study providing evidence of the students' preferences to use cartoons in language learning. According to Rule and Ague (2005), cartoons are preferred because they create low affective filter atmosphere which causes high degree of motivation. This high confidence and motivation achieved through exposure to cartoons has the potential to enhance the memory (Rule & Ague, 2005). Rule and Ague (2005) also claimed that the students who use cartoons can improve different language skills and achieve higher test scores. However, they did not specify which language skill(s) can be improved through great amount of exposure to cartoons.

Besides audiovisual news and cartoons, films as another source of authentic language input has also been investigated by some researcher (Chapple & Curtis, 2000; Gebhardt, 2004; Heffernan, 2005; Ryan, 1998). Chapple and Curtis (2000) carried out a research on the utilization of different films as authentic and appropriate teaching materials in content-based instruction approaches in EFL classrooms in Southeast Asia. The study emphasized how intrinsically motivating materials such as films along with content-based instruction can help to improve language learning. According to Chapple and Curtis (2000), films have many cross-cultural values, provide excellent basis for the development of critical thinking skill, provide a rich source of content for language learners, and offer linguistic diversities. These features of films along with the motivating feature facilitate language learners' oral communication (Chapple & Curtis, 2000). Similar studies were also conducted by Ryan (1998), Heffernan (2005), and Gebhardt (2004) focusing on enhancing motivation and language learning through the use of films in language classrooms. However, neither of the studies provided empirical evidence to support this claim.

In a nutshell, wide arrays of audiovisual mass media programs are available as authentic sources of language input for SLA in EFL and ESL contexts. What can be concluded from the related studies can be summarized in the following 3 parts: 1) The claims made by the studies conducted regarding the pedagogical values of the use of news, cartoons, and films as authentic audiovisual mass media programs to provide the necessary language input for SLA are mostly anecdotal, 2) most of the studies have investigated psycholinguistic aspects of various audiovisual mass media programs. For example, cartoons and films can enhance language learning through creating low affective filter atmosphere, and 3) few studies have provided limited empirical evidence on the effect of utilizing audiovisual mass media news in language learning classrooms. However, the findings are limited to improving only the listening skill through exposure to audiovisual mass media news at the intermediate or advance level classes. In fact, language proficiency as a whole or various language skills have not been investigated particularly at low level of language proficiency.

### **Research questions**

In the view of the above, the present research was set to answer the following three questions:

1. To what extent, does exposure to audiovisual news improve low level language learners' language proficiency?
2. To what extent, does exposure to cartoons improve low level language learners' language proficiency?
3. To what extent, does exposure to films improve low level language learners' language proficiency?

### **Significance of the study**

This study will guide low level EFL/ESL learners on ways to improve their language proficiency that is through effective exposure to news, cartoons, or films as authentic audiovisual programs from various technologies. The findings may also be important to language teachers, practitioners, and institutions for investment in authentic audiovisual mass media programs for language learning by exposing the low level language learners more than before to news, cartoons, or films as authentic language input for the enhancement of language proficiency.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### *Participants*

Initially, 107 language learners aged from 18 to 23 majoring in teaching English as a second language (TESL) including both males and females went through the research voluntarily. Then, a smaller population of 60 low level language learners was selected out of the initial 107 participants based on a sample International English Language Testing System (IELTS) language proficiency test which was also considered as a pre-test. The 60 low level participants were divided into three groups of equal number randomly.

### *Instruments and Materials*

The first instrument to gather the necessary data for the present research was a set of two parallel IELTS language proficiency tests. Prior to the study, the sample IELTS language proficiency tests were verified to be parallel to ensure the internal validity of the findings. IELTS test was selected to measure the language proficiency of the participants because it was one of the valid standardized tests which the researchers could utilize.

For the audiovisual materials used as authentic language input, news, cartoons, and films were selected as 3 types of authentic audiovisual programs. The first set of materials which was given to group one to work on in the classroom was a collection of 10 hours of authentic audiovisual news programs from CNN, BBC, Press TV, and CBS. Different channels, both British and American English programs, were selected to focus on both forms of English. The collection of the news programs consisted of news headlines, sports news, economy news, political news, scientific news, and social news. Moreover, the most important criterion for selecting various news programs was the content and linguistic difficulty (Bell, 2003). Efforts were made to select non-episodic news programs which do not require prior knowledge of the story. Moreover, the researcher tried to select various news programs with almost the same speech-rate. The second set of materials which was given to group two to work on in the classroom was a collection of 10 hours of various cartoons from *Shrek 1*, *Ice Age 1*, and *Toys*. These cartoons were selected because of their interesting stories. The third set of materials given to group three was a collection of 10 hours of various films (such as *Matrix* and *Final destination*) Similar to the news programs, the content of the second and third collections also contained both British and American forms of English.

### *Data Collection Procedure*

The present research employed quantitative method and pre-post test design. The procedure consisted of the following stages:

#### *Verifying the instruments*

The first step to take before the study was carried out was to verify that the two sample IELTS language proficiency tests were parallel to assure the internal validity of the data obtained from the pre-post tests. According to Bachman (1990), in order for two tests to be considered as parallel, they should measure the same ability or skill(s). In other words, an individual's true scores on one test should be the same as his/her true scores on the other. However, Bachman (1990) highlighted the point that because it is never feasible to know the actual true scores for a given test, the definition of parallel tests in classical measurement theory should be utilized in order to verify that the sample selected tests are parallel. According to the operational definition of parallel tests put forth by Bachman (1990), parallel tests are two tests of the same ability that have the same means and variances when administered to the same group. In the same line, although we may never have strictly parallel tests, we treat the two tests as parallel if the differences between their means and variances are not statistically different (Bachman, 1990).

In view of the above, both sample IELTS language proficiency tests were administered to 10 trial language learners majoring in TESL at a short interval of two weeks. Then, the means and the variances of both tests were calculated separately. Table 1 represents the descriptive analysis of both the tests:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics related to the administration of the two tests to the same group

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
First Test	10	4.00	6.50	5.217	0.758	0.541
Second Test	10	4.50	7.00	5.350	0.745	0.551

According to the statistical analysis of the data obtained from the administration of both tests to the 10 participants, the means and the variances of both tests were almost the same. This was indicative of the fact that the two sample IELTS tests were parallel. By utilizing the same scores obtained from the administration of both tests to the trial group, the correlation between the first and the second tests was 0.872 which indicated that the two tests were also verified in terms of reliability.

After verifying the sample IELTS tests, the actual data collection procedure of study was conducted. Accordingly, the data collection procedure comprised of two stages: one stage was concerned with the selection of the participants which was the pre-study selection stage and the other stage included the actual data collection from the pre-post tests.

### Pre-study selection

The pre-study selection stage was concerned with the selection of the participants for the research. To do so, one of the parallel IELTS language proficiency tests was administered to a population of 107 language learners including both males and females majoring in TESL to select 60 low level language learners. According to IELTS Band score, those who scored 4 or 4.5 out of 9 Band score were selected as low level language learners (entry level).

### Data collection from pre-post tests

The data necessary for the present study was obtained from the two parallel IELTS pre-post tests. The duration of the research was 10 weeks. During the experiment, group one had exposure to news materials, group two to cartoons, and group three to films in three separate classes which met 3 hours a week accompanied with some discussion in relation to the viewed programs. In other words, the researchers provided each group of participants with different type of audiovisual mass media program to work on inside the classroom. One of the researchers monitored and ran all the three classes.

After 10 weeks of exposure of group one to news, group two to cartoons, and group three to films, all the participants took the second sample language proficiency test from IELTS as a post-test to find out whether there was any improvement in their language proficiency. After the post-test, the scores of all the three groups gained from pre-test (pre-study selection stage) and post-test were compared by means of a paired sample t-test analysis to determine the differences.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to answer the research questions, the scores obtained from the administration of pre-post tests to group one, two, and three were compared statistically by means of a paired sample t-test. The following tables represent the statistical analysis of the pre-post tests scores obtained by the participants in groups one, two, and three.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics related to group one (news) pre-test and post-test results

Groups	N	MEAN	SD	t-test
Group one pre-test	20	4.09	0.64	-1.305
Group one post-test	20	4.16	0.54	P=0.086

$T_{\text{observed}}=-1.305$   $T_{\text{critical}}=1.729$   $T_{\text{observed}}$  smaller than  $t_{\text{critical}}$   $P>0.05$

Table 3: Descriptive statistics related to group two (cartoons) pre-test and post-test results

Groups	N	MEAN	SD	t-test
Group two pre-test	20	4.13	0.48	-2.756
Group two post-test	20	5.67	0.53	P=0.013

$T_{\text{observed}}=-2.756$   $T_{\text{critical}}=1.729$   $T_{\text{observed}}$  bigger than  $t_{\text{critical}}$   $p<0.05$

Table 4: Descriptive statistics related to group three (films) pre-test and post-test results

Groups	N	MEAN	SD	t-test
Group three pre-test	20	4.12	0.64	-1.824
Group three post-test	20	4.85	0.62	P=0.024

$T_{\text{observed}}=-1.824$   $T_{\text{critical}}=1.729$   $T_{\text{observed}}$  smaller than  $t_{\text{critical}}$   $p<0.05$

In relation to group one's performance in the pre-post tests, it should be mentioned that the mean score of the participants in group one in the pre-test was 4.09 out of 9. The mean score rose to 4.16 in the post-test which was indicative of the fact that minor progress was made in their performance. Using the statistical analysis of a paired sample t-test for group one, it was observed that the t-critical (1.729) was higher than the observed (-1.305). This means that the improvement was not statistically significant ( $p>0.05$ ). The point should be mentioned that it makes no difference whether the t-observed is positive or negative in reading the table. Because the distribution is symmetrical, the minus quantities would be the same (Hatch & Farhady, 1982).

In relation to the data obtained from the pre-post tests by group two, the mean score in the pre-test was 4.13 and in the post-test was 5.67. The major difference can be interpreted as improvement. However, in order to find out whether the change in the mean score can be interpreted as a significant improvement or not, a statistical analysis of a paired sample t-test was run for the scores of group two. The results of the paired sample t-test indicated that

the t-critical (1.729) was smaller than the t-observed (-2.756) which was indicative of the fact that the change in the mean score was high to lead to a significant improvement ( $p < 0.05$ ).

The final analysis of the data was carried out for the results obtained from the pre-post tests for group three. Accordingly, the mean score in the pre-test was 4.12 and in the post-test was 4.85. This positive change in the mean which was more than that of the first group and less than that of the second group can be interpreted as improvement. However, in order to find out whether the change in the mean score can be interpreted as a significant improvement or not, a statistical analysis of a paired sample t-test was run also for the scores of group three. The results indicated that the t-critical (1.729) was slightly smaller than the t-observed (-1.824) which indicated that the change in the mean score led to language proficiency improvement.

The results of the statistical analysis of the paired sample t-tests for the data obtained from the pre-post tests scores of all the three groups were indicative of the fact that groups two and three i.e. cartoons and films respectively, did improve their language proficiency during the period of the research and this leads to the conclusion that it was probably due to the type of audiovisual exposure. In contrast, the participants in group one who had exposure to news did not significantly improve their language proficiency.

More particularly, in relation to the first research question about the effectiveness of exposure to news on developing low level language learners' language proficiency, the findings proved that exposure to audiovisual news did not significantly improve the language proficiency of low level language learners. This sheds more light to the findings of previous studies (Bahrani & Tam, 2011; Baker, 1996; Blachford, 1973; Brinton & Gaskill, 1978; Mackenzie, 1997; Poon, 1992) which found that audiovisual news as a type of authentic language input has proved effective in developing language learning of only the intermediate or advance level language learners. In other words, the results obtained by the present research do not support the pedagogical value of audiovisual news as authentic language input for low level language learners. This result is probably due to what Martinez (2002) put forth regarding the disadvantages of incorporating authentic language materials in low level language proficiency classes. He emphasized that beginner or low level language learners may have a hard time interpreting what they hear or read because of the mixed structures used in authentic materials. Indeed, the utterances of news programs may include a lot of incomprehensible language input that the low level language learners may have difficulty comprehending and internalizing. Bacon and Finneman (1994) also highlighted the point that language learners may encounter comprehension difficulties with the use of authentic language materials.

Another probable reason behind this might be traced back to the type of specialized vocabulary items which are used in some types of authentic materials such as the news genre and the speed of the speech. According to Martinez (2002) and Widdowson (1996), low level language learners have difficulty interpreting and understanding some types of authentic materials because of the difficult vocabularies used. For the current research, the point should be underscored that the researcher did his best to present news episodes which focused on general topics which the language learners had schemata to help them comprehend the information better. Moreover, audiovisual news episodes with normal speech rate were selected. The researcher also provided the first group of language learners with a gloss of specialized vocabulary items. Regardless of all these efforts, the participants in the first group still had problem comprehending the language input of the news. According to the observations of one of the researchers, a few of the participants could get the main idea of the news episodes presented in the classroom. However, most of the difficulty was with the specialized vocabulary items which hindered comprehension. In the case of low level language learners, the recycling feature of vocabulary items in audiovisual mass media news could not ease the comprehension and the internalization of the input for SLA. This finding seems to go against the claim made by Brinton and Gaskill (1978) regarding the effect of recycling vocabulary items in news on comprehension of the news. The findings of the present research also seem to reject the claim made by Mackenzie (1997) that news can be used at low level classes.

Another probable cause for this group of low level participants' insignificant language proficiency improvement could be the higher amount of incomprehensible input received through the news genre. Indeed, exposing low level language learners to more incomprehensible language input than comprehensible language input might hinder language proficiency development.

In relation to the second research question regarding the effectiveness of exposure to cartoons as one type of authentic audiovisual program on improving the language proficiency of low level language learners, the result of the statistical analysis of the paired sample t-test was indicative of the fact that low level language learners could achieve a significant language proficiency improvement through exposure to cartoons. This finding sheds more light to the studies conducted by Clark (2000), Doring (2002), Rule and Ague (2005) which claimed that

cartoons can create low affective filter atmosphere and increases motivation which boost language development. In the same line, the present research provided solid empirical evidence to support this claim. During the research period, the participants in the second group showed less difficulty comprehending the information provided in the cartoons. This could be due to the fact that the language input and more particularly the vocabulary items which are used in most of the cartoons are not specialized. Unlike audiovisual news, the language input embedded in cartoons might have included less incomprehensible input. Exposure to this optimum level of incomprehensible input might have created fewer difficulties for comprehension and internalization for the participants of this group. As a result of less comprehension difficulties, there is a high probability that they could acquire new aspects of the language which contributed to their language proficiency improvement. It should be noted as well that the participants in this group also showed great interest in watching the selected cartoons and participating in the follow up discussion about the content. As a result of greater probability of internalizing the language input embedded in the type of program which they had exposure to, they could develop their language proficiency.

Finally with regard to the third research question about the effectiveness of exposure to films as one type of authentic audiovisual program on improving the language proficiency of low level language learners, the result of the statistical analysis of the paired sample t-test for group three revealed that low level language learners could also improve their language proficiency through exposure to films. Of course, the third group improvement was less than that of the second group. Supported by empirical evidence, the finding of the present research corroborates previous anecdotal studies carried out by Chapple and Curtis (2000), Gebhardt (2004), Heffernan (2005), and Ryan (1998) regarding the pedagogical value of utilizing films to develop language learning. A probable cause might be that, similar to cartoons, the utterances in films utilize less specialized vocabulary items. This could probably boost the comprehension and internalization of the content of the films. However, although both the second and the third groups improved their language proficiency, the results of the data analysis showed that low level language learners can benefit more from exposure to cartoons than films.

## CONCLUSION

With the ever-increasing developments in audiovisual mass media technologies, various audiovisual mass media programs are not limited to entertaining the audience anymore. In fact, some of the audiovisual mass media programs can be utilized as pedagogically valuable authentic sources of language input for language learning. In this regard, the present research was set out to find out the most effective type of audiovisual mass media program among news, cartoons, and films for low level language learners to further enhance their language proficiency.

Accordingly, although previous studies (Bahrani & Tam, 2011; Baker, 1996; Blachford, 1973; Brinton & Gaskill, 1978; Mackenzie, 1997; Poon, 1992) proved that audiovisual news are pedagogical valuable sources of potential language input for intermediate or advanced levels language learners to improve their language proficiency, the findings of the present research were indicative of the fact that low level language learners did not benefit significantly from having exposure to news programs. In contrast, low level language learners showed great interest and benefitted significantly when received input from cartoons and films. They showed more preference to cartoons and films probably due to the motivating feature of such materials (Clark, 2000; Doring, 2002; Heffernan, 2005; Gebhardt, 2004; Rule & Ague, 2005; Ryan, 1998).

In conclusion, although audiovisual programs generally are a great source of authentic language input for teaching/learning purposes, more caution should be given to the selection of the type of audiovisual program for low level proficiency learners. Cartoons and films with good story lines seem to motivate the learners to absorb the language input better and have a significant effect on the language improvement.

Finally, in relation to the limitations and the findings of the present research, the point should be highlighted that the participants of the present research were low level language proficiency. Hence, different results might be obtained if the study is conducted with intermediate or advanced levels language learners particularly by exposing them to cartoons and films. Another point to be considered is that the study was conducted with news, films, and cartoons as three types of audiovisual programs. The need to conduct other studies which consider the effectiveness of exposure to other types of audiovisual programs on language proficiency development is warranted.



## REFERENCES

- Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford University press, Oxford, London.
- Bacon, S. M., & Finnemann, M. D. (1990). A study of the attitudes, motives, and strategies of university foreign language students and their disposition to authentic oral and written input. *The Modern Language Journal* 74, 459-473.
- Bahrani, T., & Tam, S. S. (2012). Informal language learning setting: technology or social interaction? *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 11 (2), 142-149.
- Bahrani, T., & Tam, S. S. (2011). Technology and language learning: Exposure to TV and radio news and speaking proficiency. *Kritika Kultura* (17), 144-160.
- Baker, N. (1996). Using the TV news in the EFL classroom. *Zielsprache*, 26(2): 30-33.
- Beach, S., & Somerholter, K. E. (1997). Deutsche Welle tv: Using video to introduce business German. *Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching-German*, 30(1), 30-35.
- Bell, D. M. (2003). TV news in the EFL/ESL Classroom: Criteria for Selection. *TEFL-EJ*, 7(3), 1-17. Available at: <http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/TEFL-EJ/ej27/a2.html>. Accessed, February 22, 2007.
- Berber, S. A. (1997). Proficiency and comprehension of television news in a foreign language. *Revista de Documentacao de Estudos em Linguistica Teorica e Aplicada (D.E.L.T.A.)*, 13(2), 177-190.
- Blatchford, C. (1973). Newspapers: vehicles for teaching ESOL with cultural focus. *TESOL Quarterly*, 7, 145-153.
- Brinton, D. (1991). *The use of media in language teaching*. Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language, Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- Brinton, D., & Gaskill, W. (1987). Using news broadcasts in the ESL/EFL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 12(4), 403-413.
- Chapple, L., & Curtis, A. (2000). Content based instruction in Hong Kong: Students responses to films. *System*, 28, 419-433.
- Clark, C. (2000). Innovative strategy: Concept cartoons. *Instructional and learning strategies*, 12, 34-45.
- Doring, A. (2002). The use of cartoons as a teaching and learning strategy with adult learners. *New Zealand Journal of adult learning*, 30, 56-62.
- Gebhard, J. G. (1996). *Teaching English as a Foreign Language: A Teacher Self-Development and Methodology Guide*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Gehardt, J. G. (2004). Using movie trailers in an ESL CALL class. *The internet TESL journal*, 10(1). Available at: [http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Gebhardt movie trailers.html](http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Gebhardt%20movie%20trailers.html). Retrieved February 23, 2006.
- Gilmore, A. (2007). Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning. *Lang. Teach.* 40, 97-118.
- Hatch, E., & Farhady, H. (1982). *Research design and statistics for applied linguistics*. University of California, Los Angeles.
- Heffernan, N. (2005). Watching movie trailers in the ESL class. *The internet TEFL journal*, 9(3). Available at: [http://iTEFLj.org/Lessons/Heffernan movie trailers.html](http://iTEFLj.org/Lessons/Heffernan%20movie%20trailers.html). Retrieved February 23, 2006.
- Mackenzie, A. S. (1997). Using CNN News Video in the EFL Classroom. *The Internet TEFL Journal*, 3(2). Available at: <http://www.aitwech.ac.jp/~iTEFLj/>. Accessed February 8, 2006.
- Martinez, A. (2002). *Authentic Materials: An Overview*.
- Mayya, S. (2007). Integrating new technology to commerce curriculum: how to overcome teachers' resistance? *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 6 (1), 8-14.
- Melvin, B. S., & Stout, D. S. (1987). *Motivating language learners through authentic materials*. In W. Rivers (ed.) *Interactive Language Teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 44-56.
- Nunan, D. (1999). *Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- Poon, A. (1992). Action research: A study on using TV news to improve listening proficiency. *Research Report*, 14, 1-70.
- Porter, D., & Roberts, J. (1981). Authentic listening activities. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 36(1), 37-47.
- Rule, A. C., & Auge, J. (2005). Using humorous cartoons to teach mineral and rock concepts in sixth grade science class. *Journal of geosciences education*, 53(3), 548-558.
- Ryan, S. (1998). Using films to develop learner motivation. *The internet TEFL journal*, 13(11). Available at: <http://iTEFLj.org/articles/Ryan-Film.html>. Accessed: February 3, 2006.
- Sweet, H. (1899). *The practical study of languages*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, D. (1994). Inauthentic authenticity or authentic inauthenticity? *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* 1, 1-10.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1996). Comment: authenticity and autonomy in ELT. *ELT Journal* 50(1), 67-68.