

Captions in L2 Learning from Language Teachers' Perspective: What Do Teachers Believe and Do?

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Abstract

Captions, i.e. subtitles in the original language, have been studied extensively in recent years. Many studies have found that captions facilitate listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition and that learners tend to have positive attitudes towards captions. However, except for few anecdotal observations, what language teachers believe about captions' role in L2 learning and how, if at all, they use captions in class have remained untapped despite the substantial influence teacher cognition has on teachers. Therefore, this study explores the stated beliefs and reported practices of EFL teachers regarding captions in L2 learning. To this end, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from EFL teachers ($N= 63$). Thematic analysis, descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyse the data. The findings showed that despite evidently lacking empirical knowledge, teachers had positive beliefs about captions. It was also found that teachers' past experiences as captions users were correlated with their beliefs about captions. Finally, comments from teachers revealed that they use captions in the class to ease comprehension, contribute to language development, and address the affective aspects of listening activities. Implications of the findings are discussed within the context of teacher training.

Keywords: captions; teacher beliefs; teacher cognition; informal language learning; subtitles

Introduction

Today multimedia tools and productions are omnipresent in humans' lives. Every day people across all ages consume hours of multimedia content on devices like tablets, smartphones, TVs, and so on. To illustrate, daily TV viewing time is almost three hours in the USA (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020), three and a half hours in the EU (European Broadcasting Union, 2020), and staggering six and a half hours in the UK (Ofcom, 2020).

Apart from entertaining, multimedia content in the form of movies and TV shows helps people learn foreign languages. Studies carried out in countries where foreign TV programs are broadcast in their original language, mostly in English due to its ubiquity, with L1 subtitles have found that children have picked up English language without having received formal English instruction at school (De Wilde et al., 2019; Kuppens,

2010). In other studies, it was found that out-of-class exposure through subtitled TV programs and movies assists foreign language learning (Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Peters, 2018; Peters et al., 2019). Surveys lend support to these findings, too. Respondents in traditionally subtitled countries reported higher proficiency in English than those in traditionally dubbing countries (European Commission, 2013), which also shows parallelism with the English First's proficiency index where the top five countries are traditionally subtitled countries (EF EPI, 2020).

In recent years, researchers' interest in language learning from L1 and/or L2 subtitled video viewing in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) field has risen. This interest is evidenced by an increase in the number of special issues in journals (e.g., Montero Perez & Rodgers, 2019; Peters & Muñoz, 2020), conferences (e.g., EuroSLA, 2018), and PhD dissertations (e.g., Frumuselu, 2015; Pujadas Jorba, 2019; Rodgers, 2013; Wisniewska, 2021). Studies in this multimodal input research line have manipulated on-screen text as L1 subtitles; L2 subtitles, i.e., captions; L2 keyword subtitles; L2 highlighted subtitles, or no-subtitles whatsoever (e.g., Montero Perez et al., 2014). Overall, previous research has demonstrated that captioned videos significantly aid comprehension and vocabulary learning in the foreign language (FL) compared to L1 subtitled, or neither L1 nor L2 subtitled videos (see Montero Perez et al., 2013 meta-analysis for a detailed review).

In their meta-analysis, Montero Perez et al. (2013) found more than 150 studies investigating captions and subtitles. Studies have explored whether captions help learners (1) comprehend audiovisual content more than L1 subtitles and/or no-subtitles (e.g., Birulés-Muntané & Soto-Faraco, 2016; Wang, 2019), (2) acquire vocabulary incidentally (e.g., Peters et al., 2016; Peters & Webb, 2018), (3) improve pronunciation (e.g., Wisniewska & Mora, 2020), grammar (e.g., Cintrón-Valentín et al., 2019), and (4) how learners perceive captions (e.g., Wang, 2012; Winke et al., 2010, 2013).

Although researchers have sensibly called on language teachers to encourage and motivate their learners to engage in such out-of-school language activities as watching subtitled and captioned movies (Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Montero Perez, 2020; Peters, 2018), it is not known whether teachers follow researchers' recommendations. Moreover, little is known as to what language teachers believe and do with respect to the use of captions in language learning, despite the conspicuous importance of teacher cognition (Borg, 2003). Only Vanderplank (1988) and Danan (2004) have shown interest in what teachers think and do regarding captions. Through anecdotal observations, both researchers reported that language teachers are hostile to the use of captions in listening tasks.

The importance of this study is threefold. First, an exploration as to whether English teachers follow researchers' recommendations is necessary because teachers are the most important factor in bringing research to the class to improve learning. Second, teachers' cognition plays a highly influential role in their teaching. Thus, it is essential to find out if teachers think highly or otherwise of captions. If negative, bringing this to light will provide an insight for teacher training program developers and teacher trainers so it can be tackled in the pre- and in-service teacher training. Finally, exploring the reasons behind why English teachers think and do in the way they do will portray if their thinking is research-based or experience-based. If the latter is the case, then, in parallel to the second point above, modifications may be necessary for teacher training programs to tackle misbeliefs regarding captions.

Literature Review

Captions

Captions, also known as intralingual subtitles (Frumuselu et al., 2015) refer to a video viewing condition in which both the soundtrack of the video and the on-screen text are in the same language. Captions originally emerged in the 1980s in the US and the UK to serve the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities (Vanderplank, 1988). However, in language learning contexts, captions are used to help those who are ‘hard of listening’ (Vanderplank, 1988, p. 272) i.e., having difficulty in following and understanding spoken input.

Multimodal input and language learning

Researchers have long campaigned that extensive reading should be carried out to maintain language learning, especially to expand vocabulary size, away from the classroom (Nation, 2015) to which research lends support (Feng & Webb, 2020; Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010). Along with extensive reading, extensive viewing has been suggested to ‘fill the need for greater L2 input’ (Webb, 2015, p. 159). Arndt and Woore (2018) compared vocabulary gains from reading blogs to watching vlogs. The results showed that watching vlogs led to higher vocabulary gains than reading blog posts. One interesting result of the study is that not every aspect of vocabulary learning was equally processed in each medium. That is, while the vlog group obtained higher scores than the blog group in 5 aspects of vocabulary, the blog group obtained higher scores only in recalling the orthographic form of the target words. Thus, it can be argued that multimedia viewing is as valuable as reading in second language acquisition.

Interestingly, multimodal input studies have shown that language learning from multimedia viewing can be taken a step further using textual information, e.g., captions (Birulés-Muntané, Soto-Faraco, 2016; Peters et al., 2016; Peters & Webb, 2018). For example, Sydorenko (2010) investigated the effects of video viewing conditions on vocabulary learning of 26 Russian as foreign language learners at a US university. She assigned the participants to captioned video group; non-captioned video group; and captioned silent group. The results revealed that the captioned group significantly outscored the non-captioned group on translation tests. Similarly, the captioned group outscored the non-captioned group on the written word recognition test. In another study, Baranowska (2020) placed 63 Polish learners of English in captioned; non-captioned; and L1 subtitled groups. After watching a 12-minute excerpt from a TV series, participants took vocabulary and comprehension tests. The results showed that captioned group had the highest vocabulary score, and significantly outscored the L1 subtitled group. Overall, studies have shown that captions help learners recognize more words (Bensalem, 2018), both aurally (Peters et al., 2016) and in print (Peters, 2019), and translate more words (Winke et al., 2010).

Multimodal input and listening comprehension

There is abundant research on the effects of captions on listening comprehension in L2 (e.g., Bensalem, 2017; Hsu et al., 2013; Rodgers & Webb, 2017; Teng, 2019; Wang,

2019). For example, in Rodgers and Webb's longitudinal study, participants watched an episode of an American TV show each week for 10 weeks. Comprehension tests revealed that participants in the captioned group consistently outscored those in the non-captioned group. In another study, half of the participants watched 10 episodes of an instructional video series with captions and the other half without captions (Gowhary et al., 2015). Comparison of pre- and post-listening comprehension test scores revealed that the captioned group significantly outperformed the non-captioned group. Overall, these studies suggest that when captions are presented along with audio and images, learners' comprehension is enhanced.

Studies have convincingly documented that captions are beneficial for language learners. However, to establish a more accurate estimation of the statistical significance of captions on listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, Montero Perez et al. (2013) carried out a meta-analysis. After applying multi-layered selection criteria, they selected 18 studies (e.g., Hayati & Mohmedi, 2011). The researchers found that captioned groups significantly outscored non-captioned groups both on comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, the results of this meta-analysis consolidate the findings of previous research in that captions boost comprehension and are conducive to vocabulary acquisition.

Captions and learners' opinions

Considering that learners are the end-users of captions, researchers explored what learners think about captions (Stewart & Pertusa, 2004; Vanderplank, 2019; Wang, 2012). Generally, learners reported positive attitudes and experiences regarding captions. In Stewart and Pertusa's (2004) study, more than 75% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that they learned new vocabulary thanks to captions and indicated that they would prefer captions to L1 subtitles in the future. The majority of the participants in Vanderplank's (2019) were content with captions. They commented that captions 'were a reassuring and often helpful presence' (p. 411) and 'were really useful for the parts in which there were new words that I hadn't known. In my opinion, it is much easier to learn a new word if you also see it written' (p. 412). Some learners use captions like a 'crutch', 'just to double-check to make sure that what you are hearing is correct' (Winke et al., 2010, p. 79). Overall, learners report positive experiences with captions and believe that they learn more.

Teachers' beliefs, practices, and past experiences

Teachers' beliefs are 'the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching' (Borg, 2003, p. 81) and they are one of the most important predictors, if not the most, in teachers' instructional decisions. Research has shown that what teachers believe, and think is highly influenced by their experiences. Those beliefs in turn considerably influence teachers' behaviours and decisions in class (Borg, 2003; Phipps & Borg, 2009). For example, Einstein-Ebsworth & Schweers (1997) explored teachers' beliefs about teaching grammar. When asked how and why grammar should be taught, several teachers pointed out their past learning experiences as a reference point. One teacher said, 'grammar helped me, and I can see that it also helps my students. I have confidence in my own experience' (Einstein-Ebsworth & Schweers 1997, p. 252).

Similarly, Tang et al. (2012) in a longitudinal study described the development of teaching beliefs of 4 pre-service teachers during their 4-year study at university. The descriptive accounts of the pre-service teachers' previous language learning experiences revealed that they learned English in a way that relied on mechanic grammar practices and rote learning. In line with their previous experience, all but one pre-service teacher incorporated lots of grammar drills, memorization, and sentence level practices in their teaching, suggesting that their past experiences heavily influenced their practices although they were taught and encouraged to use communicative language teaching in their courses at university.

Busch (2010), too, explored pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning. The researcher administered Horwitz's (1988) beliefs about language learning inventory for teachers (TBALLI) before and after the second language acquisition (SLA) course on 381 participants. The results of the survey before the SLA course revealed that the reasons behind their beliefs about language learning stemmed from their own past language learning experiences.

Aims and Research Questions

Researchers call for more comprehensive use of captions inside and outside the classroom and teachers' cognition exert power on their classroom practices. Therefore, this study aims to explore (1) what beliefs teachers have regarding captions, (2) what sort of engagement teachers have had with captions and their relationship with their classroom practice, and (3) whether teachers indeed promote captions. To this end, the following research questions guided the current study:

1. What beliefs do EFL teachers report holding regarding captions?
2. To what extent are stated beliefs of EFL teachers associated with their own experience with captions?
3. How, if at all, do EFL teachers use captions?

Method

Research Design

A survey research design was adopted for the current study. Surveys, in the form of a closed-item questionnaire, are good at providing data about large groups in a short period of time (Griffie, 2012) and are widely used to explore the beliefs and opinions of a certain population (Mackey & Gass, 2015). Therefore, a closed-item questionnaire, along with four open-ended questions, which enriched the study with insightful comments from the respondents (Mackey & Gass, 2015), was seen fit for the study.

Participants

Sixty-three EFL teachers working at 27 different schools of foreign languages in Turkey participated in the study. Schools of foreign languages are part of universities.

They offer year-long compulsory English programs to newly admitted students before they start their undergraduate programs as well as elective and compulsory English courses for undergraduate students. The teachers ranged in age from 24 to 62 years ($M=34.9$, $SD=8.2$). The most and least experienced teachers had 36 and two years of experience ($M=11.3$, $SD=7.9$), respectively. Twenty-three teachers (36.5%) had bachelor's, 35 (55.5%) had master's and 5 (8%) had doctorate degrees.

Instrumentation

Discussions and findings in the literature regarding captions and teachers' beliefs guided the formation of the questionnaire (see Appendix). The questionnaire consisted of closed and open-ended items to support and complement each other (Griffiee, 2012).

The online questionnaire had six sections in total. In the informed consent form, the purpose of the study was explained, and it was stressed that participation was voluntary and that no personal data would be shared with third parties. The second, third, and fourth sections explored respondents' personal experience with captions, beliefs about captions in L2 learning, and practices with captions, respectively. In the fifth section, respondents' practices were explored more deeply through open-ended questions. Finally, demographic information about the respondents was collected. The alpha coefficient for the full-scale was found to be 0.69, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Data collection procedure

Firstly, two professors checked the content and face validity of the statements. Necessary changes were then made. Next, six teachers were invited for a pilot study. They reported on clarity and organization as well as the time required to complete the questionnaire. One teacher suggested that a question that taps on the disadvantages of captions be used. Her point was found to be insightful. Accordingly, the following question *what problems could captions pose to in-class listening activities?* was added to the existing three open-ended questions. After piloting the study, through convenience and snowball sampling, teachers were reached out to. A total of 64 respondents completed and returned the questionnaire. The data collection process took two weeks.

Data analysis

To answer the first research question, descriptive statistics were utilized. Specifically, a frequency test was run to find out the mean scores, standard deviations, and percentages of items. To answer the second research question Pearson correlation test was run to identify the extent to which the teachers' beliefs and their own experience are associated. To answer the third research question, thematic analysis was carried out. The teachers' entries were first read through to identify the ideas expressed in each entry for each question. The entries were, then, reread to group similar ideas under a broader theme (e.g. speakers' accents, fast-paced speech). The entries were read once again to be collocated under a bigger theme (e.g. comprehension concerns). This procedure was repeated four times for each of the four open-ended items.

Results

Teachers' beliefs with respect to captions

Teachers responded to nine statements designed to explore their beliefs on captions using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Their responses to the statements are shown in Table 1. 87% ($N= 55$) either agreed or strongly agreed that captions help learners understand the content of a video more ($M= 4.06$, $SD= 0.62$). Similarly, an overwhelming 97% ($N= 61$) stated that captions help learners improve their vocabulary ($M= 4.22$, $SD= 0.55$). Furthermore, most respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that captions are adverse. For instance, almost 60% ($N= 37$) of the respondents stated that they did not find captions distracting ($M= 2.51$, $SD= 0.86$). Overall, the mean score of the respondents' beliefs with respect to captions in L2 learning was found to be closer to 5 ($M= 3.47$, $SD= 0.55$), which indicates that, contrary to the anecdotal observations, most respondents had positive beliefs about captions.

Table 1

Teachers' responses showing their beliefs on captions (N= 63)

	Percentage who disagreed and strongly disagreed	Percentage who were unsure	Percentage who agreed and strongly agreed
Captions help learners understand the content of a video more ($M= 4.06$, $SD= 0.62$)	2%	11%	87%
Captions help learners improve their listening comprehension skills ($M= 3.89$, $SD= 0.81$)	5%	19%	76%
Captions help learners improve their vocabulary ($M= 4.22$, $SD= 0.55$)	2%	2%	96%
When captions are on, learners cannot pay attention to the video ($M=2.86$, $SD= 0.84$)	38%	38%	24%
Captions are distracting ($M= 2.51$, $SD= 0.86$)	59%	27%	14%
When captions are on, learners ignore the audio ($M= 2.68$, $SD= 1.00$)	54%	21%	25%
Captions turn listening activities into reading ($M= 2.95$, $SD= 1.07$)	38%	30%	32%
Using captions in a listening activity is cheating ($M= 2.68$, $SD= 1.01$)	52%	22%	26%
When captions are on, learners rely on their aural processing abilities less ($M= 3.25$, $SD= 1.03$)	24%	32%	44%

To what extent are stated beliefs of English language teachers associated with their own experience with captions?

First teachers' experiences were descriptively explored. It was found out that the teachers were not informed about captions. Barely more than 15% ($N= 10$) indicated that they would be able to name a related study or theory. Likewise, less than 15% of the respondents indicated that they were taught how to make use of captions in their ICT or teaching listening skills courses at university. On the other hand, teachers' first-hand experience with captions was found to be positive. Specifically, respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they improved their listening comprehension skills (67%, $N= 42$) and vocabulary (79%, $N= 50$) thanks to captions. Finally, 46% ($N= 29$) showed a preference for captions over subtitles. Teachers' responses to the statements about their experiences are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Teachers' responses showing their experience with captions (N= 63)

	Percentage who disagreed or strongly disagreed	Percentage who were unsure	Percentage who agreed or strongly agreed
I can name studies and/or theories related to captions ($M= 2.35$, $SD= 1.11$)	67%	17%	16%
I have improved my listening comprehension skills in English by watching captioned videos ($M= 3.67$, $SD= 1.06$)	17%	16%	67%
I have improved my vocabulary in English by watching captioned videos ($M= 3.91$, $SD = 0.93$)	11%	10%	79%
I prefer captions over subtitles when watching videos ($M= 3.41$, $SD= 1.07$)	18%	36%	46%

Pearson correlation test was run to identify the extent to which the teachers' own experience and their stated beliefs about captions are associated. To begin with, teachers' belief that they improved their listening comprehension skills in English thanks to captions was significantly correlated with the belief that captions help learners understand the content of a video more ($r= .25$, $p < .05$), that captions help learners improve their listening comprehension skills ($r= .33$, $p < .01$) and that captions are distracting ($r= -.31$, $p < 0.5$). Not surprisingly, teachers' belief that they improved their vocabulary thanks to captions was significantly associated with the belief that captions help learners improve their vocabulary ($r= .36$, $p < .01$). A significant correlation was also found between preference for captions and the beliefs that captions help learners improve their listening comprehension skills ($r= .39$, $p < .01$) and that captions help learners improve their vocabulary ($r= .31$, $p < .05$). Correlation coefficients between the statements and the effect sizes are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Correlations between teachers' experiences and beliefs

	Captions help learners understand the content of a video more	Captions help learners improve their listening comprehension skills	Captions are distracting	Captions help learners improve their vocabulary	When captions are on, learners rely on their aural processing abilities less
I have improved my listening comprehension skills in English by watching captioned videos	($r = .25^*$, $p = .045$)	($r = .33^{**}$, $p = .008$)	($r = -.31^*$, $p = .015$)		
I have improved my vocabulary by watching captioned videos				($r = .36^{**}$, $p = .004$)	($r = .38^{**}$, $p = .002$)
I prefer captions over subtitles when watching videos		($r = .39^{**}$, $p = .002$)		($r = .31^*$, $p = .015$)	
I can name studies and/or theories related to captions			($r = .30^*$, $p = .016$)		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

To explore teachers' practices with captions, first, the responses to the statements were descriptively analysed. The responses revealed that the majority of the teachers sometimes accompany in-class videos with captions, encourage their students to use captions on their own, and teach them how to benefit from captions. Responses showing teachers' practices with captions are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Teachers' responses showing their practices with captions (N= 63)

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
When I play videos in class, I turn on captions ($M = 2.16$, $SD = 0.48$)	2%	84%	11%	3%
I encourage my students to turn on captions when watching videos on their own ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 0.67$)	9%	67%	19%	5%
I teach my students to take advantage of captioned videos for out-of-class use ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 0.84$)	8%	43%	35%	14%

Secondly, four open-ended questions asked the teachers their motivations for turning on captions, whether they teach any strategies to their students, and what problems they foresee with the use of captions. Answers were analysed, and they were gathered under broader themes.

Why do teachers use captions in class?

Forty-nine participants described why they turn captions on. Three themes emerged from the entries: comprehension, language development, and student affect.

To support student comprehension, the teachers use captions when they think the language of the video is beyond their students' level. For example, one teacher commented, 'I let them see the captions when they really find the content hard to comprehend'. Another teacher indicated that they use captions when 'the language is above my students' proficiency level'. Teachers also stated that they turn captions on 'if the speakers are too fast, use a lot of colloquial languages'. They also use captions 'for challenging tasks (due to speed or accent of the speakers) in which students may fail to follow what is being said'. In a similar vein, another teacher remarked that they use captions 'when the video is too fast or complicated to understand'. Another reason the teachers indicated for the use of captions is unaccustomed accents. 'Only when the speaker has an accent, which is almost impossible to understand', put one teacher. Similarly, another one said, 'Students do not understand the accent of the speaker sometimes, so using captions becomes useful for them to understand the words they cannot get/hear properly while listening'.

The teachers in this study also use captions to support language development. Teachers mainly use captions to support vocabulary development, pronunciation, and grammar. They use captions 'to aid their [students'] comprehension, to teach vocabulary and pronunciation'. Another teacher elaborated, 'While teaching vocabulary or a grammar point, it is useful to turn on captions so that the students can see the spelling of the words while listening to their pronunciations simultaneously and the correct use of the specific grammar point'. A similar comment was made by another teacher, 'If it is pre-intermediate or lower-level class, I sometimes turn on the captions because I think it can be helpful to improve their pronunciation because they can see the word and its pronunciation at the same time'.

Finally, teachers use captions to support student affect. One of the reasons is to raise students' confidence and encourage them to try. One teacher reported using captions so 'they [students] get their confidence back'. Teachers use captions to increase students' engagement and maintain their interest in the activity. One teacher reported using captions 'when they [students] give up listening because they cannot understand a word'. Third, teachers use captions 'to minimize the students' stress caused by their disability [sic] [inability] to understand the dialogues'.

Why do teachers encourage their learners to use captions?

Forty-eight teachers wrote how and why they encourage their learners to watch captioned videos. Again, comprehension, language development, and student affect emerged as key motivators.

Several teachers indicated that one of the reasons to encourage their learners to watch captioned videos is to help them understand the content more. One teacher simply said that they encourage learners to watch captioned videos '[so they could] follow better'. Another teacher commented, 'I usually use captions and suggest using captions when they don't understand enough'.

As for affective concerns, one teacher said that they encourage their students to kill two birds with one stone, 'If they add the captions, they will be both having fun and learning implicitly'. Another teacher emphasized the entertaining aspect of videos and informal learning opportunities captions create, 'I want them to enjoy the content and be familiar with the sounds of the language – pronunciation, intonation, etc.' Another teacher pointed at the state of anxiety learners tend to demonstrate in listening activities, 'Some students lack confidence in understanding what they listen to or watch, so to hearten them, I let them watch captioned videos'.

It also appeared that the teachers encouraged their learners for language development – mainly for vocabulary, and aural and textual form association of words. For example, one teacher said, 'They might learn some vocabularies [sic] while watching it [a video] with captions and also see the daily language use and many different grammatical forms that they haven't seen before. So, it could provide them a little bit of online input'. Another teacher stressed the language awareness issue, 'I encourage them to watch captioned videos to increase their language awareness and do some ear training'.

How do teachers teach their learners to benefit from captions?

Forty-two teachers described how they teach their learners to benefit from captions. Four themes emerged from the entries – advising learners to use captions; teaching and encouraging note-taking; replaying segments and eliciting answers from learners and not teaching any strategies.

Most entries show that teachers simply tell their learners that captions are useful. One teacher said, 'I tell them it may be useful to watch videos or TV series with captions when they study for listening'. Another teacher, in a similar vein, remarked, 'I advise them to watch TV shows and movies out of class and I recommend watching them with captions'.

Some teachers, on the other hand, ask their learners to become more involved with captioned videos. One teacher detailed, 'I show some YouTube or Ted Talk videos, in the beginning without captions. I want them to take notes. The second time, I show captions as well. In this way, they find the chance of checking their notes and understanding'. Another teacher elaborated:

I show them [learners] how they can make use of it [captions]. While listening to a video in the class, I use the whiteboard as a notebook and take notes so they see how they can do the same and improve their grammar, vocabulary and note taking skills at the same time. I make them use a notebook for the things they hear for the first time and every Friday, they tell me what did they learn [sic] this week from the things they watched. Amazingly, they ask me some daily language use forms such as: 'Teacher, what keep up with the good work mean' and I write it on the board and explain the meaning so that the others can also learn.

Two teachers indicated that they replay and/or pause videos to elicit some answers from learners or to do some pronunciation work. One teacher stated:

I sometimes pause the video and ask students about the words or the structures. Then I want them to give more examples to check if understand or not. I tell my students that they can do the same thing [at home] to internalize the new words or chunks or structures by practicing a lot.

Possible problems with captions

Forty-eight teachers described the potential downsides of caption use. Many of the entries suggested that captions may turn listening activities into reading and increase textual dependence for learners. One teacher said, ‘They [learners] sometimes focus just on the questions. When they get the answers from the captions, they stop listening’. Another teacher indicated that captions interfere with listening activities and suggested that they not be used the first time a video is played:

I think if the captions are provided while playing the audio track for the first time, the main objective of the listening activity is not met. In that case, this activity may turn into a reading activity instead. Therefore, I think captions must be provided in the second time the track is played.

Three entries suggest that the use of captions may send learners a wrong message. One teacher said, ‘Students feel that they have to understand every single word while listening for example but actually they don’t have to’. Another teacher elaborated on their point of view:

Students shouldn’t rely on captions. We should take advantage of captions but shouldn’t give the message that ‘you cannot listen and understand without captions’. They should know that seeing captions is only a useful strategy to enhance listening skill. It is like swimming with a life buoy until you are able to swim.

Finally, two teachers remarked that captions do not prepare learners for real-life situations as ‘nobody talks with subtitles in real world’.

Discussion

Vanderplank (1988) and Danan (2004) claimed that language teachers do not think highly of captions in listening activities, and that language teacher are hostile to the use of captions as they cause excessive textual dependence for learners. It was further claimed that the use of captions in listening activities was regarded as cheating by many language teachers. However, the findings of the present study do not support these claims. One possible reason may be the fact that captions are now more easily accessible through YouTube and streaming services like HBO, Netflix, and Amazon Prime Video compared to the past. For example, ‘language learning with Netflix’, a Google Chrome extension,

allows Netflix users to have L1 subtitles and captions on screen simultaneously and a pop-up dictionary when the cursor is held on a word. Such novelties in multimedia viewing might have resulted in more familiarity with captions. In fact, changes in viewing behaviours can be observed in Spain, a traditionally dubbing country. Young Spaniards show a preference for the use of subtitles over dubbing when watching their favourite TV shows so as not to wait for the dubbed version to be released and to do some listening training in English (Talaván, 2013, as cited in Frumuselu, 2015).

Some correlation was found between teachers' experiences and their beliefs regarding captions. Some comments from the teachers support the quantitative findings. One teacher commented, 'I encourage [my students] a lot because I have benefitted myself. I told my story to my students. I watched Merlin (a BBC series) with captions, and it improved my English while I was learning'. This finding corroborates with previous research that has found that teachers' classroom behaviour and decisions are influenced by their own experiences (Borg, 2003; Peacock, 2001).

Studies have found that teachers generally do not refer to empirical findings to explain their reasons for the instructional choices (Borg & Burns, 2008; Eisentein-Ebsworth & Schweers, 1997) and that language teachers do not engage in reading research (Borg, 2009). Similar interpretations can be drawn from the current study as a great majority of the respondents indicated that they cannot name studies and/or theories related to captions. It is thus safe to say that many teachers rely upon their own experiences and perceptions rather than the available literature on captions when deciding how to use captions, and do not read the research.

Studies have shown that out-of-class exposure to multimedia viewing facilitates foreign language learning (De Wilde et al., 2019; Peters, 2018). Webb (2015) has also argued that teachers should raise learners' awareness of the merits of out-of-class video viewing and teach them a series of strategies that they can use to maximize their learning from extensive viewing. Similarly, Vanderplank (2019) has suggested that learners exploit captions to the fullest providing that they are supported with guidance by their teachers. The findings of the present study concord with Webb (2015) and Vanderplank (2019) since the qualitative data from the present study imply that many teachers are aware of the benefits of captions and accordingly, encourage their students to use them, which is, intuitively or otherwise, a step in the right direction taken by the teachers in this study.

Moreover, it has been argued that without engagement, captions offer little help to learners (Vanderplank, 2019). Several teachers in the current study seem to be aware of the benefits of engagement with captioned videos. They sometimes pause the video and elicit answers from their students, ask them to practise pronunciation with captioned videos, teach them how to take notes, and ask them to jot down unknown words, phrases, and grammatical structures. These findings are in line with Vanderplank's (2019) suggestions that such activities as notetaking and replaying scenes several times might be more useful for language learners.

It has been revealed that teachers in the present study use captions when videos are beyond their students' proficiency level, accents of the speakers are unfamiliar, and the dialogues are fast-paced. These considerations are in line with that of Vanderplank's (2019) participants who used captions for the same purposes. It has also been found that several teachers use captions to raise learners' confidence, minimize stress and maintain their interest. Similar comments have been shared by language teachers surveyed in

Alonso-Perez and Sanchez-Requena's (2018) study. The teachers' comments from the present study are also in line with Vanderplank's (1988) claims that the availability of captions reduces anxiety and creates a more relaxing, secure atmosphere. The reason why there is an overlap between teachers' and learners' motivations for using can be explained by the notion of 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975, p. 62), that is, the teachers possibly shaped their beliefs and drew their own conclusions by relying on their own experience as learners and users of captions.

Finally, due to the global pandemic that broke out in early 2020, there has been a shift from a traditional, face-to-face learning environment to online learning. This abrupt change caught most teachers off-guard. Consequently, anxiety, confusion, and stress are common words to come across when they describe their state of mind (Gao & Zhang, 2020). Therefore, perhaps helping learners use captions to the fullest is one of the practices that can alleviate the burden on teachers and create more autonomous learners in this new online language learning environment.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the present study offer several pedagogical implications. Although language learning from extensive reading is well established (Krashen, 1989; Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010), studies found that rather than reading materials in L2, learners mostly engage in multimedia content in L2 (Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Peters, 2018). Thus, teachers should fuel this trend and encourage more learners to captioned multimedia content extensively. Secondly, although language teachers use captions to facilitate language learning in many ways (e.g., vocabulary acquisition, aural and textual word mapping), improving writing skills was not mentioned whatsoever. Research shows that producing reverse subtitling aids improves written production (Talaván et al., 2017). Thus, teachers can be informed of novel ways of which they might be unaware in pre- and in-service training. Moreover, as it is evident that experiences influence beliefs, teachers should be encouraged to use captions themselves, so their expected positive experience converts them into captions practitioners and agents. To this end, captions may be incorporated into courses like ICT and listening skills that would allow practical and reflective activities for pre-service teachers. Finally, both pre- and in-service training programs should aim to inform teachers of captions because if teachers and learners are not aware of the benefits that captions offer, then the fact that captions facilitate language acquisition would be futile.

Limitations and Further Research

Although this study has been able to reveal instructors' beliefs, experiences, and practices with respect to captions in L2 learning, it has several limitations. First, since the number of participants is low, the results cannot be firmly generalized. A similar study with a bigger participant pool might yield different results. Another limitation of the study is due to the design of the study. Griffiee (2012) has stated that "surveys tend to be a mile wide and an inch deep" (p.55), arguing that survey research design does not offer in-depth accounts for respondents' choices. This drawback, however, was reduced with an addition

of open-ended items to have relatively more detailed accounts from the respondents. Nonetheless, a follow-up interview could have provided richer input for the study. Future research could carry out in-depth interviews. Another methodological limitation is that it cannot be known whether the respondents practice what they reported doing. Class observations in future studies can shed light on language teachers' actual practices in class. Moreover, some studies found that experienced and inexperienced teachers differ from one another in terms of beliefs and practice. Future studies may compare if these two groups have similar beliefs and practices regarding captions. Finally, the current study was conducted in a traditionally dubbing country. Different insights might be revealed if a similar study is conducted with teachers from traditionally subtitled countries like the Netherlands.

Conclusion

This study investigated the stated beliefs and reported practices of EFL instructors in Turkey about captions in L2 learning. It also explored possible associations between instructors' experiences with captions and their stated beliefs. Finally, it explored how EFL teachers used captions in class. The findings of the study have shown that, unlike anecdotal observations, EFL teachers, in fact, look favourably upon captions in L2 learning. Perhaps not surprisingly, it was found that teachers lack empirical knowledge on the benefits and disadvantages of captions. It was also found that teachers' past experiences as captions users were correlated with their beliefs about captions. Finally, comments from teachers revealed that they use captions in the class to ease comprehension, contribute to language development, and to address the affective aspects of listening activities.

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Appendix - The online questionnaire

Your own experience with captions (i.e. English subtitles)

Captions refer to the video viewing condition in which both the soundtrack of the video and on-screen text are in the same language (e.g. English soundtrack and English subtitles (i.e. captions)).

Please mark the option that best reflects your experience with the use of captions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I can name studies and/or theories related to captions.					
2. I have improved my listening comprehension skills in English by watching captioned videos.					
3. I have improved my vocabulary by watching captioned videos.					
4. I prefer captions over subtitles when watching videos.					

Your Beliefs on Captions

Please mark the option that reflects your beliefs best on the benefits of captions in L2 learning.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
5. Captions help learners understand the content of a video more.					
6. Captions help learners improve their listening comprehension skills.					
7. Captions help learners improve their vocabulary.					
8. When captions are on, learners cannot pay attention to the video.					
9. Captions are distracting.					
10. When captions are on, learners ignore the audio.					
11. Captions turn listening activities into reading.					
12. Using captions in a listening activity is cheating.					
13. When captions are on, learners rely on their aural processing abilities less.					

Your own Practices with Captions

Please mark the option that reflects your practices best on the use of captions in class with your students.

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
14. When I play videos in class, I turn on captions.				
15. I encourage my students to turn on captions when watching videos on their own.				
16. I teach my students strategies to take advantage of captioned videos for out-of-class use.				

Open-ended Questions

17. For what purposes do you turn captions on?
18. How and why do you encourage your students to watch captioned videos?
19. What and how do you teach your students to take advantage of captions?
20. What problems could captions pose to in class listening activities?

Background Information

21. How old are you?
22. Please indicate the highest degree you have received
Teaching Certificate / Bachelor's / Master's / Doctorate / Other (please specify)
23. Have you taken any Information and Communications Technology (ICT) course before? (e.g. CALL in EFL or Audiovisual Aids in SLA, etc.)
Yes No
24. Have you taken *teaching listening skills* course before?
Yes No
25. Was "how to use captions in language classes" shown in ICT or listening skills?
Yes No
26. Please indicate your teaching experience (in years)