

Using Authentic Videos to Improve English Listening Skills of Dong Nai Technology University Non-English Majored Students

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ABSTRACT

Since English communication skills are crucial for students to have good careers in the future, this paper aims at finding the difficulties that students at Dong Nai Technology University encounter when learning listening skills and how multimedia learning materials can help them improve these skills. Students have critical difficulties in English listening because most of the Vietnamese high schools pay more attention to grammar, reading, and vocabulary. Listening is not an important part of many course books and most teachers do not pay attention to this vital skill in their classes. In this paper, the researchers reviewed the terms listening, factors causing learning listening difficulties. The review of literature indicated that when teachers are aware of students' listening difficulties they can help their students to develop effective listening strategies and finally solve students' difficulties in listening English as well as improve students' listening abilities.

KEYWORDS: *listening difficulties, Dong Nai Technology University, improve English listening skills, authentic videos*

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INTRODUCTION

I noticed that many of my students who are not majored in English at Dong Nai Technology University have problems in comprehending the oral language. Which made me wonder what alternative strategies and methods should be applied to support students using extrinsic means. So I want to investigate the reason why listening is so challenging to those students and how effective authentic videos can be in English listening classrooms. These should give students more opportunities and motivations in learning English.

Rationale of the study

In learning English as a second language (ESL), listening is one of the most vital and inseparable skills. Listening is the receptive use of words, and because it seeks to provide interpretation, meaning instead of expression is the emphasis (Cameron, 2001). Listening is the capacity to perceive and appreciate what other people think, said Saricoban (1999). For the student, listening is how the spoken language is implemented (i.e. the first step of foreign language learning). This takes place in the classroom when the teacher, a CD or other students are listened to. It is the way messages are perceived-what people say. From the four aspects of listening, speaking, reading and writing, foreign language learning can be considered. Listening is a significant factor in social interactions, and new messages were found to be more powerful by listening than reading (Luo, 2008). Usually, people listen for a certain purpose. When the object of

listening is only to relieve stress such as listening to music for relaxation and enjoyment, listeners hardly need any skills at all. However, if the object of listening is to obtain knowledge, especially while listening to foreign language tapes or disks to learn languages, learners need to have some skills such as: judgment before listening, focus while listening, deduction of the main information to be learned from key words in the lesson (key words), interpretation, synthesis of the information learned. Linse (2005) considers the teaching of listening skills to be essential to the development of other language skills. However, we should be mindful of the need to direct every kind of listening understanding operation well for specific purposes. To this point, Ur (1996) argues that in identifying a pre-set task, a listening target should be given. Listening is made up of a range of individual skills. Many learners have asserted that a text if in written form can be simple for them in information processing, but the same text in oral form, learners have many difficulties in grasping and capture the main content of the post. Especially for students without majoring in English at Dong Nai University of Technology, listening skills are a major obstacle in their globalization path. The first reason is that they were not exposed to this skill during their high school years. As mentioned above, the high school English curriculum in Vietnam only focuses on grammar and vocabulary, ignoring the most important thing about using English is communication. The second reason is students' backgrounds, they come from many different regions of

Vietnam: the North, the Central, the South and the West. The local accent greatly affects their English pronunciation and thereby their listening skills.

It is well-known that using media in teaching and learning English as a second language (ESL) is no longer a new thing. This kind of technique could be used to develop not only students' skills but also their cultural knowledge while bringing them a considerable motivation. I think that films, the major element of media, can assist a lot since it is regarded as one of the most common interests in students.

Research questions

This study (1) investigates the common difficulties that students face when studying listening and (2) identifies how authentic videos can help students improve their listening skills in the learning process. For these reasons, the study also helps to encourage Dong Nai Technology University students to have right attitudes towards studying English listening skills as well as to encourage teachers to use different teaching methods to create a motivating learning atmosphere.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Students' difficulties in learning listening skills

According to Gilakjani (2011), in day-to-day contact and education, listening plays an important role. Despite its significance, the overlooked capacity in training, study, teaching and evaluation of second language has long been recognized. When studying at lower levels, secondary or high school, students are accustomed to focusing on English grammar to perform well in many kinds of writing tests, multiple choice tests and listening skills are usually neglected in the classrooms. As Nguyen (2020) noted, Vietnamese researchers and educators have found that Vietnamese language learning does not yield successful results. Despite the requirement of oral communication skills, particularly for students who will be employed after school, teachers continue to follow English language class grammar translation methods. Students gradually become not interested in learning English and fear to listen to English. When studying at university, they are provided with the knowledge and practice for their future career in which English listening skills are also important to them. Students at Dong Nai Technology University come from many places all over the country. Most of them do not have solid English background since many schools in small towns and in the countryside do not give their students a chance to learn to listen to the language. Listening involves listening for thoughts, feelings, and intentions. Doing so requires active involvement, effort and practice (Takeno et al, 2007). Accordingly, there is a big need to improve students' listening skills and figure out the difficulties students encounter so that teachers can have better methods to encourage students to study these skills. Goh (1998) listed the most common problems in the order of frequency are:

- Quickly forgetting what is heard;
- Not recognizing the words they know;
- Understanding the message but not the intended message;
- Neglecting next part while thinking about meaning;
- Being unable to form a mental representation from words heard.

For a clearer look, they conducted a survey among students at the age of nine to eleven and the popular answers were "I cannot understand clearly as the speakers in the track are speaking so fast" "I know the words, but I cannot remember immediately when I hear." "I know the words, but I feel so anxious and under pressure to fill in the activity." "The speakers utter the words in a different way than we have learned.". I believe that these are caused by the lack of vocabulary and practice. However, not many learners feel interested in practicing listening to English due to their failure with difficult tasks. Hamouda (2013) asserted that knowing speech is a very challenging task for students. Apprentices have several difficulties listening to a script. In order to help students understand their communication challenges, teachers should understand and provide them with successful communication understanding techniques to overcome their listening understanding problems. EFL students have considerable difficulties listening to the grammar, comprehension and vocabulary of EFL students. Indeed, the teacher's assistance in the teaching process is of great significance to learners. Especially on a subject that is extremely difficult like listening. As Leaver et al (1993) stated, the teachers' ability to choose the key information and to train students to verify the general sense of the listening materials should be encouraged in teaching processes. The connection between teachers and students is the foundation of a successful class and the ideal motivation that students always want to have. In the most unexpected situations, teachers do not care where their students are in trouble or where they are stuck, but only with a desire to complete the lesson on a task, rarely any students gain knowledge and also the spirit of continuing to learn. Besides, Azmi et al (2014) emphasized that when listening to texts containing known words, it will be very easy for students to do with them. If students know the meaning of the words, this may arouse their interest and motivation and can have a positive effect on a student's listening comprehension ability. There will always be vocabulary that is difficult and uncommon in life but appears in the listening. This means that teachers have to really understand their students and the topic of the lesson.

How real - context videos can help improving students' listening skills

Listening is an ability which requires continuous training for students, while teachers often neglect hearing activities during the process of teaching and learning because they tend to take for granted that hearing is performed by the students automatically. Researchers have paid considerable attention to the use of videos or films as a learning platform and have successfully introduced different educational applications (Yang et al, 2009). They suggested that more useful than conventional paper-based education are digital learning materials (Mackey et al, 2008). Several previous studies have shown that learners consider these videos very strongly during the course of the learning process (Choi, 2005). In addition, many media web2.0 including YouTube are common channels that provide audio and video materials for linguistic research (Godwin-Jones, 2007), as well as a mobile device for learning through listening (MP5 Player). Foreign language learners have simultaneous visual and audio stimulation for providing visual, qualitative and non-verbal information which can compensate for any loss

of understanding through their own listening (Seo, 2002). Besides, Vandergrift (2007) has stated that native subtitles for students hinder their familiarity with pronunciation. If students are involved in listening, subtitles can better emphasize or give them a sense of what they should be aware of. For example, the use of movies is an important way of enhancing the listening skills and deeper understanding of the English culture of students. A majority of them strengthened their listening skills and responded by watching movies with positive attitudes. They think that it was better than vocabulary, that they understood more foreign culture and that during their study they felt relaxed and had fun. Liou (2000) has found that the highest proportion of students use foreign language captions as supports for the student's use of video to train their listening to their foreign language, particularly the higher attainment of students. The primary component of real-life film is to allow listeners to see or see in detail incidents, characters, stories and expressions. The perception of the personal experience of a student is also part of its comprehension skills.

Using films in the classroom, learners can assess their daily life by using the very medium (Goctu, 2017). Films provide realistic everyday discussions, but often provide real life elements, and as such contribute to the linguistic classroom fun and interaction. The findings of the present study have shown that films are effective instruments for the development of language skills of students. To order to develop their English, the participants to the study have a constructive outlook towards inclusion of films in their classrooms. With EFL classroom video, the motivation of students to learn language could be improved. We have found films helpful for them to develop their learning of verbs, vocabulary, phrasal language, verb phrases and different vocabulary and speech expressions. It is worth noting that choosing suitable films for learners is also a significant factor in achieving the desired goals. Films that match their age, culture and topics that interest them will enhance their learning spirit, creating a great motivation for students. This also connects the relationship between teachers and students in a way when students see the refinement in every detail of the teacher. According to Ismaili (2013), one benefit of using the film was that the visual stimuli specifically influence the expectations of the students. Films are more tactile than reading — in addition to verbal language, colour, motion and sound are also available. The film-based experimental class was much more vibrant and the students were more interested in closely observing the lesson than the other class, where only graduate readers discussed it. More student-teacher and student-student dialog has been developed with movie watching experiences. Films draw the attention and interest of the students. There is no doubt of the advantage of using films in teaching and learning. There are still some drawbacks on the good sides. Perhaps the most commonly cited drawbacks were that the use of classroom films meant lack of class time and the task of viewing films at class hours. As the biggest downside of watching a film, a film usually needs to minimize events in two hours or so when no time limit is applied to a listening track.

METHODOLOGY

Common selected methodology

In the last study, Argyrbayev (2014) (MA in TESOL, Senior Lecturer, Suleyman Demirel University) organized an

experiment with 63 participants, aged 21-23, to reinforce his view that it is effective to use films in teaching a foreign culture. I highly appreciate this article for its clear purpose, specific information but the quantity as well as quality of survey questions need to be renewed by exploiting more points about how and how much students absorb the culture via movies. The effect of digital storytelling on the listening comprehension abilities of pre-school student in a foreign language learning context was explored by Abidin et al (2011). The experimental group studied digital background and showed a substantial improvement over the control group in their analysis. In a Malaysian primary School that uses Chinese teaching, Sandaran et al (2013) have conducted a study of the impact of digital history on listening awareness with 9-year-old students. Eight fairy tales conceived as interactive stories were listened and interpreted by the students. Preliminary results obtained from observations showed a substantial increase in student interest, attention and motivation and a clear improvement of listening skills during the listening study. However, they noted that vocabulary teaching exercises should take place before students listen to and watch digital stories in order to improve their listening skills.

A representative study

In Safran's study 2015 on the effectiveness of educational films as a means to enhance the listening skills of English students, the researcher applied quasi-experimental methods. First, the group of students was invited to participate in an interview to learn their listening skills using movies. The researcher then divided the selected group of students into the experimental group which was taught by film-watching activities and control group which was taught by conventional methods. She employed a survey questionnaire with twenty – five items to collect data to answer the second research question on the influence of movies towards students' listening competence in the classroom. In the five - point Likert scales questionnaire, students are asked to choose one in five options: Strongly agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly disagree - which is best suitable for the context of students. The results were collected at the pre-test stage and the post-test stage in a semester.

Mackey (2005) say that researchers are inclined to use quantitative as well as qualitative methods for data collection and reporting, particularly on ESL / EFF. Accordingly, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is applied sequentially with respect to the objectives and purpose of this research. Quantitative data will be collected and analysed for report and discussion via questionnaire surveys distributed to students. Qualitative data are then collected through semi-structured interviews in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the survey questionnaire findings. Survey questionnaire is regarded as the most appropriate way to collect social science data. The advantage of using questionnaires, among many other variables, was established by Gillham (2008) since participants do not impose strain on those involved in the survey, the choice has no place in the survey questionnaire because the participants typically respond anonymously and the questionnaire can be easily evaluated. After the interviews, the questionnaires will clarify explicitly and describe students' responses in a deeper way. It aims to

make the results more compelling and to get over the limitations or weaknesses of other approaches because they can help each other to improve the accuracy of the research results with questionnaires and interviews as adequately resources for the collected study statistics or data.

Research instruments

Procedure

Each semester, I teach approximately 7 classes including 30 students per class. All of them are non-English specialized students focusing on other majors such as Information Technology, Automotive Technology or Electrical Technology. Each class is an interesting mix of themes that ensures fairness of English proficiency across groups. Thirty students majoring in Information Technology and Automobile Technology from one class were offered to participate in the study willingly. First, the researcher organized a small survey about the ability to listen to English as well as the students' perceptions of this subject. Next, the trial took place over a month, in which the aforementioned students learned English through real-life videos and short films accompanied by activities before, during and after watching the video. At the end of the trial period, the group of students were once again surveyed by questionnaires to recognize the change in their abilities and attitudes. In addition, 10 of them were randomly selected to participate in an interview in order to better understand how this method affects the participants.

Questionnaires

The research used a sample survey for 30 students who studied at least two basic courses in English in their first year of university. In order to obtain accurate data for the research questions the questionnaire was written in English and doubled up to 30 copies for 30 students. In a short time, this is a useful way to collect enough data. The students' answers collected through the survey could give a clear understanding of their listening ability awareness and film-watching activities in order to develop their communication skills. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. Section one includes three articles about gender, age and significant personal details of students. In the questionnaire survey, student identities were not needed as those who participated in the survey were still anonymous. Section 2 addresses six questions on short details about listening skills and film-looking practices. The questions have been closed with choices to choose from by putting ticks on the answers according to their circumstances. Students were invited to select one choice from just four choices in questions 1, 3, 5 and 6. There were six options in each question in question 2 and 4, and students were able to select any options appropriate for their background. The student knowledge of the capabilities of video – watching tasks or activities in English classroom, was covered in section three by 8 Likert scale items. Eight items in section three has been adapted from a research by Safranji (2015), the findings of which indicate the students' understanding of movie – watching tasks. Students are asked to select one in five options (Strongly agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly disagree).

The completed questionnaires were carefully checked for confirmation after the survey questionnaires had been answered and collected. The data have thus been placed on the Social Software Statistical Package (SPSS) for analysis. This procedure helped to identify students' accepted attitudes to information gap activities.

Although it was really easy and helpful, the questionnaire was still cumbersome. The answers of students may not give the students true perceptions due to certain external and internal factors that could affect the responses of their students. Students did not respond adequately to these questionnaires in some cases as they did not completely understand the questions found in the questionnaire. Before completing the questionnaire, the researchers clarified the questions for the participants. Besides that, to get the valid findings, semi-structures interviews were held to strengthen the results and somehow the researcher could understand the students' choices from the questionnaire.

Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were made up of 10 volunteer participants in order to establish the credibility of the findings from the survey. The details from the meetings could provide clearer evidence for the analysis. The interview consisted of five questions that were taken from the choices of students who took part in the survey. They were open questions to enable them to share their ideas and beliefs while studying English in the classroom. The questions were written in English and in Vietnamese to ensure that students could accurately understand the interview questions and provide the best answers. The participants' answers were and key ideas were noted to be analyzed while the interviewer listened to the responses of the participants. The researcher translated the replies in Vietnamese for transcription into English.

Ethical considerations

Since the study consisted of 50 participants, ethical problems required to be discussed. Before the survey is sent, any student who participates in the survey will be asked to give their consent. In addition, ten students involved in the semi-structured follow-up interview were invited. They were encouraged to share their own ideas about the right answers and did not have to adopt any response configurations. Individual details and interviewee identities were kept confidential and the survey and interview information was gathered and administered without names. In the conduct of the study the considerations of ethics are highly valued such that no laws or regulations are broken.

Pedagogical implication and suggestions

In English as a second language (ESL), listening is one of the vital and inseparable skills. Most students regard this field as a tough and chewy subject which raises a lot of researches to help them solve the problems. Now, thanks to those researches, we have some ideas of applying movies into teaching and learning for listening – cultural knowledge development. It is understandable that teachers like using movies in classes because of their variety, flexibility and applicability. As Swaffar et al (1997) state, films enable learners to observe real-life communication when native speakers interact in the

authentic settings. Moreover, movies provide visual clues in addition to audio and written inputs, which support comprehension and production in L2 (Hanley et al., 1995). In the future, I expect there will be more works about the influence of movies on vocabulary improvement as well as more suggestions for listening enhancement techniques.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Through the pre-test survey, it is easy to see that selected students at Dong Nai Technology University have the same problems as students in previous studies. First, they easily forget what they just heard when absorbing in listening to the next paragraph. On the contrary, sometimes they are so focused on analyzing the information they have just heard that they miss the next paragraph which leads to not linked and incomplete data. In addition, most students at this level are subjected to being subjective when they hear the deceiving piece of information and then give up on listening to the next part, which contains the real answer. Last but not least, the children reported that they often got lost halfway through the listening. The reason is that they cannot imagine the context, emotions, and character who is speaking.

However, the good news is that students have a positive attitude toward using real-world video in the classroom. In terms of data, more than 90% of participants reported that they were genuinely interested in this approach. They believe that applying short videos in the classroom makes learning more enjoyable and easier. All of them say that during the past month they have learned a lot more words more easily than usual and even know how to use those new words in specific situations. In fact, the researcher has observed and noted many amazingly positive results. The number of people distracted and chatting in the classroom is significantly reduced. They volunteered to speak, the lessons passed faster and more energetically.

Fortunately, this study has shown gradual growth in students' listening skills. The percentage of students giving the correct answers on tasks is increasing. During the first week, the children were shown bilingual videos - Vietsub and Engsub, so they would not be overwhelmed. For the second week, the teacher used Engsub-only videos at x0.75 speed. At this time, students began to practice vocabulary guessing in context (long and difficult words were provided before watching videos). In the 3rd week, the video speed is adjusted to original. One hundred percents of students admitted that subtitles are very helpful to them. In the final week of the experiment, it was not too hard to notice the improvement in their listening ability and learning attitude. The 10 students who participated in the interview all said that if they were chosen again, they would definitely participate in this study. Moreover, they hope to have the opportunity to continue learning English with this strategy.

CONCLUSION

Authentic videos are a controversial but promising subject in language teaching that can be discussed in various ways for a number of purposes. The writer can only glimpse this matter on the small scale of the present study. The writer also found success with short films, in line with previous research. The researcher was able to see some significant changes in the behavior of the students as well as the level

of English listening over the course of four weeks. Students with smiles come to class and are ready to study. However, instead of the subjects that are set in their textbooks, they prefer to talk about what happened in videos. This is one of the greatest constraints that emerge as research progresses. Other prominent problems emerge from the job transition of the writer, lack of time management, disputes with teacher scheduling during interviews, technological failures with projectors / televisions, etc. However, the writer is proud to have been able to provide meaningful and relevant results for educators in Vietnam, especially teachers at Dong Nai Technology University, for a project constructed from scratch.

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