

The Effect of Watching Videos on Listening Comprehension of Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners in Public Schools

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Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate the possibility of learning listening skills by watching videos and explore the attitudes of students toward this method. Numerous studies are available to illustrate the effectiveness of this method; however, there is no study exploring the attitude and level of proficiency after using this method in Public Schools of Iran. Unfortunately, in Iran, after many years of education in public schools and passing many English courses, students are still not able to understand and convey their intention by using English language. For the purpose of this study, 75 male students of different Public Schools in Isfahan randomly selected and took part in it. To make sure about the homogeneity of participants the Oxford Placement Test was administered and then 60 participants with higher grades selected. A pre-test and a post-test which included 50 standardized TOEFL listening items were administered to the participants to check their levels of understanding, before and after the treatment. In addition, a questionnaire that was designed by researchers in this field was given to the participants at the end of the treatment to explore their attitudes. The result indicated that by watching videos, learners showed positive attitudes and their levels of proficiency in listening skill were significantly improved. This study has implications for EFL curriculum designing in Iran and can make Iranian EFL teachers, especially in Public Schools, aware of the importance of this method.

Keywords: EFL learning Strategies, Iranian EFL learners, Listening Strategies, Learning Strategies, Iranian Public Schools

INTRODUCTION

Exposing learners to different comprehensible inputs is necessary for a successful teaching and learning, especially in EFL classes, the more these inputs are similar to real world situation and real life context the better comprehension learners have. Chamot (2005) believes that learning strategies are the thoughts and actions that individuals use to accomplish a learning goal. Nunan (2002, p. 65) stated, "Listening has a great importance in foreign language classroom. Research in the field of listening skill has developed because of the effective role of comprehensible input". Teachers in public schools of Iran have faced with many limitations in teaching listening skill, including the lack of suitable strategies and techniques in this field or lack of the In-service Training

Programs. These limitations lead to an inappropriate curriculum that lacks video or audio resources and does not stimulate a situation similar to real world. Canning-Wilson (2000, p. 5) stated the importance of video as a powerful and effective resource to call the attention of English language learners. Using videos as an authentic resource will provide a situation that learner's understanding of comprehensible input will be improved.

This Study

In this study, videos act as a tool for improving listening comprehension. Ur (1984, p. 88) stated that through using videos as a method of teaching, students can concentrate on verbal and non-verbal information during watching movies, and in this way they will be motivated to achieve comprehension and develop their listening habit. Participants of this study were 60 male students that were selected randomly from the top Public Schools in Isfahan according to OPT criteria.

Significance of This Study

The first benefit of using this method is the wide practical scope it has that can be applied to different levels and different courses of EFL classrooms especially in Public Schools. The second reason is that this method provides a situation similar to the real life context, which make students aware of the different situation and help them to overcome the limitations and barriers of the classroom atmosphere and of course, they are more authentic resources than old ones. The third reason of using this method is to keep students motivated in contrast to some years ago that Iranian EFL learners in Public Schools were trained by Grammar Translation Method that was so frustrating.

Research Questions

This study was an attempt to find answers to the following question:

- RQ1: Is there any significant difference in listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners in Public Schools after using videos as a method of teaching?
- RQ2: How Iranian EFL learners in Public Schools evaluated the use of this method in learning listening skill?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Teachers and instructors neglect listening comprehension skill and less research attention has been paid to this field. It seems that listening comprehension is a passive process, but on the contrary, it is not; listener plays a discriminator role and should discriminate among huge input, which he or she receives, understand them, keep necessary information and act upon them. Nunan (2002, p. 97) once said, "Listening is the Cinderella in second language learning. All too often, it has been overlooked by its elder sister: speaking". Listening comprehension is not a simple process as just receiving sounds and transmitting them in to the brain as Brown (2001, p. 69) states:

“listening is not a one-way street. It is not merely the process of unidirectional receiving of audible symbols. One facet - the first step - of listening comprehension is the psychomotor process of receiving sound waves through the ear and transmitting nerve impulses to the brain. But that is just the beginning of what is clearly an interactive process as the brain acts on the impulses, bringing to bear a number of different cognitive and affective mechanisms”. Numerus researches revealed that listening skill is an important piece in learning process, such as (Holden, 2004, p. 257) states that listening has many aspects that it is difficult to deal with and understand so it requires a lot mental process, and all of these skills play an important role in the process of language learning and the improving more related language skills. Rost (1988, p. 66) defines the meaning of listening as a process that involves a continuum of active processes that are under the control of listeners and passive processes, which are not. Richards (1983, p. 219-240) classifies listening tasks to engage in bottom up and the top-down process, which uses background knowledge to assist in comprehending the message. O'Malley and Chamot (1990, 1985) point out that language learning strategies are divided into three main categories, metacognitive, cognitive, and social affective. As it can be seen in figure.1, Wagner (2002, pp. 10-12) produced a model of second language listening comprehension as an important part of listening ability.

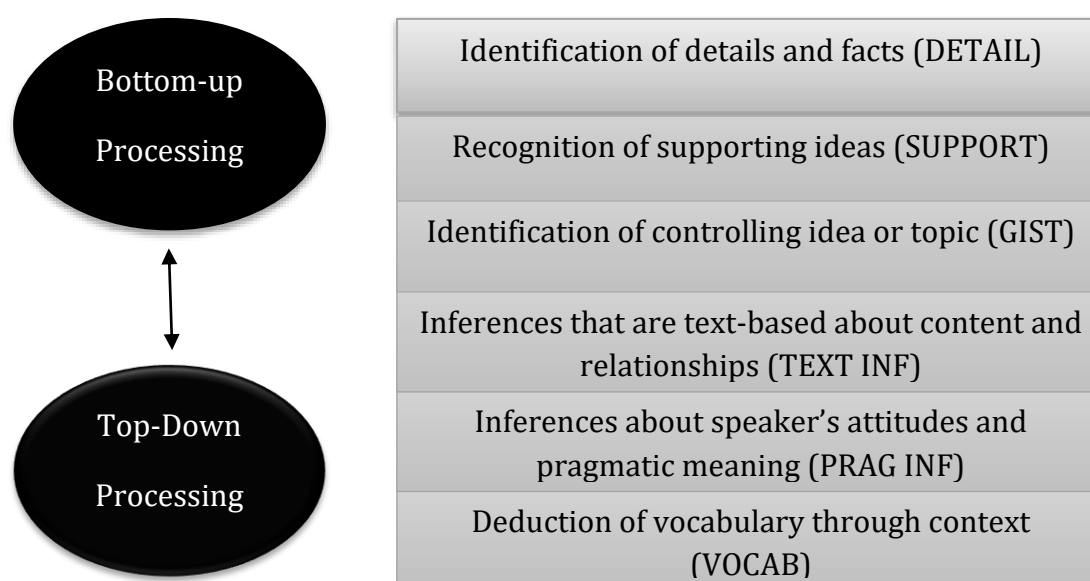


Figure 1. Operationalization of a Model of Second Language Listening Comprehension (Wagner, 2002, p.12)

Although there are many researches in learning strategies but they are just different in the names and in classification. Learning strategies are “the specific thoughts and behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information” (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). O'Malley and Chamot (1990) have categorized two main types of strategies, metacognitive and cognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies refer to awareness of learners in their learning process and cognitive strategies are related to learning task. Some studies used movies as a tool to motivate students such as, King (2002, p.35) that motivated students in learning English by using

captioned and non-captioned films. He selected DVD-based movies because of their many features including functional menus, subtitles and others. Some other studies such as Gebhardt (2004, p.26) used videos as a listening strategy. He investigated the effects of watching previews and movie trailers on first year university students' listening skill. The results showed important role of using video-based materials in the EFL instruction by providing a suitable and proper context for students to be motivated and enhance their listening skill.

METHOD

Participants

The participants of this study contained 60 male Iranian intermediate EFL learners in randomly chosen public schools that were selected by administering an Oxford Placement Test. By the way, no learning disability was observed among the subjects.

Instruments

The following instruments were employed for the data collection:

1. OPT that provides a reliable and efficient means for placing students properly at the beginning of a course for teachers (Allan, 2004).
2. Standardized Pre-Test and Post-Test for listening skill including TOEFL listening part.
3. Questionnaire that was based on different scientific theories by other researchers in this field for measuring learner's attitude about learning English listening skills through videos.

Data Collection Procedure

First, 60 EFL learners from different public schools were selected randomly and tested by the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) to make sure that they were rather homogeneous. According to Allan (2004), the test has been calibrated against the levels system provided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (commonly known as the CEF), which has been adopted by the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) as well as by governments and major institutions, including exam boards, throughout Europe. After estimating the levels of the participants, a pre-test included 50 standardized TOEFL listening items was administered to the learners. Students have to listen to different conversations and then respond to items to check their understanding. The data collection methods included teaching through videos for 40 hours, 4 hours per week. All videos were selected by participants' votes from different topics and genres. At the end of experiment, a post-test which was the same pre-test administered to participants to measure their listening ability. In addition, their attitudes toward learning listening through videos were checked by a questionnaire. The questionnaire was written in English and no translation of them used. To calculate the reliability of the questionnaire, the Cronbach's Alpha was conducted for this purpose. In order to do this a pilot study was performed

by selecting 10 Intermediate EFL learners in Gooyesh Institute. Then, their responses and comments about the ambiguity of the questionnaire were checked. In order to evaluate the validity of the questionnaire, two experts who had Ph.D. degrees in TEFL were consulted to be sure about the validity of the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

In the analysis phase of this study, the results obtained from pre-test and post-test were summed up and the procedures of descriptive statistics were conducted on them. According to Table 1, the Likert Scale Five Point was used to measure the participants' attitudes toward using videos in the questionnaire.

Table 1. Rubrics for the Likert Scale

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Indifferent	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Unfavorable	Somewhat Unfavorable	Undecided or Indifferent	Somewhat Favorable	Strongly Favorable

RESULTS

In order to answer the first research question, the analysis of data included a comparison of scores gained from the pre-test and post-test:

Table 2. Participants' TOEFL Listening Scores

Students	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference	Students	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference	Students	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
1	34	39	+5	21	34	39	+5	41	32	37	+5
2	36	42	+6	22	29	33	+4	42	47	47	0
3	33	41	+8	23	33	39	+6	43	36	39	+2
4	36	40	+4	24	32	45	+13	44	36	38	+2
5	35	39	+4	25	33	35	+2	45	27	34	+7
6	31	38	+7	26	27	31	+4	46	29	32	+3
7	30	40	+10	27	19	27	+8	47	38	45	+7
8	33	38	+5	28	44	45	+1	48	24	33	+9
9	32	39	+7	29	31	36	+5	49	32	40	+8
10	39	45	+6	30	30	32	+2	50	31	42	+11
11	34	40	+6	31	38	39	+1	51	38	44	+6
12	30	36	+6	32	38	48	+10	52	38	47	+9
13	30	37	+7	33	34	42	+8	53	43	43	0
14	37	40	+3	34	22	29	+7	54	29	34	+4
15	36	42	+6	35	29	33	+4	55	32	35	+3
16	33	37	+4	36	30	31	+1	56	46	46	0
17	32	36	+4	37	36	38	+2	57	34	39	+5
18	38	40	+2	38	34	43	+11	58	22	31	+9
19	39	47	+8	39	42	43	+1	59	40	44	+4
20	31	36	+7	40	26	37	+11	60	37	43	+6

Table 3. Comparison of Scores

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Population Std. Dev.	SE \bar{x}	Sig. (2tailed)
Pre-Test	60	33.516	5.5065	5.4604	0.7108	.000
Post-Test	60	38.833	4.8787	4.8379	0.6298	

As displayed in Table 3 there was a significant increase in the Mean of the post-test: 38.833 in relation to the Mean of the pre-test: 33.516. The difference is approximately, 5.32 which means watching videos had a great impact on learners' listening comprehension.

The second research question aimed to find out the participants' attitudes toward learning listening skill by videos. For this purpose a questionnaire was designed which consisted of 12 questions. The five-point Likert Scales were employed in rating weight.

Table 4. Participants' Attitudes toward Learning Listening Skill by Watching Videos.
(According to the Table 1 which displays Rubrics for the Likert Scale)

No	Descriptions	5	%	4	%	3	%	2	%	1	%
1	Participants are satisfied with learning listening skill by watching videos.	41	68.4	12	20	4	6.6	3	5	0	0
2	Participants understand English in everyday use through watching videos.	34	56.7	13	21.7	5	8.3	5	8.3	3	5
3	Learning English is more fun by watching videos.	49	81.7	6	10	2	3.3	2	3.3	1	1.7
4	Participants are more interested in learning English through videos.	50	83.4	7	11.6	3	5	0	0	0	0
5	Participants improved their listening skill by learning English through videos.	48	80	4	6.6	3	5	4	6.6	1	1.7
6	Participants felt more relaxed in learning English by watching videos.	39	65	14	23.3	5	8.3	1	1.7	1	1.7
7	Learning listening skill through watching videos is a waste of time.	0	0	0	0	1	1.7	6	10	53	88.3
8	More than 4 hours per week is necessary to learn listening skill by watching videos.	33	55	9	15	12	20	3	5	3	5
9	Participants learned more slangs and idioms	55	91.5	5	8.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	Participants learned more about foreign cultures by watching videos	51	85	5	8.3	1	1.7	3	5	0	0
11	Learning listening skill by watching videos did not satisfied participants' needs.	0	0	0	0	9	15	5	8.3	46	76.7
12	Selecting videos by participants make this method more effective.	47	78.4	6	10	7	11.6	0	0	0	0

As it can be seen in Table 4, most of the participants developed and maintained a positive attitude toward learning listening skill by watching videos.

DISCUSSION

The summary of the results elaborated in the previous section is based on the analysis of the results; it was revealed that there is a significant difference in listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners in Public schools after watching videos; also, they showed a positive attitude toward this method. These results are in line with King (2002, p.19) who stated that watching movies have different advantages such as: a) movies contain visual elements that means receiving information both by eyes and ears, b) receiving the input both by eyes and ears lead to gain most of the presented information either verbally or non-verbally features, c) videos are authentic materials that include real life language and provide real world context which is so enjoyable for English language learners, d) watching videos is a effective way to understand foreign cultures.

The results showed that Participants' attitudes toward this method are positive and they preferred this method to any other routine method like Grammar Translation Method. Asking the participants to vote for their favorite genres and topics motivated them and helped them to learn better. Ellis (1997, p. 47) defines motivation as the attitude and effective states that influence the learner's effort to learn a second language. Table 4 confirms the "Learning and Motivation" idea by Ur (1984, p. 68). It is necessary to give interest and enjoyment to the learners who learn English as a foreign language and using movies as a method of teaching is so effective, it helps them to concentrate better during study.

CONCLUSION

Although there are many different learning strategies, which help students to learn better, in this study researcher used video as a teaching method. Videos are rich resources that provide a real life context full of contextualized linguistic, paralinguistic and authentic cross-cultural information. Moreover, features films (Movie, Motion Picture) are more motivating for learning English. (King, 2002; Shea, 1995; Gebhardt, 2004). It should be mentioned that In Iranian Public Schools, due to some problems such as time constraints (timetable schedules), limitation in video teaching materials and lack of collaboration from several teachers, researcher faced with many problems, which might have had negative impact on the results. As it was mentioned, the first purpose of this study was to measure to what extent the learners listening comprehension will be improved after watching videos as a method of teaching and the second purpose was to explore the learners' attitudes toward this method. For the purpose of this study, 60 male students of different public schools in Isfahan randomly selected and took part in study then tested by the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) to make sure that they were rather homogeneous. After estimating the levels of the participants, a pretest included 50 standardized TOEFL listening items was administered to the learners. The treatment included teaching through videos for 40 hours, 4 hours per week. At the end of experiment, a post-test, which was the same pre-test, administered to participants to measure their listening ability and their attitudes toward learning listening through videos were checked by a questionnaire. In summary, as shown in

Tables 2 and 3, participants listening comprehension was improved and as shown in Table 4, they had positive attitudes toward learning by watching videos.

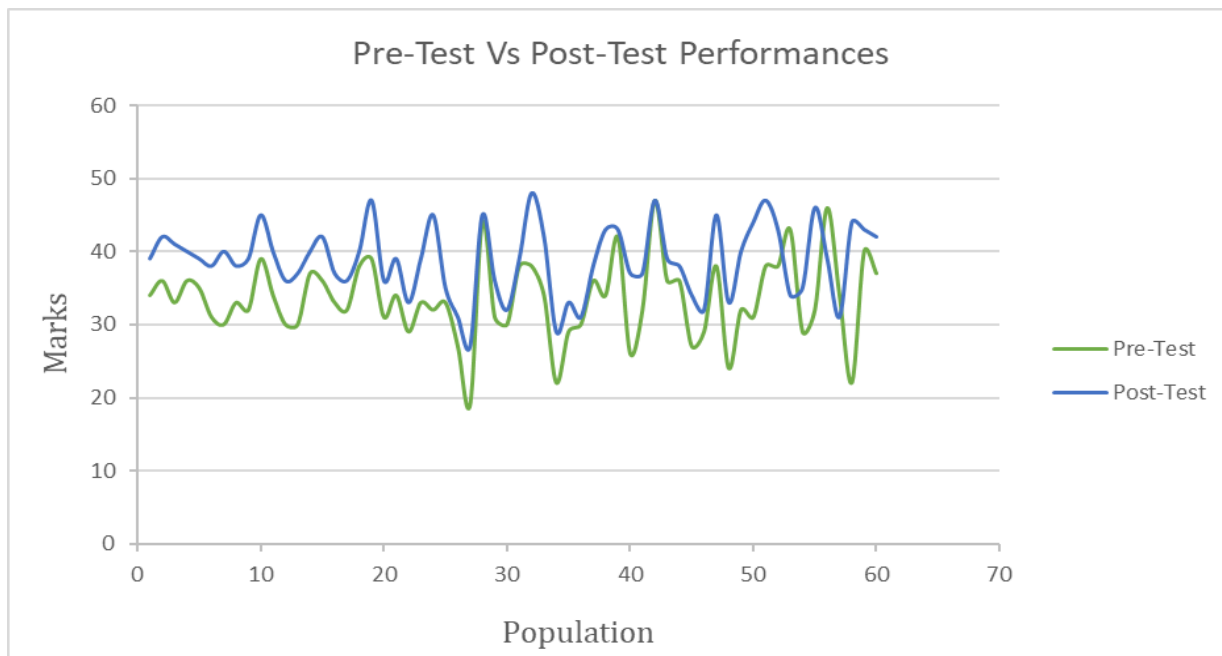
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APPENDICES

Appendix A

The below figure compares the students' grades before and after the Treatment.



Appendix B

The below chart indicates results of the Questionnaire used in this study based on 5 Points Likert Scale (5: strongly agree to 1: strongly disagree).

