

# Effect of Using Video Materials in the Teaching of Listening Skills for University Students

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Received: June 27, 2014    Accepted: August 16, 2014    Published: August 22, 2014

doi:10.5296/ijl.v6i4.5870    URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v6i4.5870>

## Abstract

The purposes of this study were 1) to develop the listening skills of university students studying English with the use of video materials and 2) to evaluate students' attitudes towards the use of video materials in teaching listening skills. The sample of the student population for this study was 41 first-year English major students in the second semester of the academic year 2012 at Thaksin University, Thailand. They were selected by simple random sampling. The study was conducted over 20 teaching periods. The one-group pretest-posttest design was implemented in this study. The instruments used in this study were 1) lesson plans 2) English comprehension tests (pretest and posttest) and 3) a questionnaire of the students' attitude. Regarding the data analysis, mean, percentage and t-test scores for the dependent sample were employed. The result indicated that 1) the students' English listening comprehension ability increased significantly after learning with videos and 2) students had positive attitudes towards using videos in teaching listening skills.

**Keywords:** Video materials, Listening skills, University students

## 1. Introduction

### *1.1 Rationale for the Study*

The teaching of English language to Thai students has been of limited success over many years. This is despite numerous attempts by the Ministry of Thai Education to develop curricula to help students improve English skills. However the majority of Thai students are not competent in using English language skills, especially listening skills. This is because listening requires effort and concentration, and it is difficult to determine whether someone is actually listening to a speaker. Poor listening skills can have adverse consequences. For students, poor listening can result in lower grades, incorrect assignments, lost job opportunities, and the like.

Listening is a skill that is rarely taught. In school, students are taught speaking, reading, and writing skills, but, in general, there are a few courses devoted to the subject of listening. Moreover, most people are so engrossed in talking or thinking about what they are about to say next that they miss out on many wonderful opportunities to learn about new concepts, ideas and culture.

There are three main reasons to support the importance of listening in foreign language learning. First, a new language learner should learn listening at the initial stage of language learning in the same manner as a child learns a mother language (Buck, 2001). This is because listening is a skill developed in the very beginning of a child's learning of language. Listening is a natural process in acquiring a new language. According to Underwood (1989), a child receives a large amount of verbal input through listening prior to developing speaking, writing and reading skills. These skills are developed later as the child matures.

Second, listening can enhance speaking skill. Spoken language provides a means of interaction for the learner. Furthermore, a learner's failure to understand the language they hear is an incentive, not a barrier, to interaction and learning. Therefore, it is necessary to develop listening skill in the initial stage of learning in order to become a good speaker.

Finally, listening exercises help to draw a learner's attention to new forms in the language i.e. vocabulary, grammar and interaction patterns. Thus, listening comprehension provides the right conditions for language acquisition and the development of other language skills (Krashen, 1989).

In order to develop listening skills, effective material used in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes is a crucial aspect of the teaching method. Technology has played an increasingly important role in the methods of instruction. One technology is video which offers instructors a wide variety of resource material to be employed in EFL classrooms to improve students' listening comprehension.

Video materials can be used an alternative instructional tool for teaching listening since they are a rich source of conversation and dialogue by English speakers. This can greatly facilitate comprehension of pronunciation. Secules, Herron & Tomasello (1992 cited in Keihaniyan, 2013) mentioned that the employment of video-based instruction is preferable to audio-only

instruction in teaching language learning due to its multiplying input modalities that can motivate learners and attract their attention to the aural input. As a result, the use of video material is widely employed as an instrument to practice listening skill in English language learning. For these reasons, the aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the effects of using video materials in the development of listening skills in an EFL classroom.

### *1.2 The Purposes of the Study*

The purposes of the study were as follows:

- 1) To develop the listening skills of university students studying English through using video materials.
- 2) To evaluate students' attitudes towards using video materials in teaching listening skills.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### *2.1 Models of Listening Process*

#### *2.1.1 Top-down and bottom-up processing*

With regard to language processing, it is now generally recognized that learners need to adopt both top-down and bottom-up processing strategies. Bottom-up processing strategies emphasize the individual components of spoken messages: the phonemes and individual lexical and grammatical elements which need to be understood in order to understand the messages. Top-down processing strategies emphasize the macro-features of text such as the speaker's purpose and the topic of the message (Nunan, 1998). Chaudron & Richards (1986 cited in Habibi, Jahandar & Khodabandehlou, 2013) explained that top-down processing includes prediction and inference based on facts, propositions and expectations. That is to say it is rather possible to comprehend the meaning of a word prior to decoding its sounds, as individuals have many kinds of knowledge, including world knowledge. This view is taken from real life situations in which one knows what basically occurs and consequently has expectations of what one will hear. Therefore, top-down processing, occurs from an internal source from background knowledge and world expectations. It was asserted by Richards (1990) that an understanding of the role of bottom-up and top-down processes in listening is the heart of listening comprehension. Even though the cognitive process of listening cannot be observed, comprehending the listening process can be useful in rethinking the methods of teaching listening.

#### *2.1.2 Interactive Processing*

Bottom-up and top-down processing is the view that listening comprehension concerns interactive processing. In other words, listening comprehension is a mix of bottom-up and top-down processing. O'Malley, et al. (1989) found that effective second language listeners employed both top-down and bottom-up strategies to understand meaning whereas incompetent listeners interpret the meanings of individual words. The idea is that listening comprehension is the outcome of an interaction of a numbers of pieces of knowledge. This means that listeners have to use many types of knowledge. The knowledge of specific aspects

of language such as word meanings or grammatical structures, and the influence of the listener's expectation and background knowledge, the particular situation and the topic itself all contribute to the listener's ability to comprehend spoken messages. In other words, listeners use whatever information they possess to interpret what a speaker is saying.

To summarize, in listening comprehension, bottom-up and top-down processing are used together to interpret intended meaning. In order to comprehend the message conveyed, listeners must comprehend the phonetic input, vocabulary, and syntax (bottom-up processing), and employ the context of situations, general knowledge, and past experiences (top-down processing). That is to say, listeners do not passively listen to speakers in order to understand the meaning of the messages, but actively interpret the speakers' expected meaning and acquire meaningful information by assimilating the sounds, words, and phrases.

### *2.2 Authentic Materials for Language Learning*

Authentic material is defined by Gardner and Miller (1999, pp. 101) as material intended for some other use besides language learning. Authentic material can come in all forms of communication. It may be written text, audio recordings of actual communications or video of conversations or dialogue, all containing content not intended to be used for language instruction.

There are several benefits of employing authentic materials for language learning and teaching. First, they can provide examples for learners of how to communicate in real life situations through exposing them to the sorts of messages they will likely face in everyday conversation. Second, authentic materials can help the learner focus on the language skills they truly need and ignore skills they may not need for their job or studies.

In addition, authentic materials can strengthen learning strategies which can then be employed in different situations. Those learners with training in self-access learning tend to possess knowledge of what language learning strategies they can best use. Little, Devitt & Singleton (1988 cited in Guariento & Morley, 2001) stated that authentic texts motivate learners and promote language acquisition. Firstly, authentic text or material tends to be more interesting than invented text. Secondly, authentic text motivates learners to pay attention to meaning instead of only form or structure. According to Little et al, language acquisition occurs when learners activate their background knowledge of the world, of discourse, and of the language system.

### *2.3 The Use of Videos for Language Learning*

Video can be a very valuable tool for language learning. The advantages this tool provides, which this section will discuss, include the provision of samples of real-life communication, motivation for language learning, and promoting language acquisition.

The first major advantage of using video is that it can provide samples of real-life situations. Lonergan (1984, pp. 4-5 cited in Lustigová 2013) pointed out that video is able to present "complete communicative situations. At their best, video presentations will be intrinsically

interesting to language learners. The learner will want to watch, even if comprehension is limited.” Learners can use video to study how language use may be employed by age and how the relationship between language use and paralinguistic features can be focused, including how to convey moods and feelings.

Mirvan (2013) asserted that employing video materials in a classroom can enhance students’ motivation to learn since it can expose them to a wide variety of situations that can help them comprehend similar situations in real life.

Allan (1985, pp. 48-49 cited in Liu, 2005), who also argues that video reflects real-life communication, advances another reason why video is more advantageous than other forms of authentic material; it presents “slices of life.” Normally, teachers work with dialog in textbooks or audio cassettes; however, video presents communication more contextually. According to Allan, this makes video a valuable addition to language learning.

Besides providing real communication situations, video can be more motivating than other forms of authentic material. Christopher and Ho (1996, pp. 86) provide another reason why this is so; it can be entertaining. Music and setting elements can make for an enjoyable experience by learners. Video movies provide topics and ideas for learners to discuss.

In order to choose video material for the classroom, topics must be chosen based on students’ interest and their level of English proficiency, as well as cultural aspects. In addition, Nunan (2003) stated that the design of listening cycles is an important consideration, which involves selecting the content of the video or audio recording and dividing it into sections for presenting in stages to learners. Instructors can design cycles of activities in which learners can participate. The instructor should also be a reflective observer in order not to distract the learners’ attention from the video. Therefore, it would be very beneficial for instructors to select video materials that are conducive to language learning. Learners are more motivated to cope with the instruction when given the opportunity to study with the use of video materials.

Studies have revealed that visual attention is affected by several factors. While moment-to-moment visual attention of children may wander from the set, the studies showed that they steadily monitor the presentation at a surface level, so that their visual attention is recaptured by certain audio cues (Anderson, Alwitt, Lorch, & Levin, 1979). Nugent (1982), Pezdek and Hartman (1983), and Pezdek and Stevens (1984 cited in Zarei & Gilanian, 2013) conducted studies to examine a video program with its audio and visual presentations decomposed by comparing the role of these two sources of information, individually and together. In most of the research, the integration of visual and auditory input has led to more recall than visual-only or audio-only presentations.

#### *2.4 Related Research*

Herron (1994, pp. 775-795) studied American university students of French and compared video and text-based materials. An experiment was conducted in which the control group was taught with a text while “semi-authentic” videos were used to teach the experimental group. These videos were an “on-going drama in which native speakers interact in authentic

situations”. The “drama” was created specifically for language learners but the videos also included clips from French films and television advertisements which added a measure of authenticity. The experimental group’s scores in listening comprehension showed significant improvement over those of the control group.

Thanajaro (2000) conducted a study concerning the use of authentic materials to develop listening comprehension in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom through analysis of the class observation and interviews with students. The results revealed that the use of authentic materials in ESL classrooms provided a positive effect on ESL student’s motivation to learn the language.

Maneekul (2002) conducted a study on using authentic material and tasks to enhance listening skill for undergraduate students majoring in English. The results revealed that students’ listening skill increased to a higher level when using authentic materials and tasks after watching native speakers’ video programs.

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1 Population and Sample*

The population of this study was 118 first-year English major students in the second semester of academic year 2012 at Thaksin University. The sample in the study was 41 of these students, selected by simple random sampling from one of three classes.

#### *3.2 Duration of the Study*

The study was conducted during the second semester of academic year 2012. It involved 20 periods of an hour each. Two periods were used for the pre-test and post-test and the other 22 periods were used for the experiment.

#### *3.3 Variables*

Independent variable: The use of video materials in teaching listening skills.

Dependent variables: The students’ learning achievement on listening skills and attitudes towards learning through using video materials.

#### *3.4 Research Instruments*

1. 10 units of lesson plans for the instruction.
2. 10 short English language documentaries about culture, environment and adventure activities. Each video was 3-5 minutes in length.
3. The test which was used as a pre-test and post-test to study the progress of students’ learning achievement before and after they studied listening with videos.
4. The questionnaire to study students’ attitudes towards learning listening with videos, constructed by using the Likert method.

#### *3.5 Validity and Reliability*

### 1) Pretest and Posttest of Listening Comprehension

1. 3 language specialists were consulted to check the content and validity of this test.

2. The revised test was tried out with 35 second-year students to check the level of difficulty of test items (p) and the discrimination index (D).

3. The test items with value of level of difficulty between 0.20 to 0.80 and the discrimination index higher than 0.20 were selected.

4. The test scores were calculated to check for reliability using the Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR<sub>20</sub>). The value of this reliability test was 0.78.

### 2) Questionnaire

1. 3 language specialists were consulted to check the congruence between the questionnaire items. The value of Index of Congruence (IOC) was between 0.6-1.0. The students were required to rate the statements on a five-point scale from “very low” to “very high”.

2. The initial questionnaire was tested and improved to make it more comprehensive, reliable and valid for collecting data.

3. The questionnaire was then administered with a new group of students to study their attitudes towards learning listening skills through using videos. The Cronbach's Alpha value ( $\alpha$ ) of this questionnaire was 0.82.

### 3.6 Data Collection

The data were collected from the students' scores of the pre-test and post-test of listening comprehension, and from exercises undertaken after each learning material was presented. The procedure followed in the teaching plan used in the study encompassed the following three stages:

#### Pre-listening

At the beginning of the class, the researcher outlined the objectives of the lesson and the topic of the presentation material, then asked the students about their background knowledge and related vocabulary. A series of leading questions was put to the students to help them before studying with the material.

#### While-listening

First, the students were presented with the entire learning material and instructed to take notes or write down key words. Second, the material was presented again accompanied by an exercise to be completed by the students.

#### Post-listening

The students completed a questionnaire and checked the answers carefully for a minute

before exchanging it with their partners in order to check if the answers are correct, then handed in the exercise to the researcher. They were then given the opportunity to discuss the material presented and to express their ideas or opinions about it.

### *3.7 Research Procedure*

1. The learning procedures and learning objectives were described to the students step-by-step.
2. They took the pre-test.
3. They learned with the video, covering 20 periods over 7 weeks.
4. The group was assigned to do the post- test.
5. The scores on the pre-test and post-test were statistically analyzed, compared, and interpreted using mean and t-test for dependent samples.
6. The students in the experimental group were assigned to respond to a questionnaire regarding their attitude towards the use of videos in teaching listening skills.
7. The results from the questionnaire were used to calculate the mean score of a particular comment and overall comments in order to gauge the students' opinions.

### *3.8 Data Analysis*

The data obtained from this method of teaching in the study was analysed and interpreted through quantitative analysis. Quantitative data includes the data obtained from the pre-test, the post-test and the questionnaire. The t-test was used to compare the listening competency of the experimental group. The computer software program, SPSS, was used to analyse the data. The data from the Likert's scale was calculated for the arithmetic means ( $X$ ). These means revealed the students' opinions towards learning with video. The value of mean scores for opinion level was interpreted according to the following criteria:

<b>Value of mean scores</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
4.51-5.00	very good
3.51-4.50	good
2.51-3.50	average
1.51-2.50	bad
1.50 or lower	very bad

## **4. Findings**

### *Evaluation of listening competency tests between pre-test and post-test scores of students*

Table 2 below showed the comparative result of English listening pre-test and post-test scores of students. The average mean scores of the pre-test and the post-test are 7.80 and 11.80 respectively. The standard deviation of the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group was 2.14 and 1.93 respectively. According to the result of the t-test which was -20.248, it can be concluded that the learning achievement of students' post-test is higher than the pre-test at

a significance level of 0.05. The students' English listening comprehension ability increased significantly after learning with the videos. The result of this study is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The result of comparison between of English listening pre-test and post-test scores

Test types	Mean	n	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test	7.80	41	2.14	-20.248	.000
Post-test	11.80	41	1.93		

#### *Evaluation of Students' attitudes towards learning English listening using video*

Based on Table 3, it has been found that the mean score of the questionnaire about students' attitude toward learning listening with video ranges between 3.39 to 4.17, which is in between average to high levels. The highest mean score (4.17) is the item "Keywords I have learned prior to watching videos motivated me to learn English." The lowest mean score (3.39) is the item "Video materials help develop my speaking ability more than modified or non-authentic materials do." The average mean score evaluated by students was 3.72, which was at a satisfactory level. Students had positive attitudes towards using the videos in teaching listening skills. The 17 items of evaluation contained in the form were adapted from Sabet (2012) for use in this study. Each criterion rating was identified as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Result of evaluation of students' attitudes towards learning listening skill through video materials

Evaluation items		X	SD	Result interpretation
1.	I prefer to use English video materials rather than use those materials provided in the textbook.	3.75	.79	Good
2.	Video materials motivate me to do more listening outside the classroom.	3.70	.64	Good
3.	I prefer not to use simplified listening materials provided in the textbook.	3.60	.80	Good
4.	Keywords I have learned prior to watching videos motivated me to learn English.	4.17	.73	Good
5.	Video materials help me improve my language proficiency.	3.92	.90	Good
6.	English subtitles in the video materials are helpful in learning English.	4.04	.73	Good
7.	The video materials I listened in class are more interesting than non-authentic materials or simplified listening materials.	3.80	.55	Good
8.	Video materials help me to understand other listening materials outside the class.	3.75	.53	Good
9.	Video materials in the listening course motivate me to listen to other materials outside the class.	3.51	.63	Good
10.	Video materials introduce me to how language is used in the real world.	3.58	.54	Good
11.	I think my video preferences will affect my	3.39	.73	Average

	learning.			
12.	Video materials improve my language proficiency more than modified or non-authentic materials.	3.80	.71	Good
13.	Video materials improve my listening comprehension ability more than modified or non-authentic materials.	3.73	.74	Good
14.	Video materials help develop my speaking ability more than modified or non-authentic materials do.	3.34	.65	Average
15.	Video materials increase my familiarity with the use of grammar rules in their original context.	3.87	.84	Good
16.	Video materials increase my knowledge of vocabulary which I need in real life situations.	3.43	.54	Average
17.	I am interested in learning English if the teacher uses video in English as teaching materials.	3.85	.85	Good
	Total	3.72	-	Good

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that the use of video materials to develop listening comprehension of first-year English major students seemed to be effective, as indicated by the post-test score which was significantly higher than the pre-test score.

Analysis of the students' responses from the questionnaire revealed that they were more interested in learning English if the teacher used English videos as teaching materials. In addition, the keyword preview before watching videos motivated them to learn English. They explained that it was easier for them to remember and understand vocabulary in the video which they had previously taught by the researcher during the pre-listening stage. Overall, students agreed that videos were beneficial in learning English, and that English subtitles in video movies were an excellent aid to learning English.

## 6. Discussion

The finding of this study was in line with the study conducted by Maneekul (2002). The result of her study showed that teaching listening using authentic video materials enhances student's listening comprehension ability due to the combination of visual images and sound which stimulate student's perceptions. In addition, tone and speed of speech are spontaneous, similar to that in daily-life situations. According to Meskill (1996), strong receptivity may be related to the ease of listening processing that visual accompaniment implies. Video can help in promoting the language learners' listening comprehension. The structure of language is in the form of ungrammatical features that are not similar to the written language, which can enhance learners' comprehension as well as entertaining them. The connection between the classroom and real world encourage students to understand the relationship between learning and practicing. Video is widely accepted as more powerful and more comprehensible than other media for second and foreign language students (Brinton & Gaskill, 2009; MacWilliam, 2004 cited in Keihaniyan, 2013).

This study also found that the class was more attentive and the students were more interested in following the lesson carefully. This might also be because the atmosphere was more relaxed and therefore more conducive to learning. The students were more encouraged and motivated to learn from video than to follow activities in a textbook. The pictures and gestures can support their understanding of the video's content, and guide them to guess and interpret the meaning of the message conveyed by the speaker even without the support of the audio.

Teachers should be well-trained in the use of video and how best to exploit its inherent advantages in a learning environment. Furthermore, the selection of the video content should be appropriate to the level of students' English proficiency. The topics of the content should be matched to their interests and their background knowledge in order to motivate them to learn.

Authentic video material needs to be carefully chosen to ensure the level of difficulty is appropriate and the content is of interest to students. Videos containing difficult vocabulary or ungrammatical or incomplete structures should not be used. This includes videos in which the spoken language might contain many difficult or unneeded English idioms and expressions, or the rhythm, tone and phonological systems have different features from the students' first language which could contribute to misunderstanding or be difficult for non-native listeners to understand the content. Thus, students might not be able to discriminate the reduced or incomplete forms of language while they were watching the videos. In addition, Lynch (1998) further explained that when the speaking rate is too fast, listeners will not have enough time to process the complete messages. This means that they will focus their attention more on lexical or grammatical processing than the meaning of the text. Therefore, they would not catch all the messages conveyed.

## **7. Teaching Implications and Recommendations**

Based on the result of this study, it can be implied that video can contribute positively to language learning and processing. It helps learners in developing listening skills, in learning new lexical terms and in encouraging autonomous learning.

Video-based instruction can be used to develop students' listening and speaking skills. Activities associated with video-based instruction such as gap-filling, group discussion, and oral presentation, can also develop students' listening and speaking skills. Thus, other aspects such as how videos help to improve speaking production should be the subject of further research.

A study on using other authentic materials such as movies or news commentaries should be conducted through comparing between two groups of students for promoting other language skills.

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