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THE EFFECTS OF TED TALKS AS EXTENSIVE LISTENING

Abstract. Learning a foreign language is more considered on productive skills such as speaking and writing, but also listening and reading are essential as they provide crucial input to learners. Listening is a typical activity with a great deal of oral exposure to a language. Therefore, extensive listening (EL) is helpful in a way that the learners engage with a variety of comprehensible input. This qualitative method study investigated whether there is a relationship between students' listening achievements and the use of TED lectures as an extensive listening resource in the classroom. Moreover, this study explored the students' perceptions of the use of TED lectures as EL materials in the treatment period. To shed light on these issues, 20 school students, who learned English as a foreign language participated in this study. The results also indicated that students found extensive listening enjoyable and useful to learn new vocabulary. Moreover, they expressed that the subtitles make the speech more comprehensible for the parts that were challenging to comprehend.

Keywords: extensive listening, TED talks, teaching listening, listening skills, comprehension.

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TED Talks-тың тыңдау дағдысына әсері

Аңдатпа. Шетел тілін үйрену сөйлеу және жазу сияқты өнімді дағдыларға көбірек бағытталған, бірақ тыңдау және оқу да маңызды. Тыңдау – бұл ауызша тілдің көп әсер ететін типтік әрекеті. Осылайша, қарқынды тыңдау студенттердің әртүрлі түсінікті ақпаратпен өзара әрекеттесуі үшін пайдалы. Бұл сапалы зерттеу студенттердің тыңдаудағы жетістігі мен TED дәрістерін аудиториядағы тыңдау үшін бай ресурс ретінде пайдалану арасында байланыс бар-жоғын зерттейді. Сонымен қатар, бұл зерттеу студенттердің ағылшын тілін үйренуге арналған материал ретінде TED дәрістерін пайдалану туралы түсініктерін анықтады. Осы сұрақтарды түсіндіру үшін бұл зерттеуге ағылшын тілін шет тілі ретінде оқып жатқан 20 мектеп оқушысы қатысты. Нәтижелер студенттерге тыңдауды жағымды

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және жаңа лексиканы меңгеру үшін пайдалы деп санайтынын көрсетті. Сонымен қатар, олар субтитрлердің сөйлеуді түсіну қиын бөліктерге түсінікті ететінін айтты.

Кілт сөздер: кең ауқымды тыңдау, Ted Talks, тыңдауға үйрету, тыңдау дағдылары, түсіну.

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Эффекты TED Talks как эффективное слушание

Аннотация. Изучение иностранного языка в большей степени ориентировано на продуктивные навыки, такие как устная речь и письмо, но также важны аудирование и чтение, поскольку они вносят решающий вклад в учащегося. Аудирование является типичным занятием с большим количеством устного воздействия языка. Таким образом, интенсивное слушание полезно тем, что учащиеся взаимодействуют с разнообразной понятной информацией. В этом качественном исследовании изучалось, существует ли связь между успехами студентов в аудировании и использованием лекций TED в качестве обширного ресурса для аудирования в классе. Кроме того, в этом исследовании изучалось восприятие студентами использования лекций TED в качестве материалов для изучения английского языка в период лечения. Чтобы пролить свет на эти вопросы, в данном исследовании приняли участие 20 школьников, изучавших английский язык как иностранный. Результаты также показали, что учащиеся находят длительное прослушивание приятным и полезным для изучения новой лексики. Более того, они заявили, что субтитры делают речь более понятной для частей, которые было сложно понять.

Ключевые слова: обширное прослушивание, TED talks, обучение аудированию, навыки аудирования, понимание.

Introduction

It is commonly thought that second/foreign language (L2 henceforth) speaking is the hardest to achieve, yet mastering L2 listening is as hard as speaking since it requires split second comprehension as well as an appropriate response. The listening skill is also hard to define since it requires sophisticated mental processes, and thus hard to observe. Yet again, to make this concept more precise, it would be helpful to give a definition. It is defined as “a complex, active process in which the listener must discriminate between sounds, understand vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpret stress and intonation, retain what was gathered in all of the above, and interpret it within the immediate as well as the larger socio-cultural context of the utterance”. To develop an understanding of listening, it is important to know how it works. As a matter of fact, there are many theories regarding how listening takes place. One of the most well known information processing models in the literature is a comprehension model proposed within the cognitive framework. This model suggests that language comprehension is realized in three phases: a perceptual stage, a parsing stage and a utilization stage. The perceptual phase entails encoding the spoken or written information. In the parsing stage, rules of the language are highly important since these rules tell us about how to go from words to their meanings. However, there are many rules encoding many linguistic patterns, and it is not simply possible to know every rule for every linguistic pattern to reach meanings out of them. Here, our attention is drawn to sub-patterns, or “phrases” of the

language since we have learned how to merge, link and interpret these sub-patterns. These sub-patterns are also called as constituents, or phrase structure, in language processing. What makes the language comprehensible, especially when it comes to L2 is its clarity. Therefore, the constituent structure should be easily identifiable to be understood by the listeners. Otherwise, there could arise problems in the parsing stage. It is also important that listeners have access to one phrase each time; otherwise, they might have difficulties while processing the meaning of the words. Although it is tried to get meaning from each word as far as possible, there needs to be additional time after each phrase so that the listener can modify his/her understanding and have correct interpretation. The individual meanings of words are brought together to reach an overall interpretation of the sentence in the parsing stage.

Ted is an organization which is built on sharing ideas in the form of short talks (18 minutes or less) without seeking for profit. Although it started as Ted (Technology, Entertainment and Design) in 1984, it has expanded the topics it covers, from business to global issues and is available in almost 100 languages. Research suggests that Ted-Talk videos are increasingly being used in English Language Teaching classroom. As the videos are at open access to the general public (including a smart phone app) they are being used for educational purposes since 2007. With the partnership of National Geographic Learning with Ted Talks in 2014, Ted Talks gained popularity as authentic ELT language materials. In addition, Ted Talks are being edited as language materials by Ted-Ed initiative and available with subtitles in various languages. Considering that the aim of English language teaching is to bring students to a ready state for using the language beyond classroom, it can be said that the internet has made this job a lot easier. There are too many Ted Talk videos on almost every topic with different lengths, difficulty levels and genres. In this regard, Ted Talks are great as listening resources both for classroom-based activities and self-study outside the classroom. Videos are quite useful for L2 listeners since they can get access to facial expressions and gestures of speakers. This helps them to extract information about the general context.

Literature review

There are many studies that were devoted to youtube in teaching English context. Renanya and Farrell [1] proposed that on the basis of the agreed success of extensive reading, we might apply the extensive listening approach to listening instruction. Chang and Millett [2] tried to provide some hard evidence on the improvement of listening competence through extensive listening and found out that by the help of listening strategies along with extensive listening such as simultaneous reading and listening significantly improved listening fluency. Therefore, extensive listening may include strategies when needed. The researcher was free to use any beneficial strategies along with extensive listening of TED Talks lectures, which might enable students to get comprehensible input.

The starting point of this research was the study of Takaesu [3]. Takaesu conducted a qualitative study to explore how TED Talks are used as extensive listening material and what the students' perceptions are towards listening to TED Talks videos. The researcher worked with 468 participants who were freshmen. The data was collected through a survey and a journal form. When the researcher analysed the data, it was seen that many participants perceived that TED Talks improved their listening skills and automatic processing capacity. Additionally, students appreciated the authenticity that TED Talks provided. Takaesu calls for research that there is a need to quantitatively test whether using TED Talks as an extensive listening material improves learners' listening comprehension.

Although a study has been conducted to verify its effects on listening comprehension, there are not many extensive studies for accurately measuring the effect of extensive listening to listening comprehension with a quantitative study. For instance, Famiansyah and Abdulrahman [4] researched whether there is a significant effect of using TED Talks on students' listening skills. When they analysed the data based on pretest and post-test scores, it was seen that using TED Talks

as learning media improved students' listening skills. However, the sample size was small; the participants were all 11th graders. Famiansyah and Abdulrahman do not attempt to differentiate the improvements between different proficiency levels. Moreover, Famiansyah and Abdulrahman gave a minimal hint about what type of listening instruction they used while giving treatment to the experimental group's students. It might be thought that they played the TED lecture and sit somewhere to see if it works on students' listening comprehension, which might be quite non-pedagogical. The study might be more interesting if it included the investigation by clearly stating how listening instruction took place in the classroom, and whether there is a difference among proficiency levels or not. Another issue that needs greater attention is that there is an increasing rate of the use of TED Talks in English learning classrooms. For instance, National Geographic Publishing started a collaboration with TED in 2014 to design coursebook material. TED Talks are used in National Geographic's coursebook series such as World English, Keynote, Perspectives, 21st Century Reading, and 21st Century Communication. These course books are used in thousands of ELT classrooms.

Onoda [5] investigated the effects of extensive listening of QuickListens, which can be defined as quick, graded listening texts. Thirty college students participated in the study. The results, which were based on questionnaires, showed that extensive listening approach to the listening of QuickListens improved students' listening comprehension. Onoda discovered that the improvement of listening skills was also connected with confidence in listening. Another study was conducted by Yeh [6] to see whether a podcast learning project promotes extensive listening. Twenty-three university students participated in the study. The data were collected through questionnaires and listening diaries. The results showed that the use of podcasts was both convenient and helpful for students to improve their L2 proficiency. A recent research was carried out by Metruk [6] to investigate university-level EFL students' frequency related to extensive listening of English videos. Thirty-seven students participated in the study. The data was collected through questionnaires. The results indicated that the participants found viewing English videos outside the school useful to improve their listening skills. Another recent study was conducted by Pamuji, Waring and Kurniawan [7] to explore how EFL teachers perceive the improvements of their listening skills through extensive listening. Two teachers participated in this study, and the findings were based on questionnaires. The results showed that the participants enjoyed listening to the materials provided by extensive listening, and they perceived that it helped them to improve their language skills.

Renandya and Jacobs [8] stated that one of the main problems in implementing extensive listening at schools is the lack of resources to purchase graded listening materials. For other schools with financial resources, administrators might not be willing to spend money on it, because they might not be conscious of the benefits of extensive listening. Thus, teachers may be frequently left alone in choosing the right material for their students online.

The study of Wingrove [9] showed that TED lectures have approximately 25 per cent less academic vocabulary than an academic discourse at a university in general. Additionally, he found out that there are many talks, which have even more academic vocabulary. In his study, TED talks are spoken faster on average compared to academic lecture discourse. Wingrove further stated that many talks are slower than an academic lecture discourse as well. Hence, a variety of listening materials are available at TED Talks, and a teacher should choose the appropriate material by considering the competence of students. For example, faster talks can be used to challenge higher-level students, while slower talks, including a lower level of academic vocabulary, may be used for students with a low-level of English. A recent study was conducted by Astika and Kurniawan [10] to discover the challenges that EFL students face while listening to TED Talks to improve listening skills. The researcher worked with 27 participants who were EFL students and taking the academic listening course at the university. The data that was collected through journals were analysed qualitatively. The researchers found out that students mainly face three challenges. The first

challenge was the accent. For example, in the study, a speaker with a Pakistani accent was the most challenging for the students, while only a few students complained about the speakers with an American accent. However, Astika and Kurniawan stated that it is required to use different types of accents because it is what they will encounter in real life. The second challenge they found out was the speech rate. The students could not comprehend the talks with a higher speech rate.

Kazakh researches also conducted studies on implementation of youtube in teaching English in Kazakhstan. For example, Zhanybay studied the categories of communication competence and how to build them with the help of using youtube. Language learners' grammatical understanding of syntax, morphology, and phonology, as well as social knowledge of how and when to utilize utterances correctly, is referred to as communicative competence. To improve linguistic abilities, the author chose a variety of YouTube exercises. Simultaneously, the author evaluates the outcomes of the practical work completed during the internship [11].

Zheniskhankyzy and Gersonskaya's research is to see how active and important YouTube may be in the educational process, as well as how it can help language teachers enhance their students' skills. The research demonstrates a variety of theoretical framework conditions that address the use of technology to improve the learning and teaching process [12].

However in this study we tried to investigate whether there is a relationship between students' listening achievements and the use of TED lectures as an extensive listening resource in the classroom

Research methods

The research adopted a qualitative research design by relating using TED Talks as a listening resource to learners' listening achievement for the 9th grade 20 students at № 20 R.Isetov school in Turkistan. The data was collected by listening practice journal (LPJ) form which was sent to the students online after watching the TED talks during ten weeks in the academic year of 2021-2022 fall term. The researcher sent an LPJ form after each extensive listening lesson online, and the students submitted them back. Before completing the LPJ forms, the researcher reminded students that their names would be kept secret, and a code number would be used instead of their name through the study. They were also reminded that LPJ forms would not affect their grades. Additionally, there was no restriction by the researcher regarding the language of students' responses to LPJ forms. Nevertheless, the students subconsciously wrote their answers in English as they had their constraints in their context of learning English, and the researcher did not interfere. And the data was analyzed by thematic analysis.

Results and discussion

The highest frequency is 'learning new vocabulary'. The finding showed that extensive listening to TED lectures helped them to learn new vocabulary. The finding was relevant to the literature. For instance, Renandya and Jacobs [8] stated that extensive listening of videos is useful for learning new vocabulary as it contains visual aids, and learners think that understanding videos is easier than understanding audio-only. EL encourages learners to enhance their vocabulary knowledge, both incidentally and deliberately. One of the effective ways to promote vocabulary development is through EL. The use of subtitles along with EL also provides learners with an opportunity to learn new words incidentally. This is because reading while listening provides learners with the required conditions for incidental vocabulary learning. *The following excerpts illustrate the finding.*

"I looked at the meanings of the words I don't understand and wrote in my notebook. (Student 3)

"The subtitles were extremely helpful because my word knowledge has enlarged." (Student 7)

"I learnt so many words in this video. I liked this video. Video was so instructive. Lecturer was so sincere. She explained very well. Thanks to her." (Student 1)

“I learned some new vocabulary from that lecture - I learn some new vocabulary from every lecture.” (Student 2)

One of the aims in EL is to create opportunities for students to engage with comprehensible and interesting oral input. This stands for the first principle of extensive listening, which was mentioned in the literature review part of this study. Therefore, the right material for EL needs to be comprehensible, engaging, and enjoyable.

The positive themes stated that the lectures were interesting, and they were easy to understand. As the students were interested in the message that the lecture conveys, they focused on the oral input to comprehend. This is because one of the critical principles of listening, according to the cognitive models of listening such as the connectionist model and the cognitive model of Anderson [14], is that learners are required to pay attention to the oral input to comprehend it. The following excerpts illustrate these aspects.

“The plot was interesting so I listened extremely carefully. To me, it was a good lecture.” (Student 10)

“The speaker thought me something important, time management. And I needed that already. I listened very carefully. And it helped.” (Student 8)

“It wasn’t difficult - it was startlingly simple for a scientific lecture. And I learned some new vocabulary. I wasn’t nervous because the lecturer explained the main plot to us very comprehensible. Listening to that lecture was very fun and I learned so much about AI. It was a good lecture, I think.” (Student 6)

Extensive listening of Ted lectures provides students with information in a variety of topics. Students learn new things while doing EL of Ted lectures. The following excerpts from the students’ responses illustrate it.

“This speech is very helpful for me to learn something about artificial intelligence. I learned many things.” (Student 13)

“I like this lecture. It is a useful topic. I needed to learn this. (Student 11)

“The lecture made me aware of the consequences of climate change.” (Student 4)

“I was intrigued to this video. I learned something new from this video.” (Student 5)

To sum up, the findings provided evidence that EL enhances students’ vocabulary knowledge not only deliberately but also incidentally. EL helps learners to improve their listening comprehension by providing them with an opportunity to be exposed to comprehensible input. As the materials in EL interesting, it facilitates the listening comprehension by making the listeners focus on the message. Moreover, the students learn about different topics while listening to Ted lectures.

Negative Perceptions which are based on the negative themes. The speech rate is one of the significant problems that L2 listeners encounter with, as it was mentioned in the literature review of this study. Most of the students who reported that the speech rate was high, also reported that it was hard for them to understand. This finding supports the view of Buck [14] that the higher the speech rate, the more difficult it becomes to comprehend. The following excerpts can illustrate it.

“This one is hard for me because sometimes the talk was getting faster and it was not understandable for me.” (Student 9)

“This video was very difficult. I cannot understand this video. I was very nervous during the video. She spoke very very fast. So, I cannot understand.” (Student 11)

Nevertheless, EL helps learners to deal with the speech rate by providing them with the exposure to comprehensible, meaningful, and enjoyable oral input. For instance, Renandya and Jacobs [8] stated that extensive listening improves listeners’ skills to overcome the speech rate. When learners engage with EL for an extended period, they accustom to higher speech rates as their ability to deal with the speech rate improves. Additionally, reading while listening by using subtitles helps listeners to overcome the speech rate. The following excerpts are given to illustrate.

“The lecture wasn’t difficult and I wasn’t nervous - it’s just a TED talk, anyway and I adjusted to that lectures.” (Student 15)

“I think this video was easy. I understand. I was not stressful or nervous during the video. I was relaxed. He spoke slowly.” (Student 18)

“It was difficult but the presentation was enjoyable. He talks clear but he speaks fast. I had to use the English subtitles.” (Student 14)

“It was very difficult. I had to use subtitles. But she is really fast talker.” (Student 20)

Although a number of students found some talks difficult, the results indicated that drawing on the background knowledge along with EL assisted them to improve the rate of listening comprehension. The following excerpt might illustrate.

“The lecture wasn’t difficult because I have already anticipated the main plot.” (Student 12)

The findings also suggested that when the learners did not understand some parts of the lecture, subtitles helped them to comprehend. This finding supported the study of Brown et al. [15] as they found that simultaneous reading and listening of a text make input more comprehensible for listeners. Therefore, reading subtitles while listening helps learners to deal with the difficulty of the oral text.

“It was not hard. It was actually my best TED talks listening. I understand in the class, and I remember. Yet, I listened one more time before writing this. I listened with subtitles because I listened to understand the things that I did not understand at the first time.” (Student 16)

“I am glad that I listened again with English subtitles because I realized that I missed some points at the first time.” (Student 17)

The results showed that there were a variety of accents in TED, which the students were not familiar with, and found challenging. This supports the findings of Astika and Kurniawan [10].

To conclude this, EL helps learners to develop listening skills to deal with the speech rate. In other words, EL assists learners in building listening fluency by increasing their oral information processing capacity. The use of strategies such as drawing on the background knowledge along with EL facilitates listening comprehension. Additionally, the learners can benefit from the subtitles that are available to read while doing EL. Lastly, EL of Ted lectures is useful to improve listening skills to comprehend a variety of accents.

Conclusion

There are tons of listening materials available online, and this study investigated the use of TED Talks, which contains lectures on hundreds of different topics. When choosing the right material for EL, the scholars urge upon the linguistic appropriateness and its being of interest to listener. It is agreed that it is a significant aspect that a teacher needs to consider. Nevertheless, there are more aspects to consider. First, when it is thought about a TED lecture that an English teacher practice as EL material in the classroom, the speech that the speaker delivers might include elements which can be offensive to a specific group of people with specific beliefs. This is because TED lectures are available in more than 450 different topics. Second, it is quite likely that there are educational contexts where the English class time is limited to an hour a week. Therefore, not only linguistically appropriateness of material, but also the social and educational context appropriateness, in which the language is taught needs to be considered while choosing the right material for EL. For example, choosing and creating a pool of listening materials which are appropriate in both ways mentioned above and letting students vote and choose the topic can be useful.

So, the findings of this study provided further evidence to both the inverse proportion between the speech rate and comprehension, which was proposed by Buck [14] and for the inverse proportion between affective filter and comprehension. There are several studies in the literature on the correlation between speech rate and comprehension, and many studies are supporting the correlation between affective filter and comprehension. In addition to these, the present study

indicated that there might be multiple correlations between affective filter, speech rate, and comprehension, causing lower proficiency level students to improve less regarding their listening comprehension skills. To conclude, it is known that high affective filter causes a decline in comprehension. High speech rate causes a decline in comprehension, too. Together with these, it is assumed based on the results of the present study that students with high affective filter might perceive the speech rate as high, although it is given at a normal rate. Likewise, when the speech rate is higher than one's oral processing capacity, it increases the affective filter. Therefore, speech rate and affective filter influence listening comprehension interactively. Hence, a future study to test this hypothesis would benefit to the literature.

The data analysis showed that such an approach to listening instruction was useful by providing them a great deal of pleasure comprehensible input, enhancing their vocabulary knowledge. In addition to this, it was found that listening with subtitles helped students to comprehend the challenging parts of the speech.

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