ทัศนคติของนักศึกษาที่มีต่อสื่อการฟัง
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LISTENING MEDIUM TYPES

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บทคัดย่อ

สื่อจริงสำหรับการฟังได้ถูกนำมาใช้เพื่อเพิ่มความสนใจและแรงจูงใจให้นักศึกษาในการฝึกฟังภาษา
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คำสำคัญ: ประเภทของสื่อการฟัง, แรงจูงใจ, สื่อจริง

Abstract

To raise students' interest and motivation in listening lessons, authentic materials are
first prioritised. To substantiate the ideas, the evidences of two listening medium types, cassettes
and films, are investigated. As a case study, the research aimed to investigate what kinds of knowledge
the students gained from the two types of listening media and their attitudes towards each listening
medium type. The subjects selected by the purposive random sampling method were 73 students who
attended LNG 101: Fundamental English I. The questionnaire was conducted for data collection.
The results of the study show that films can help students learn and also create positive attitudes in
studying listening.

Keywords: listening medium types, motivation, authentic materials

Background

Of all the language skills, teaching listening to second language learners poses particular difficulties. One reason is that listening is too difficult for students to practice. They might not be familiar with sounds, intonation, speed, and so on. Nunan [1] states that listening happens in real-time; listeners have to comprehend what they hear immediately. There is no time to go back, review, or look up unknown words, etc. Therefore, it is not easy to grasp the meaning of a particular context. Another reason affecting listening comprehension is that audio equipment is not ready for use. Due to budget constraints, many institutes still use audio cassettes to teach listening as they are relatively cheap. Using cassettes makes it difficult for students to imagine the context of what they hear since gestures help clarify the meaning. According to the above reasons, teaching listening becomes a difficult task for teachers.

In listening classes, it is generally found that students always get bored and become passive listeners. It is not easy for the teacher to motivate them and raise a good learning atmosphere. To revolutionise the traditional style of teaching, many techniques and strategies were introduced. Currently, authentic materials are used as a trouble shooter because it is believed that they help motivate students to enjoy their learning. According to the principle of using authentic texts in teaching listening, it does really help.

A case given here is a basic level English course taught at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, (KMUTT) Thailand. Initially, audio materials were implemented in teaching. This was found to be quite boring for those who showed no progress in their listening comprehension. To rectify this, authentic materials were used instead. The students were eager. Authentic gestures and movements increased their comprehension and resulted in greater enjoyment for those who became more motivated in their tasks.

The above results seem to support the benefits of using authentic materials. However, there is no evidence of what and how the students have learned with different types of listening media. It is clearly stated that authentic text helps raise good learning atmosphere. Nevertheless, it is not mentioned that students learn nothing from tape cassettes or other audio media. In other words, it is not said students learn better or best with authentic materials. The researchers wonder whether different listening medium types affect the knowledge students have gained. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to investigate the kinds of knowledge the students have gained from different listening medium types and their attitudes towards each listening type.

Literature Review

"Listening is an active, purposeful process of making sense of what we hear."

(Nunan, 2003: 24)

Regarding the above citation, although listening is receptive, it is very active because listeners can think and understand things at higher levels than what they have heard. As they listen, they "process not only what they hear but also connect it to other information they already know" [1]. Since listeners combine what they have listened to their existing knowledge and experiences, in a very real sense, they are figuring or creating some kinds of meaning in their own mind. Buck cited by Nunan [1] puts forward the idea that "meaning is not in the text but is something that is constructed by listeners based on a number of different knowledge sources."

Unfortunately, the purpose of the traditional teaching of listening is to teach grammar, vocabulary, and certain phonological features. The underlying meaning of the text is rarely negotiated. In other words, traditional listening pedagogy does not facilitate much comprehension. Audio recordings mainly used as the medium of teaching present both advantages and disadvantages. Audio cassettes expose learners to "a wide range of listening situations, speakers, voices, and speaking speeds" [2]. In terms of practicality, listeners can replay and listen as many times as they want. Moreover, they are available for an appropriate listening proficiency of learners.

Although audio cassettes provide a certain number of benefits in language teaching, actually they are inauthentic. The consequence is anxiety for many learners. This is partly because of difficulties presented by the audio text itself. It might not be easy for listeners to imagine a particular context with the voice only. Another barrier, which might be commonly found in various listening medium types, may include noise, speed, tone, intonation, etc. Therefore, using audio recordings does not provide much help in facilitating comprehension.

It is known that gestures help clarify comprehension. Thus, a new focus of teaching listening in current pedagogy was initiated. It is not just what listeners are listening "to", but what they are listening "for" [1]. Hedge [2] states that in real-life situations, people listen for different purposes, and "those particular purposes will determine the range and balance of listening skills which they need to employ". This would provide learners with training in listening comprehension that will prepare them for effective functioning outside the classroom– "activities or texts should give learners practice in coping with at least some features of real-life situation" [3]. Virtually, no one would disagree that the texts learners work with should be realistic–authentic texts [1].

Authentic materials (also known as authentic texts) are materials which the speaker is using when trying to communicate with the listener. The focus is not on the language the speaker is using but the purpose he has

in his mind. As the speaker aims to convey a message to the listener, the language used is natural, that is, sometimes not grammatically correct [4]. Authentic materials can appear in various forms including written texts from newspapers, audio or video tapes which are not produced specially for language teaching.

The use of authentic materials is advocated by many educators as this kind of materials provides great benefits for language learning. Firstly, these materials can promote students' interest and learning by focusing on communication, rather than the use of grammatically correct language, and also naturally expressing cultures [4]. Moreover, authentic materials can relate the advantages of natural acquisition to formal classroom teaching [5]. Lastly, authentic materials also develop learners' ability to receive information as they naturally provide learners with clarifications and explanations, which are hardly found in instructional listening materials [4].

Although the great benefits of using authentic materials attract the attention of many teachers and material designers, the drawbacks of using the materials continue to be discussed. Firstly, since the materials are genuine, the language used is ungraded and often very difficult for students at lower proficiency levels [4]. Furthermore, it is difficult for classroom teachers to integrate authentic materials into the curriculum as they are varied in terms of vocabulary items, structures, functions, length, etc. [4].

In this study, films are chosen as a model of providing authentic materials used to collect data. Regarding a variety of advantages films offer to language teaching and learning, Gareis [6] states that films are among the most stimulating tools for language acquisition. Visual supports increase the students' enjoyment of and interest in understanding dialogues and cultures.

Methodology

Having seen that there are arguments and beliefs in favor of authentic texts in listening materials, it is worthwhile to investigate what beliefs are actually held. This research investigates the kinds of knowledge the students have gained from the two different types of listening media and their attitudes towards the use of them. It is also concerned about the difficulties that students have regarding the use of audio cassettes and authentic texts, and it offers useful suggestions in dealing with those difficulties.

This section aims to give an overview of the research methodology: subjects, instruments and data analysis.

Subjects

There were 73 mixed-ability students from the Faculty of Science and Engineering who took a compulsory English course at KMUTT. The course was Fundamental English I: LNG101, which was conducted as a large class.

Instruments

The items of the questionnaire are constructed from 50 pieces of students' comments on listening portfolios of English fundamental courses. The questionnaire is divided into three main parts. The first part investigates the students' attitudes about the knowledge they had gained with a particular listening medium type. The second part was for their attitudes and feelings towards a particular listening medium type. Each question of both Part I and Part II was on a rating-scale. The students were asked to rate their attitudes about the use of each different listening medium type according to a four-point rating-scale: 4 = strongly agree, 3 = agree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree. The final part of the questionnaire is open-ended and calls for suggestions addressing their difficulties in using each particular type of listening medium.

During the semester, a questionnaire was administered twice to the same class of students after the implementation of each listening medium type. The questionnaire was given the first time after the use of audio recordings, and then, the second time after the use of films.

Data Analysis

Each part of the questionnaire was analyzed. Part I contains questions on what kinds of knowledge the students have gained from a particular listening medium type, whereas Part II is about attitudes and feelings towards the use of a particular listening medium type. The data were calculated in terms of arithmetic means ($\bar{X}$) and then interpreted as follows:

Criteria for rating-scale interpretation

Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Interpretation
1.00-1.75	Strongly disagree
1.76-2.50	Disagree
2.51-3.25	Agree
3.26-4.00	Strongly agree

Part III of the questionnaire is open-ended. It is the part in which the subjects give suggestions or comments. The responses obtained were collected and grouped into main themes. The number of students who had the same ideas was also counted (See Appendix).

Findings

It was the purpose of the study to find out students' knowledge and attitudes gained from the two listening medium types used in the class. The data from the questionnaire were used to yield that finding.

Rating scale

The first area of the findings concerns the use of audio cassettes and films in the class. Table 1 illustrates the knowledge the students have gained regarding the use of both listening medium types. Generally, the students agreed they gained more knowledge when studying with films.

Table 1: Comparison of students' attitudes towards knowledge gained from the use of audio cassettes and films

Attitudes towards knowledge gained from both types of media	Audio cassettes ($\overline{X}$)	Films ($\overline{X}$)	The differences of mean scores of two medium types
1. Differentiate sounds	2.15	2.64	-0.49
2. Recall vocabulary	2.02	2.37	-0.35
3. Know new vocabulary items	2.22	2.68	-0.46
4. Know the pronunciation and intonation of native speakers	2.80	2.87	-0.07
5. Know structure of language	2.09	2.2	-0.11
6. Know background and culture of native speakers	1.91	2.2	-0.29
7. Know language use in real situation	2.38	2.78	-0.40
$\overline{X}$	**2.22**	**2.53**	**-0.31**

When the two sets of scores are compared in detail, the ratings for the films are higher than for cassettes. Surprisingly, it was found that the three outstanding areas of knowledge which show the highest scores and where the students gained from both listening medium types are similar, and presented respectively. The first area of knowledge is the pronunciation and intonation of native speakers. Secondly, the students state they also know how to use language in a real situation. Lastly, it is mentioned that both types of media taught them new vocabulary items.

For the lowest mean scores of both media, it is stated that audio cassettes do not provide much information about the background and culture of native speakers; whereas, for the films, there are two areas the students state they have gained not much knowledge, and those present the same lowest mean scores. One is similar to that of using audio cassettes, but the other is different – the structure of language.

When the differences of mean scores in the use of audio cassettes and films are compared, the findings show that there are three main aspects of the differences. It could be said that audio cassettes do not help the students very much to differentiate sounds, learn new vocabulary items and provide language use in real situations, whereas films perform better in these areas.

The other area of the findings which will be discussed is the comparison of students' attitudes and feeling towards those listening medium types. As illustrated in Table 1, most students have more positive attitudes towards films than towards audio cassettes. Table 2 shows the findings.

Table 2: Comparison of attitudes and feelings towards the use of audio cassettes and films

Attitudes and feelings towards both types of media	Audio cassettes ($\overline{X}$)	Films ($\overline{X}$)	The differences of mean scores of two medium types
1. Be confident in language use	1.98	2.32	-0.34
2. Always be active in listening	2.38	2.87	-0.49
3. Enjoy listening	2.32	2.92	-0.60
4. Be satisfied in listening	2.42	2.87	-0.45
$\overline{X}$	**2.27**	**2.74**	**-0.47**

From the above table, it is significant that films are rated more highly than cassettes. Regarding the implementation of audio cassettes, there are two highlights. The data are illustrated respectively that students are satisfied with cassettes. Thus, they are more active in listening. However, for films, the findings show different aspects. There are two outstanding areas. The first area of findings with the highest score is that the students enjoy listening with films. For the other area, there are two types of data which show a similar number of mean scores. They, firstly, indicate the same area as mentioned in the use of cassettes where the students are always active in listening. Then, the other one indicates that the students are satisfied with films.

When the difference of mean scores of two listening medium types is considered, it supports the argument that films are more preferable. The highest score shown in the column confirms that students enjoy listening to and watching films. Moreover, it could be stated that films also engage the students to become more active. For the lowest score, both types of listening media illustrate similar aspects. Students do not feel more confident in language use after listening practice.

The second section of the questionnaire also reveals relatively different students' problems in using either type of media. Whereas the problems of using audio cassettes are mainly concerned with inappropriate classroom structures and affective effect, films basically cause comprehension difficulties for the students.

Table 3: Comparison of students' problems in using audio cassettes and films

Medium types	Students' Problems in listening	No. of students who answered	%
Audio Cassettes	1.1 Use poor recording and acoustically inappropriate classrooms	20	27
	1.2 Cannot catch main ideas of texts	12	16
	1.3 Feel bored, tense and sleepy	4	6
	Total	**36**	**49**
Films	1.1 Cannot catch or understand the content of films		
	1.2 Cannot understand some vocabulary items and sentences		
	1.3 Not familiar with native-like intonation	732	943
	Total	**12**	**16**

Regarding the data obtained from the above table, the problems from using audio cassettes are three times more than films. The biggest problem with using audio cassettes is the low quality of the process of making cassettes and acoustically improper classrooms. It also reveals that students feel bored, serious and sleepy while listening to cassettes. As for the use of films, the most reported problem is being unable to catch or understand the content of films. The least salient point is that they are not familiar with the native-like intonation in films.

Compared with audio cassettes, films seem to cause none of these affective problems, e.g., getting bored, feeling tense or sleepy; however, this medium usually causes problems concerning with students' understanding as they stated that they are unable to understand some words, and sentences, as well as the content of the films.

Discussion

According to the findings of this study, there is no significant difference pertaining to the students' attitudes towards the knowledge they have gained from both listening medium types. The students believed that they received similar areas of knowledge. The data present three areas of knowledge they thought they had gained, most of which are pronunciation and intonation, language use in real situations, and new vocabulary. However, authentic material is preferable since it facilitates comprehension in a variety of situations [3]. As presented in Table 1, films could help the students differentiate sounds and meaning much better than audio cassettes. It might be that gesture, movement, intonation or any other nonverbal behaviors help clarify the meaning of the words. As already mentioned, a real situation could create a good atmosphere of learning.

From the evidence, it could be inferred that the students' comprehension of a particular context is regardless of the types of media employed. A study of MacWilliam [7] supports the above claim that although video material adds motivation and interest, there has been very little research conducted into which aspects of comprehension are more effectively practiced. However, the way the media have been implemented is significant. Anderson and Lynch [8] suggest three principal factors for an effective listening teaching. They are (1) type of language, (2) task or purpose in listening, and (3) the context in which listening occurs. This directly affects the ease and difficulty of the listening task.

Concerning the data in Table 2 which present the attitudes and feelings towards both types of listening media, although the students are satisfied and active in listening, they do not have much confidence after practising. It could be said that they have little chance to practice, so their confidence in language use does not increase. In order to solve the problem, initially, some warm-up activities might be helpful to provide a certain context clue to get learners ready before listening. Therefore, listening with a particular purpose might be more successful. Moreover, follow-up activities are also needed to check understanding. Through such a process, students' confidence in language use might be raised [2].

Regarding the findings as shown in Table 3 comparing students' problems in using audio cassettes and films, the students feel bored, tense and also sleepy while practicing listening skills through the use of audio cassettes. This is probably due to the fact that this type of media naturally lacks visual clues which help encourage students' interests while listening. There are two significant technical factors leading to the problems. The first is the low quality of recording which makes some unpleasant sounds that distract the students. The second is probably improperly soundproofed classrooms in which the students are disturbed by reflected noises.

Referring to the data gained, most of the students prefer watching films to listening to audio cassettes. However, utilizing films is still problematic as stated in Table 3. The problems of films primarily pertain to students' understanding, including vocabulary, sentences and contents of films, and unfamiliarity with native-like intonation used in the films. As films are authentic materials and not designed for pedagogical purpose, the language and vocabulary used in them are ungraded, also the speed of talking is natural. These are somewhat above the students' level of aural proficiency.

Suggestions

Based on the problems of using films mentioned above, the researchers, as language teachers, provide some guidelines on how to implement the use of films in classroom learning which could bolster student understanding.

First, film selection should be taken into teachers' consideration. Generally, teachers should avoid using films with nudity, violence or cultural conflicts; instead the films should be amusing in order to motivate students to follow them. The age, interests, level of proficiency and background knowledge of viewers are also main determining factors. The language used in the films should not be significantly above the students' level; otherwise they might feel discouraged and refuse to watch them. For different educational settings and cultures, students probably agree on completely or slightly different kinds of films. That seems to cause difficulty for teachers to select the appropriate films. As a consequence, it is suggested that teachers prepare a short questionnaire asking about the kinds of films the students like or dislike, before the selecting process. The data gained from the questionnaire could help the teachers choose the most suitable film for their particular groups of learners.

The other idea which could be implemented in classroom settings is "a film workshop" in accordance with two approaches of using films suggested in a study by Chapple [9]. The former is the language-based approach in which a film is fragmented into chunks, and a particular chunk is chosen to show in class aiming to teach a certain language point. The latter is a theme-based approach in which the whole film is shown, and questions prepared asking about the settings, the events, the dialogue and the characters of the film. However, to integrate the two approaches into a workshop, teachers need to be cautious about their drawbacks. For the language-based approach, it is worth doing in an ELT setting because the students can learn a lot of language points; nevertheless it might make the students feel upset because they cannot watch the whole film. This could interrupt the students' enjoyment which is the most salient benefit of using films for educational purposes. For a theme-based approach, one of the most attractive aspects is that it could help the students be exposed to the authentic use of English which they rarely do outside classrooms of non-English speaking countries. This approach also boosts the students' satisfaction with films as they can finish the whole film without any requirement to focus too much on language use, which sometimes could disturb the enjoyment of a film.

Despite the great advantages this approach provides, it raises some conundrums for the teachers to consider. First, it might not be worthwhile showing the whole film without discussing any language points. Moreover, covering the course syllabus might be the first priority of language teachers, hence it might be impossible to spend several lessons on topics not directly pertaining to the syllabus.

To implement the idea of conducting a film-workshop in class, further decisions should be made on how to integrate the two approaches—language-based and theme-based—into ELT classrooms practically and successfully.

Conclusion

Basically, the students have gained some kinds of knowledge from films than from audio cassettes. They prefer to practise listening skills by watching films rather than by listening to audio cassettes due to the visual supports films can provide. However, using films in class sometimes causes problems relating to the students' understanding of the contents, vocabulary, and intonations of the native speakers. If films were to be used as an educational tool for classroom learning, the stages of film implementation should be taken into account so that films could be implemented meaningfully and purposefully.

Appendix

Students' answers on problems and suggestions for the two types of media

A: Audio cassettes

Students' comments after practising listening skills through audio cassettes	No. of students who answered
1. Problems in listening	**36**
1.1 Use low quality of cassettes and acoustically inappropriate classrooms	20
1.2 Cannot catch main ideas of texts	12
1.3 Feel bored, tense and sleepy	4
2. Students' suggestions	**2**
2.1 Need teachers' clarification of unclear sentences	1
2.2 Prefer practising listening skills through watching movies	1
3. Other comments	**1**
3.1 Enjoyable feeling	1

B: Films

Students' comments after practising listening skills through watching films	No. of students who answered
1. Problems in listening	**12**
1.1 Cannot catch or understand the content of films	7
1.2 Cannot understand some vocabulary items and sentences	3
1.3 Cannot understand the intonation	2
2. Students' suggestions	**5**
2.1 Avoid distraction by not using too much attractive animation films	1
2.2 Avoid using films with L1 subtitles	1
2.3 Request to watch more films	1
2.4 Request films with comprehensible language	2
3.Other comments	**21**
3.1 Motivating listening practicing	**18**
3.1.1 Feel enjoyable and alert	15
3.1.2 Prefer visual supports and native speakers' intonation	3
3.2 Providing contexts for better understanding	**3**
3.2.1 Can guess the meaning from the roles of the characters and contents of the films	1
3.2.2 Use the scenes as a clue.	1
3.2.3 Learn practical English usage	1

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