

USING FILMS TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS FOR STUDENTS AT THE HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

Listening comprehension has been always known as the most complex skill among four language skills for Vietnamese students, particularly for high school students. Because of the fact that students at school have only one period each unit lesson to learn listening skills, it is extremely vital for them to find out an effective way to generate students' motivation in listening lessons, thus improving their learn listening skills and motivate them to study listening better. This paper presents an investigation into students' perception of learning listening skills via films conducted at Nguyen Binh Khiem High School for The Gifted. The findings of the study are expected to enable teachers of English to have a better understanding of the students' perception and attitudes towards film employment in listening periods and thus put into practice appropriate methods with a view to enhancing students' listening skills.

Key words: *films, improving listening skills, motivation, high school students, teaching method renovation*

1. Introduction

For Vietnamese high school students in the 4.0 era, becoming proficient in English is crucial for future success, but it can be challenging due to various factors such as lack of interest, motivation, or difficulty in understanding spoken English. Additionally, students often struggle to find engaging and effective methods for learning English in school. To address these issues and make learning more enjoyable, I have considered using films to enhance listening skills. While using films for teaching is not a novel approach globally, it has not received significant attention in Vietnamese educational workshops, curricula, or teacher discussions.

This paper focuses on investigating students' perceptions of learning listening skills through films at Nguyen Binh Khiem High School for The Gifted. Understanding these perceptions will help teachers better grasp students' attitudes towards using films in listening instruction and enable them to implement effective methods to improve students' listening skills and scores.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Films' Values in Education.

Films offer four key benefits in pedagogy that can enhance listening skills and encourage more effective learning.

Firstly, films provide authentic language. As noted by Gilmore (2007), authentic language includes real messages delivered by actual speakers to real audiences. Films incorporate important elements often missing in traditional listening materials, such as genuine intonation, natural word ratios, assimilation, diverse voices, local languages, and varied syntax.

Secondly, films combine sound and visuals, which supports listening comprehension. According to Hu (2006) and Murphy and Hasting (2006), films create an immersive learning environment where students can hear characters and see their gestures and facial expressions simultaneously. This multimodal approach aids understanding, as the saying goes, "a picture is worth a thousand words."

Thirdly, films stimulate student participation. Chapple and Curtis (2000) and Ishihara and Chi (2004) argue that engaging content, attractive visuals, interesting dialogues, and soundtracks can motivate students and enhance their involvement in learning.

Finally, films can build students' confidence. Latifi, Youhanaee, and Mohammadi (2012) suggest that exposure to films helps learners gain confidence, which can lead to improved listening performance. Given these advantages, films are seen as a valuable tool for motivating students, increasing their confidence, and familiarizing

them with authentic language. In the current context of Vietnamese students, where exposure to authentic language is limited and listening skills are underdeveloped, films are evaluated as a powerful educational tool. **2.2.**

2.2. Theoretical background

Most DVDs offer subtitles in various languages, such as English, Korean, Chinese, or Vietnamese. Research by Danan (2004), Guichon and Mc Lornan (2008), and Hayati and Mohmedi (2011) indicates that films with subtitles are more effective than those without in improving listening skills and reducing learners' anxiety. However, King (2002) points out that subtitles may hinder learners from predicting and inferring meaning from context, as reading is easier than listening. Additionally, breaking the habit of using subtitles can be challenging. While subtitles may introduce weaknesses, such as dependency, viewing films without them can lead to nervousness or ambiguity but also fosters a sense of achievement and progress in information processing. A balance of both methods is considered beneficial for Vietnamese learners, who often lack exposure to authentic language and seek to improve their listening skills.

Bahrani and Tam (2012) demonstrated the impact of engaging with news, animations, and films on listening skills. Their study used an IELTS listening test for pre- and post-testing, showing that while news did not significantly improve listening levels, both cartoons and films did, with cartoons yielding slightly better results.

In summary, films have the potential to enhance listening skills based on pedagogical benefits and experimental research. However, the effectiveness of films in Vietnam's current educational context remains a key concern for the researcher in their innovation project. **3. Research methodology**

The purpose of this study is to provide evidence for films' effects on listening comprehension assisting foreign language teachers and curriculum designers to eagerly spend time investing in films. Furthermore, films can foster students' independence and autonomy to practice listening via films outside class. This study also supplies the researcher with precious feedback that suggests places for improvement and supports the decision-making for the next implementation.

There are 40 sixteen-year-old students (20 male and 20 female) from a Math class at Nguyen Binh Khiem High School for The Gifted participating in focus groups from interviews and classroom observations in about forty five minutes each period till the closing of the study and all participants studied at intermediate level through the school's replacement test.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. Students' attitude of listening skills

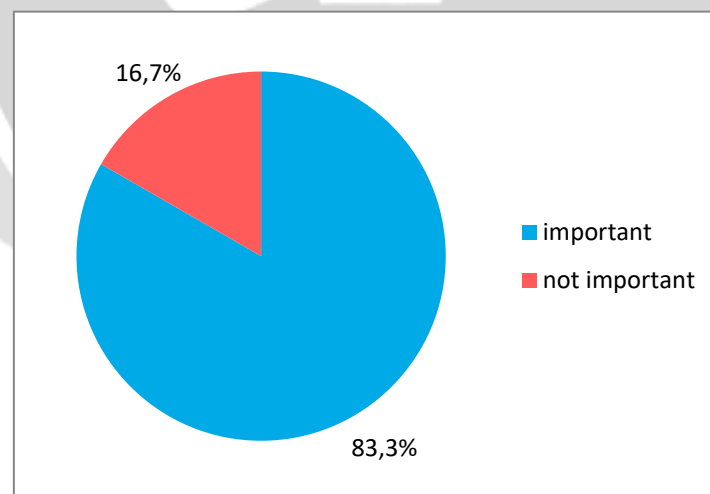


Figure 1: Students' attitude of listening skills

The ratings collected from Figure 1 show that more than two thirds of the respondents (83,3%) thought that listening skill was important in comparison with the other three language skills. 16,7% of the students considered listening skill was not as important as others. It is, therefore, assumed that listening skill is considered as the most important and necessary skill among the four language skills. Listening, as Mapruza Idrissova and al. (2015) defined, is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This involves understanding a speaker's accent and pronunciation, his grammar and his vocabulary and grasping his meaning.

4.2. Students' interest in listening tasks from using film

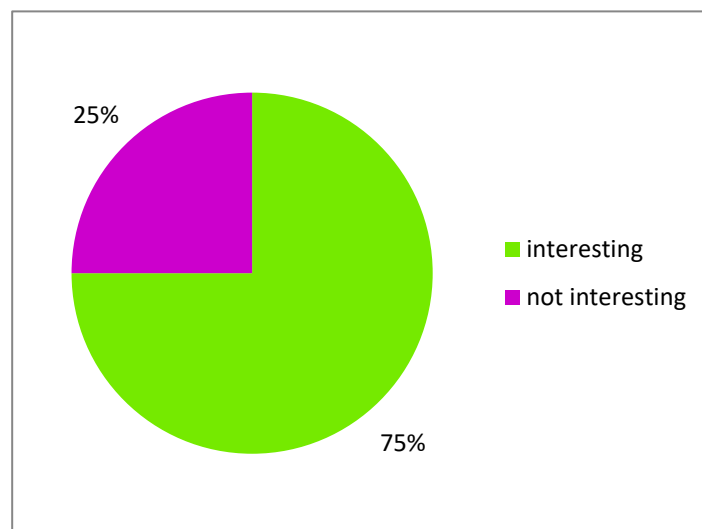


Figure 2: Students' interest in listening tasks from using film

When being asked whether they were interested in listening tasks from using film or not, three fourths of the respondents (75%) answered that they listening tasks were interesting and only 25% students thought that listening tasks were not interesting. It can be inferred that using film play an important role in listening lessons. They encourage students in paying more attention to the lessons and applying learned language in daily real life .

4.3. The content of film related to the textbook

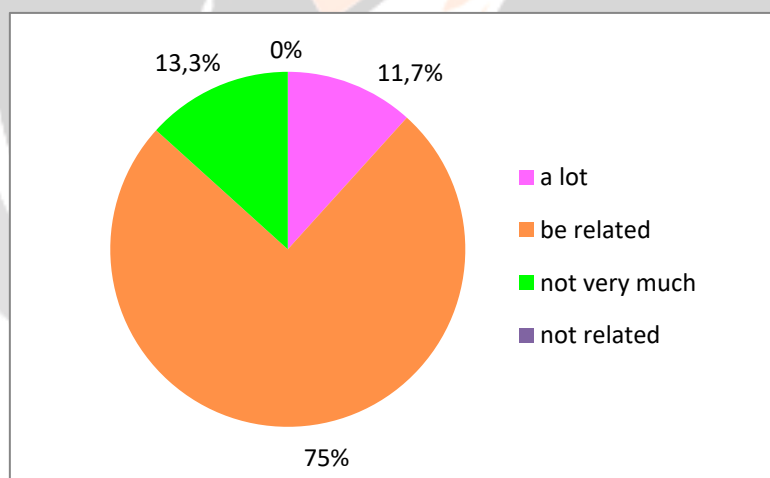


Figure 3: The content between film and the textbook

The data shows that teachers effectively used films that were relevant to the textbook content, as reported by 75% of students. Additionally, the teacher fostered a supportive learning environment that encouraged students to discuss and share information, aiming to make students feel comfortable and engage fully in their learning process. Surprisingly, 13.3% of students felt that the films were less related to the listening tasks in the textbook. Anderson and Lynch (2018) noted that "understanding is not something that happens because of what a speaker says: the listener has a crucial part to play in the process, by activating and trying to understand what the speaker means." Therefore, teachers should consider more strategies to engage students' schemata in listening comprehension.

4.5. Tests' result analysis

The goal of the listening test was to determine the extent to which using films helps students improve their listening skills. The test duration was 25 minutes, and the teacher acted as the examiner.

The marking was conducted using the same assessment criteria and was subsequently analyzed. The test was administered twice to students: once at the beginning and once at the end of the term.

After collecting and marking the tests, the investigator analyzed the scores by examining frequency distributions to identify the range of marks and measures of central tendency to assess the progress of each class.

The results from the post-test were then compared with those from the pre-test. Standard deviation (SD) was also considered as a crucial measure of dispersion, providing insights into how much the test scores deviated from the mean and helping to evaluate the impact of using films in listening lessons.

4.5.1. The pre-test

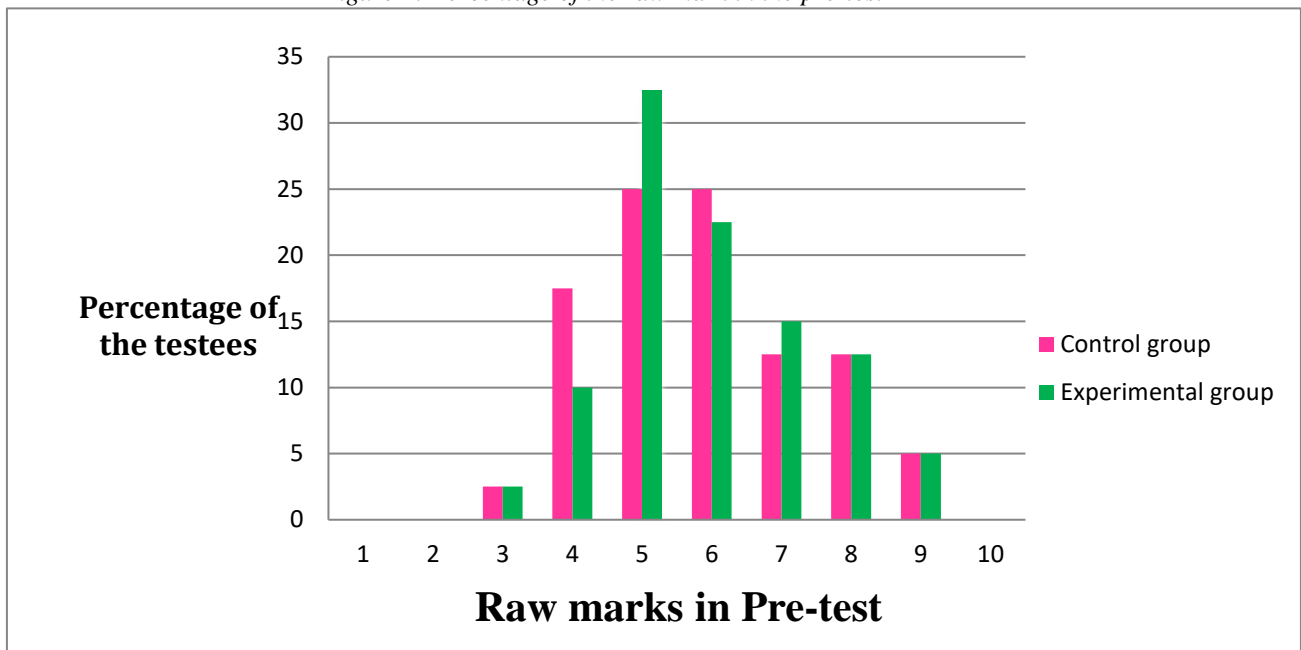
Table 4.1 shows some significant descriptive statistics of the results gained by two groups in the pre-test.

Control group			Experimental group		
score	number of testees	percentage	score	number of testees	percentage
1	0	0.0%	1	0	0.0%
2	0	2.2%	2	0	0.0%
3	1	2.5%	3	1	2.5%
4	7	17.5%	4	4	10.0%
5	10	25.0%	5	12	30.0%
6	10	25.0%	6	7	17.5%
7	5	12.5%	7	3	7.5%
8	5	12.5%	8	8	20.0%
9	2	5.0%	9	4	10.0%
10	0	0.0%	10	0	0.0%

Table 4.2: Descriptive statistics for the pre-test of the control and experimental groups

mean: 6.0	mean: 6.38
SD: 1.55	SD: 1.8

Figure 4: Percentage of the raw mark in the pre-test



As can be seen from table 4.1, the marks were ranged from 3 to 9, in which mark 4, 5, 6 were the most common. Students in control group seemed to be of more uniform level whereas students from experimental one had more excellent individuals. This were shown in the chart where the columns of mark 6 and 7 in control group were higher whereas the column of mark 8 and 9 was higher in experimental group.

Correlation:

	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Control group	40	6,0	1,55
Experimental group	40	5,93	1,46

The mean of 6,0 revealed that control group was a little bit better than experimental group whose mean was 5,93. The means also showed that in general the students were only at average level. The SD of 1,46 and 1,55 showed a very spread of scores which implied a narrow range of ability in students of both classes.

4.5.2. The post-test

The result of the post-test is described as follows.

Table 4.3 shows some significant descriptive statistics of the results gained by two groups in the post-test.

Control group			Experimental group		
score	number of testees	percentage	score	number of testees	percentage
1	0	0.0%	1	0	0.0%
2	0	0.0%	2	0	0.0%
3	0	0.0%	3	0	0.0%
4	8	20%	4	1	2.5%
5	9	22.5%	5	8	20%
6	10	25%	6	12	30%
7	2	5%	7	5	12.5%
8	9	22.5%	8	10	25%
9	2	5%	9	3	7.5%
10	0	0.0%	10	1	2.5%

Table 4.4: Descriptive statistics for the post-test of the control and experimental groups

mean: 5.94

mean: 6.7

SD: 1.58

SD: 1.43

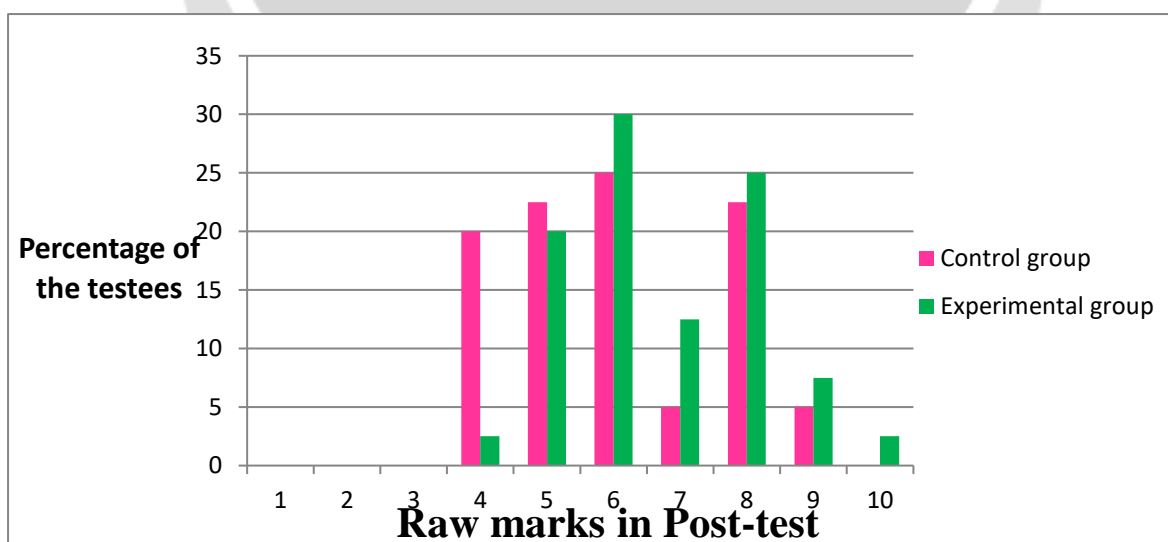


Figure 5: Percentage of the raw mark in the post-test

As shown in the table, there was a noticeable shift in the mark range for both groups. The lowest mark increased from 3 to 4, and the highest mark rose to 10. This positive change indicates an improvement in listening

skills for both groups.

This improvement is further supported by the median, which increased by one point compared to the pre-test. Although the experimental group had fewer below-average marks than the control group, it achieved higher above-average marks. Additionally, the mode changed in the post-test; the experimental group's mode increased from 5 to 7, while the control group's mode remained unchanged. These figures suggest that the experimental group showed greater progress in their listening skills compared to the control group.

Correlation:

	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Control group	40	5,94	1,58
Experimental group	40	6,7	1,43

The comparison of the mean scores confirmed that the experimental group surpassed the control group in the progress of listening skills. When comparing the pretest means, it is evident that while the control group showed a slight decrease (from 6.0 to 5.94), the experimental group made significant progress, increasing from 5.93 to 6.7. This substantial difference in mean scores between the pre-test and post-test clearly demonstrates that after one term of using films in teaching listening skills, the students' abilities improved significantly.

However, there was minimal change in the standard deviation (SD) of the two classes. The SDs of 1.43 and 1.58 indicate that, despite a shift in mark dispersion, the range of abilities among students in both classes remained narrow.

In summary, the superior results of the experimental group suggest that using films in teaching listening skills contributes to improved listening abilities to some extent.

4.6. Discussion

From the data analysis, we observe a statistically significant difference between the two means, indicating that the experimental group outperformed the control group. Here are some key achievements of using films to improve listening skills:

Firstly, many participants in the experimental group appreciated the way their teacher conducted the lessons. They noted that pre-teaching new vocabulary, grammar structures, and explaining contractions and linking words significantly helped them understand the listening text, particularly for those new to studying English. Spoken English differs greatly from written English, making teacher explanations crucial for comprehension.

Secondly, in addition to listening, other skills, especially speaking, showed positive improvements. Students reported increased confidence in speaking due to learning useful expressions from listening texts. Repeated exposure to the text helped them become accustomed to different speech rates and unfamiliar accents, leading to significant improvements in listening.

Lastly, an important benefit of using films to enhance listening lessons is increased student motivation. Students paid more attention and found the lessons more engaging. They were curious and eager to learn new knowledge from the films, actively taking notes, jotting down key words, and repeating what they heard. As a result, students no longer feared listening lessons as they did before.

4. Conclusion

To gain a comprehensive understanding of this issue, the research reviewed relevant literature on listening comprehension, including its concept, process, potential problems, significance, teaching principles, language learning strategies, and their classification and importance in the learning process.

As a high school teacher, the researcher has a clear view of the English teaching and learning situation. Listening is the weakest skill among the four, and students face various listening challenges. Therefore, this study aims to explore teachers' and students' attitudes towards using films to enhance listening skills, identify student

challenges, and offer recommendations with specific strategies to improve film use in listening at Nguyen Binh Khiem High School in Quang Nam Province. Data were collected through interviews, class observations, and questionnaires. The research findings are summarized as follows:

Firstly, all the teachers and students acknowledged the significant role of films in listening. They agreed that films are especially necessary for first-year students. Both teachers and students need comprehensive knowledge of specific films to better aid students' listening development.

Secondly, the survey results indicated that students enjoy listening lessons with films and prefer films that match their abilities. Factors like phonological rules, limited background knowledge, and grammatical rules contribute to difficulties in answering listening questions. Students expect teachers to spend time on basic grammatical and phonological rules, utilize students' background knowledge on the listening topic, provide multiple listening opportunities, encourage pair or group work, offer visual clues and key words, and present a variety of listening tasks with encouragement to find answers.

Moreover, the study suggests improving the effectiveness of using films in listening by raising awareness of their benefits, emphasizing top-down and bottom-up strategies, and training students to be efficient listeners. Findings also highlight the need for teachers to develop individualized listening strategies for each student and encourage flexible use of these strategies to enhance listening comprehension.

Finally, the researcher believes the study's results will benefit future research in this area and those interested in or concerned with this issue. The author appreciates readers' understanding of any shortcomings or deficiencies in the study.

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