Use of Technology to Enhance the Teaching of Listening Skill

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Abstract

The use of technology has become an increasingly popular method for enhancing the teaching of listening skills. By incorporating technology into the classroom, educators are able to provide a more interactive and engaging learning experience for students. With the help of various digital tools and resources, students are able to improve their listening abilities in an efficient and effective manner. This study explores the use of technology in enriching the instruction of listening skills. It underscores the diverse methods through which technology can be incorporated in language learning settings to enhance learners' comprehension capacities. The research underscores the benefits of digital audio resources, online listening tasks, multimedia materials, language learning applications, online collaborative tools, speech recognition programs, virtual reality, augmented reality, and online language learning platforms. It stresses the significance of striking a balance between technology and in-person interactions, while promoting the creation of tasks that support active listening, critical analysis, and meaningful discourse. Through leveraging the capabilities of technology, educators can develop captivating and productive listening encounters for learners, nurturing their language advancement and competence. The use of technology in the teaching of listening skills has proven to be an effective and efficient method for improving students' abilities. Through the use of audio-visual materials, online language learning platforms, and virtual reality simulations, students are able to actively engage with the content and enhance their comprehension and retention of information. As technology continues to advance, it is likely that it will play an even bigger role in enhancing the teaching of listening skills in the future.

Keywords: Use, Technology, Enhance, Teaching, Listening Skill

Introduction

Language is a gift that can be valued from a variety of perspectives in its use and functions within human life. Amadi (2001) delineated several functions, such as serving as a tool for thought, expression of identity, documentation of facts, management of reality, generation of imagination and ideas, and facilitator of social interactions, among others. The English language encompasses four primary skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Native to the English people, the English language serves as a second language to non-native speakers like Nigerians.

Listening is a process wherein individuals concentrate on a specific area of sensory input, extract meaning from passages, and connect what they hear to existing knowledge. It signifies the receptive aspect of oral communication within language and denotes the capacity to comprehend the auditory component. The method of conveying oral language involves not only grasping meaning, but also entails interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and judgment of the spoken words. The International Listening Association (ILA) (in Bond, 2012) recognized the comprehensive definition of listening as "the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages" (ILA). Due to its significance as a skill that is particularly challenging for ESL learners in general and Nigerian students in particular, this study aims to explore how the teaching of listening to Nigerian students can be improved through technological means.

Technology serves as the necessary medium and resources for teaching listening skills. The objective of teaching listening is to equip students with the ability to comprehend spoken language. In this digital age, the conventional approach to teaching English has undergone a significant transformation due to the pervasive influence of information and technology, where technology is no longer a novelty. While technology has been present in the past, its evolution was not as rapid as seen today. Although technology cannot entirely replace language instructors and traditional classroom settings, it can be effectively utilized to enhance language education.

Contemporary technology offers numerous options and conveniences in teaching, rendering the teaching and learning processes more engaging and accessible, thereby enhancing students' capabilities. Technology lies at the core of the globalization phenomenon, impacting culture, employment, and education. With the rapid advancements in science and technology, the emergence and progression of multimedia technology and its integration into teaching, featuring audio, visual, and animation effects, have become integral in English language instruction, providing a conducive platform for innovation and experimentation in English teaching methodologies in the modern era. Thus, technology plays a crucial role in providing substantial support in terms of materials, resources, and media for the teaching of English, particularly in the context of teaching listening skills. As listening is no longer undervalued in English instruction, educators have come to recognize the imperative nature of teaching listening skills, hence the indispensable role of technology in its support. In the context of teaching listening as one of the language skills teaching listening without using technology is almost impossible.

Listening skill and its sub-skills

Listening is an indispensable competency necessary for comprehending the discourse articulated by the speaker and fostering effective interaction between the speaker and the listener. Ineffectual listening results in misinterpretation of messages, leading to breakdowns in communication, underscoring the pivotal role of this skill in all forms of communication. Within the realm of language education, honing listening skills also enhances oral communication abilities. Listening essentially embodies the receptive facet of oral language communication, entailing the capacity to grasp auditory content. Proficiency in listening comprehension lays a foundation for language acquisition and the cultivation of other linguistic competencies.

This is because reading, writing, and speaking, the other language proficiencies, have primarily been emphasized in examinations. According to Ali (2011, p. 53), listening involves several sub-skills that can be presented briefly below:

1. Guessing the topic.
2. Predicting the topic.
3. Note-taking while listening.
4. Asking for repetition to identify main ideas.
5. Asking for slower speech speed to identify main ideas.
6. Scanning for global ideas or gist.
7. Skimming for specific details of who, what, when and where.
8. Guessing meaning from context.
9. Recalling important details.
10. Identifying markers of addition.
11. Identifying markers (i.e. words) of cause and effect.
12. Identifying markers (i.e. Words) of clarification/explanation.
13. Identifying markers (i.e. words) of conclusion.
14. Identifying markers (i.e. words) of comparison.
15. Identifying markers (i.e. words) of contrast.
16. Identifying markers (i.e. words) of exemplification.
17. Identifying markers (i.e. words) of generalization.
18. Identifying what the speaker said.
19. Identifying why the speaker said it.
20. Identifying when the speaker changes the topic.
21. Recognising parts of speech.
22. Distinguishing between facts and opinions.
23. Detecting key words to identify meaning.

24. Distinguishing between literal and implied meaning.
25. Detecting meanings expressed in different grammatical forms.

These skills are complex, and one skill may overlap with one or more other skills. For example, detecting words to identify meaning may overlap with guessing meaning from context. This inherently requires the listener to recognise parts of speech and distinguish implied meaning.

Listening difficulties

There are several problems embedded in the skill of listening for the ESL learner. These problems stem from a number of factors, which include the inability to cope with the speed of the speech, the inability to ask for repetitions, limited vocabulary, and lack of concentration. All language learners face difficulties when listening to the target language. Nevertheless, the types and the extent of difficulty, and much listening comprehension research has been conducted to investigate these differences. Goh (2008) summarised the main difficulties of listening for ESL students as follows:

1. Quickly forget what is heard: Students articulated an inability to recollect specific terms and expressions they had recently encountered. A prevalent concern was the lapse in memory despite initial comprehension of the auditory input, leading to forgetfulness upon transitioning to another segment of the discourse. The progression of language comprehension is not always delineated into discrete phases but can exhibit recursive and intersecting characteristics. Consequently, individuals may endeavor to retain a perceived fragment while simultaneously processing forthcoming acoustic signals. The evanescent nature of short-term memory necessitates prompt establishment of associations or fixation in long-term memory to prevent irreversible loss of information, a predicament encountered by the students. Verbal accounts from some students indicated an interplay among the three comprehension phases, particularly pronounced when unfamiliar elements succeeded a comprehended portion, such as novel concepts or vocabulary.
2. Do not recognize words they know: The students encountered a prevalent challenge in listening comprehension linked to the fundamental processing of textual content. It is plausible that certain individuals have not fully automated the conversion from sound to script. Consequently, while recognizing words visually, they struggle to identify them aurally, indicating an underdeveloped listening lexicon. Inadequate encoding of lexical sounds in long-term memory significantly impairs their ability to comprehend oral language. This deficiency in listening vocabulary may stem from the students' learning approach, often centered on spelling memorization to the neglect of auditory retention. An alternative explanation lies in the lack of atomization in word-referent associations, resulting in delayed retrieval of word meanings. Some students perceived a potential correlation between learning methodologies and this specific listening impediment.

3. Understand words but not the intended message: Despite grasping the literal meaning of words, students expressed difficulty in extracting the full message's significance. This challenge pertains to a utilization issue associated with the listeners' capacity to generate meaningful inferences or respond to the intended message.
4. Unable to form a mental representation from words heard: The final among the prevalent issues pertains to the parsing phase, where students noted a failure to construct a coherent mental representation by linking the auditory input's components.
5. Other listening problems: Three additional challenges at the perceptual level were identified, with students reporting struggles in segmenting speech streams into discernible units. This obstacle predominantly stemmed from the absence of local or specific context, typically provided by preceding portions of the discourse. The degree to which this lack of local context affected comprehension might have depended on how much prior knowledge the students could bring with them to their interpretation.

Those who had rich background knowledge were often able to compensate for this lack by engaging in top-down processing to fill in the gaps. Those who could not do this would have no choice but to fall back on input-driven parsing, which became even more difficult when there were many unfamiliar words. On the other hand, Lin (2002) identified the most important obstacles as including the listener's experience in listening to the target language, his/her general intelligence, and his/her background to the topic of the listening segment. Moreover, the listener may be affected by the style of the speaker, accent, speed of delivery, and the cohesion of the segment (Ali, 2011).

Hassan (2000) conducted a study investigating the use of ineffective listening strategies by Arabic-speaking EFL learners. He reported the findings of a questionnaire study that investigated the listening problems encountered by Arabic speaking EFL students at Damascus University. The study reveals learners' perceptions and beliefs about their listening comprehension problems, some of which include features of the listening text, characteristics of the speaker and the degree of visual and written support. The results of the questionnaire revealed that 59.4% of the participants reported using some ineffective listening strategies such as listening to every detail to get the main idea of the spoken text, which might impede their listening comprehension. The author proposed that activating students' schema before listening could remedy this problem as learners wouldn't try to process the listening passage word by word but rather try to construct a meaningful interpretation of the text as a whole.

Vandergrift (2003) examined the effect of two exercises meant to help students learn how to listen and to get them to concentrate more on the act of listening than the final outcome. He clarified that by including a process approach into routine listening exercises, students would become more aware of the steps involved in good listening and be able to exert more control over their listening efforts. In the first exercise, students filled in a weekly table with their predictions about the type of content and key phrases they thought they would read in

the assigned book. After hearing the material, the students compared their predictions. The second task was designed to aid students in understanding an oral text by giving them some written material prior to the listening exercise. The goal of the job was to comprehend a story's flow of events.

Processes involved in listening

A proficient listener does not passively receive what the speaker says. S/He actively constructs meaning. S/He identifies main points and supporting details; s/he distinguishes fact from opinion. S/He guesses the meaning of unfamiliar words. These are cognitive aspects of listening. There are also affective or emotional dimensions to listening. The listener agrees or disagrees with a speaker. Likes or dislikes the speaker's tone of voice or choice of words. S/He may find the speakers' choice of topic morally objectionable or boring. Moreover, listening is a difficult skill to acquire. It is composed of certain processes that need to be explicated. These processes can be summarised as follows:

1. Top-down processing: A listener can anticipate the type of information he will likely hear by using what he has already learned to trigger a memory of the information he hears. He's thought to be using 'top-down' processing when this occurs. A listener will comprehend what he hears better if he can make connections between what he already knows and what he is about to hear. Pre-listening exercises are therefore included in order to assist students in making connections between the listening material and their prior knowledge.
2. Bottom-up processing: In case the information he receives doesn't correspond with his prior knowledge, he can use a technique known as "bottom up" listening, which involves comprehending every word he hears and gradually constructing meaning block by block. This type of processing is a far more difficult approach to this issue. Concentrating the pupils' attention on the "building blocks"—pronunciation, word knowledge, etc.—is insufficient, though. People pay attention to noises and words. They pay attention to meaning. For example, they should attempt to infer the meaning of unfamiliar or only partially heard words from the context in order to make sense of what they hear. It is important to teach them to listen with a whole-to-part concentration. Grammar, vocabulary, and sounds should only be used as tools to help them understand the message as a whole; they should not be considered important in and of themselves.

Using technology to enhance the teaching of listening skill

Technology has greatly enhanced the teaching and learning of listening skills in recent years. Here are some ways technology can be used to enhance listening skills:

1. Digital audio and video resources: A vast array of audio and video resources are now accessible thanks to technology, and these resources can be used to hone listening abilities. Teachers to introduce students to various accents, intonations, and pronunciations can use these resources. Students for practice and

independent study can use these resources. Podcast episodes, news broadcasts, speeches, music, and more can be found in these resources. To assist students in concentrating on particular elements of the audio or video, such as identifying key ideas, comprehending details, or distinguishing intonation and stress patterns, teachers can assign structured listening assignments.

2. Interactive online listening comprehension activities: Students can improve their listening abilities by engaging in a variety of interactive online listening comprehension exercises, including podcasts, films, and online quizzes. These exercises can be modified to fit the students' skill level and interests. Multiple-choice questions and gap-fill assignments are frequently included in these exercises to gauge students' comprehension of the audio. Many levels and themes of listening exercises may be found on websites like ESL-lab, Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab, and Breaking News English.
3. Speech recognition software: Students can receive rapid pronunciation feedback via speech recognition software. This can be very helpful for students who are learning a new language and need to practice differentiating comparable sounds in the target language or working on their pronunciation.
4. Virtual reality: Through immersive listening experiences made possible by virtual reality technology, students can be exposed to a variety of scenarios and situations in which they must comprehend spoken language. Students who are getting ready for real-life events like job interviews or travel may find this especially useful.
5. Interactive whiteboards: With interactive whiteboards, educators can project and comment live audio and video resources in the classroom. Instructors can use interactive whiteboards to pause the audio and pose comprehension questions, underline important words, or call attention to certain segments of the audio.
6. Mobile Apps: Numerous smartphone apps are available to assist children in developing their listening abilities. These apps can provide children easy and simple ways to practice listening. Short games or listening exercises that students can finish at their own pace are frequently included in these apps. These kinds of apps include HelloTalk, Lingbe, and Duolingo.

In summary, technology has completely changed how listening skills are taught and learned, giving students the opportunity to practice listening in a range of settings. Both teachers and students can use technology to give pupils interesting and interactive listening exercises, as well as to practice and advance their listening abilities on their own.

The role of technology in teaching listening skill

Listening is the language skill that is used most frequently. It has been estimated that adults spend almost half their communication time listening, and students may receive as much as 90 % of them in-school information through listening to teachers/lecturers, and to one another. However most of language learners do not recognize how to develop listening ability. Listening is defined as the process of identifying and understanding the speech

of the speakers. It involves understanding the speaker's accent or pronunciation, speaker's grammar and vocabulary and comprehension of meaning (Saricoban, 1999). That is the reason many experts say that listening is not a passive activity in contrast it is an active one.

In listening activity, the listeners actively involve themselves in interpretation of what they hear, bringing their own background knowledge and linguistics knowledge to bear on the information contained in the aural text. Listening involves a sender (a person, radio, television) a message and a receiver (the listener). Listener must process messages as they come, even if they are still processing what they have just heard, without backtracking or looking ahead. They also have incomplete control of the language used by the speaker (sender). In this context the listeners must cope with the sender's choice of vocabulary, structure, and rate of delivery. Having such kind of complexity in listening become the reason why listening skill is needed to be taught as a part of learning English. In addition, it is important for English teachers to help their students become effective listeners.

Ludmilla (2011) outlined three listening categories: Passive listening for enjoyment, active listening for learning and retention, and critical/analytical listening for evaluation. She highlighted how modern computer-based technology enhances listening skills by providing ample opportunities to engage with spoken language. Language instructors must stay informed about these evolving technologies to immerse students in authentic language experiences. Regarding listening competency, Ludmilla (2011) defined it as a set of micro skills that effective listeners employ to comprehend auditory input, suggesting a potential synergy between multimedia processing options for language learners and their listening skill development.

1. Retention of information in short term memory: In the realm of multimedia applications, most current tools enable students to regulate the pace of language delivery. Learners can manage the information flow by starting, pausing, and revisiting segments to enhance comprehension and retention. Additionally, incorporating videos ensures a coherent sequence of events, facilitating the connection between new and previous information recall.
2. Discriminate the Sound of the Target Language: The ability for students to manipulate language input across various modalities enhances their capacity to identify word boundaries. The simultaneous display of text alongside the spoken content aids learners in recognizing phonetic patterns and delineating linguistic units. Observing the facial expressions of speakers in videos allows students to leverage nonverbal cues to comprehend the sound-symbol relationships in the target language.
3. Understand the significance of stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns in communicating meaning and information: When aural language is segmented into syntactic units, aspects like stress, rhythm, and intonation are accentuated. Natural pauses in speech occur at predictable syntactic junctures, thereby emphasizing the structural organization of language during communication. When specific words are stressed and patterns of intonation used, learners can be cue to closely examine the visual and spoken reactions of interlocutors in the video presentation.

4. Understand reduce speech: Multimedia is particularly well suited to assist learners in their understanding of reduced forms of target language speech. Having the written version of fast, naturally-paced aural text on the computer screen allows the learner access to both the written and spoken forms simultaneously. That is the learner may hear "wadjagonado?" but will read "What are you going to do?" in this way, learners can come to understand the two different forms of the target language-spoken-written as well as learn to decode these reduced forms.
5. Recognize core vocabulary and the rules and patterns of words used to communicate: Coordinated aural, visual and textual information on the computer screen at the same time makes up an ideal laboratory for students problem-solving at the level of individual words and sentence structures. The learner has at her disposal rich visual and contextual clues that assist in breaking the code of the written and aural text. The multi modal cues can be cross-referenced for word, sentence-level and broader understanding.
6. Understand communicative functions of utterances according to the context: Video can be a very rich source of context for language processing. In a multimedia format, learners are provided control over the rate and order of video presentation and can therefore take advantage of starting and stopping the action in order to study the language in a well-represented context. Video also typically boasts tight correspondence between what is seen and what is heard. That is in only very rare cases is the audio portion of video temporally disconnected to what is being viewed. By studying target language communication in a multimedia format, learners can experience and come to understand the connection between utterances and how they function within a visually depicted context.
7. Process different speech styles, different rates, and performance errors: Rate and styles of audio naturally vary according to the genre of the video selection. Many situation comedies, for example, exemplify slowed speech. Interlocutors speak slowly and deliberately so the joke can be processed and understood. There are other kinds of programming, talk shows, for example, that are very fast –paced and difficult for nonnative speakers to comprehend. Multimedia that includes varied genres permit a broad experience of different voices with differing rates and speech styles. Students can control the aural text so they have sufficient time for their individual processing needs.
8. Recognize the meanings can be expressed in different grammatical forms: Redundancy in video presentations is common. That is interlocutors, narrators frequently repeat the same information in different ways so that meaning, and intention is made clear to the viewer. In a multimedia format, phrases and sentences that carry the same or similar meaning can be highlighted for users or learner that they can be prompted to highlight those phrases and sentences she feels express like meanings.
9. Infer meaning and make predictions using personal knowledge, experiences, and strategies: Video is a medium to which language learners come well equipped. Students are very accustomed to inferring meaning and making predictions from what they see and hear on the screen. In a multimedia format,

these viewing/comprehension strategies can be cue and guided by for example posing pre-viewing questions on top of the stilled frame of the sequence they are about to watch. Inference, predication and calling our prior knowledge and experience can thus be activated.

Through the utilization of technology, language learners can acquire the necessary skills in listening. Technology aids in the identification of sound, stress patterns, intonation, reduced forms, word combinations, vocabulary, grammar, and dialects within the language being studied. This significant role of technology in assisting teachers and students in the instruction and acquisition of listening skills is attributed to the provision of listening experiences. Presently, the internet is extensively employed in language education due to its abundant resources, particularly in audio and video materials. As asserted by Dang (2012), educators commonly utilize audiovisual content from platforms like YouTube and news websites such as BBC, VOA, and ABC. In accordance with Dang's perspective, English teachers and learners also frequent other news websites like Google.com, CNN, Al Jazeera, and NHK.

The authentic materials sourced from these platforms prove highly beneficial for students in honing their listening and speaking abilities. The internet, with its various websites, facilitates the integration of images and audio simultaneously through sophisticated software. By simulating real-world communication scenarios through the amalgamation of sound and visuals, students are likely to find the learning experience engaging, comprehensible, and stimulating. Moreover, this format offers an interactive and appealing learning environment that enables students to engage in conversations. By leveraging this format, students can engage in language practice activities (listening and speaking) regardless of their location, as diverse language exercises are provided. Another internet-based tool is the Skype application, which promotes interactive communication due to its user-friendly interface.

Such devices empower students to engage in seamless and efficient communication. This functionality enables students to engage in conversations akin to face-to-face interactions, irrespective of their physical locations. Similar online applications include MSN Messenger and Google Talk, which have been widely adopted by L2 students seeking to enhance their listening and speaking proficiencies (Ludmila, 2011). The latest internet-based device is Indi Home fiber or High-Speed Internet, which facilitates rapid internet access.

Moreover, it enables users to access an array of television and radio stations worldwide, in addition to other communication tools. This software facilitates swift video transmission. In regions where internet connectivity is limited, televisions and radios serve as alternative sources of listening materials and media. Given that these sources operate on distinct program schedules, educators and students must consider the programming and timing of each television and radio station. Recording programs for later playback in the classroom can be facilitated through the use of tape recorders or video players.

Conclusion

Technology's role in teaching listening lies in providing various listening activities, whether inside or outside the classroom. An essential aspect of technology in this context is offering students diverse listening experiences. Moreover, it grants teachers a wide array of choices in terms of media, sources, and teaching materials, be it in audio or video formats. Through platforms like the internet, educators can access a plethora of materials such as dialogs and monologs, enabling the use of authentic resources repeatedly by both teachers and students.

In the realm of teaching media, technology equips teachers with a spectrum of media types, ranging from simple to sophisticated ones like pictures, texts, sounds, videos, animations, and movies. This abundance facilitates the selection of media relevant to the subject matter, enhancing the effectiveness of teaching listening skills and aiding students in grasping the content. Consequently, leveraging technology can enhance the listening instruction process, making it more captivating and productive. Despite the myriad benefits technology offers in terms of teaching materials, caution is advised for teachers in choosing the most suitable resources.

Recommendations

When considering the use of technology for improving the teaching of listening skills in Nigeria, the following recommendations may prove beneficial:

It is imperative to ensure that educational institutions have access to technology infrastructure, such as computers, tablets, or smartphones, along with a dependable internet connection. Steps should be taken to narrow the digital gap and offer equal educational opportunities to all students, including those in rural regions or marginalized communities.

There should be an emphasis on creating listening materials that are rooted in Nigerian culture, context, and accents. This could involve recordings of Nigerian speeches, interviews with local figures, or podcasts addressing community-specific subjects. Access to such content can cultivate a sense of familiarity and applicability, enhancing the learning experience for Nigerian students.

Integration of Mobile Learning: Given the widespread prevalence of smartphones in Nigeria, it is advisable to adopt mobile learning solutions. Mobile applications and platforms that feature listening exercises can be easily utilized by students, enabling them to practice their listening skills while on the move. Moreover, these platforms can offer offline access options to overcome connectivity challenges in certain regions.

Acknowledging the unreliable or limited internet connectivity in certain parts of Nigeria, it is crucial to develop offline alternatives for use in areas with restricted internet access. This may involve locally stored listening materials, downloadable resources, or the utilization of offline language learning applications that do not necessitate a continuous internet connection.

Teachers should receive training on how to seamlessly integrate technology into their teaching methodologies. The focus should be on enhancing their digital literacy skills, assisting them in selecting suitable listening resources, and illustrating effective strategies for integrating technology into lesson plans. Continuous support

and opportunities for professional development can assist educators in staying abreast of emerging technologies and best practices.

Educational professionals should be encouraged to collaborate through online communities or platforms where they can exchange listening materials, lesson plans, and exemplary practices. This facilitates the sharing of resources tailored specifically to the Nigerian context, fostering a culture of collaboration and inventive approaches to listening instruction.

Collaborative partnerships between educational institutions, technology firms, and local entities should be nurtured to drive innovation in listening education. Joint endeavors could result in the creation of localized listening applications, interactive platforms, or virtual reality experiences that are in line with the Nigerian curriculum and cater to the unique requirements of Nigerian students.

Technology should be leveraged for assessment and feedback purposes. Implementation of digital tools capable of providing automated scoring or feedback on listening tasks enables students to receive prompt guidance on their performance. This not only saves time for educators but also furnishes students with timely feedback to monitor their progress.

By taking into account these recommendations, Nigeria can harness the potential of technology to enhance the teaching of listening skills, foster inclusive education, and equip students for proficient communication in an increasingly technologically driven world.

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