

USING TECHNOLOGY IN IMPROVING THE ENGLISH LISTENING SKILLS OF THE FOURTH YEAR STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, YANGON

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Abstract—Technology plays an increasingly large role in people's lives. With the advancement of technology, the styles and strategies of students' learning are also changing and improving. Most of the fourth year students at the University of Information Technology are not interested in teaching English listening skills through traditional methods and are reluctant to attend the English listening class, therefore, some new and interesting technologies are used to improve students' listening skills. Using Technology in teaching listening gives wonderful opportunities for students to learn the most useful listening strategies. Internet, Podcasts, Language laboratory, Overhead Projector, BBC learning English app, VOA learning English app, CALL, and Real-world videos are some of the best tools for teaching listening skills. Questionnaires with both close-ended and open-ended questions were distributed to the students. By means of quantitative and qualitative research methods, this paper analyses students' interest and improvements in using new technologies instead of using simple methods. The use of technology aims to ultimately assist students in improving their listening skills. As a result, students are enthusiastic in learning listening skills and willing to participate in listening activities by using new technologies.

Key Words: technology; using; improving listening skills; students; University of Information Technology

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, technology plays a crucial role in educational sectors and creates the most wonderful chances for teachers and students in the classroom, which makes teaching more effective. Listening is one of the most important and difficult skills of language learning and essential for effective communication. Most of the fourth year students at the University of Information Technology are bored with the simple methods of teaching listening, such as listening audio files and do not want to attend the listening class, therefore, some new technologies are used to improve students' listening skills.

Using technology in teaching has significantly changed methods of learning and teaching. Through using technologies, students are active and interested

in learning listening skills and they get a lot of useful knowledge and experience for improving their listening skills. This paper describes various new technologies to teach English listening skills in the classroom and using technology makes students satisfied with learning listening skills and encourages students to take part in listening activities enthusiastically.

Modern technologies influence on people, education, language learning and teaching (Vandergrift, 2007). Listening comprehension could be viewed as an essential language skill which learners of language need to develop.

Moreover, all other language skills' development becomes interwoven with listening skills (Vandergrift, 1999). Language learning plays a fundamental role in language acquisition, and creates an effective communication between the students (Smidt & Hegelheimer, 2004). It tends to provide the foundation for all language learning facets and plays a long-life role in the communication process.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is divided into two subsections: what technology is, and new technologies in improving listening skills.

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2.1 What Technology Is

Technology is the application of tools, materials and knowledge. Problems can be solved and human capabilities can also be extended by the use of technology. It includes machines but also techniques and processes. The advantages of new technology are speed, efficiency and agility; storage and sharing; mobility and remote connectivity; automation; and communication. Using the Internet and mobile technologies makes people communicate with anyone in the world and creates better relationships with people from different countries than in the past. The improvements in automation of manufacturing and having a greater efficiency of modern technology make people reduce doing repetitive jobs, and flexible in working hours.

Technology has the power to transform teaching by ushering in a new model of connected teaching. This model links teacher to their students and to professional content, resources and systems to help them improve their own instruction and personalise learning. Technology is important for all areas. Technology provides teachers and students with access to a variety of educational resources that inspire creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. This in turn promotes a global awareness, which is an essential component to a 21st century education.

Nowadays, technology is widely used throughout the world to develop learning. Integrating technology creates collaboration between teachers and students and information can be accessed, analysed, presented and transmitted by working together.

2.2 New Technologies in Improving Listening Skills

Technology is a powerful contributor to learning and can transform the classroom into an interactive learning environment. Technology should be chosen correctly for students to learn listening in the classroom. Teachers should guide how to use technology so that students can see the appropriate use of technology and new applications can be used independently in future (DePasquale, McNamara, & Murphy, 2003).

Technology can be used in the classroom to develop the higher-order thinking skills of the students (Kurt, 2010). Student collaboration is increased by the use of technology and collaboration creates the effective teaching and learning environment. Students cooperation makes their projects succeed and students can share knowledge and experience with each other (Keser, Huseyin, & Ozdamli, 2011).

New technologies available in education today are: Internet, TELL, CALL, Skype, Podcasts, Video conferencing, Overhead projector, language laboratory, BBC learning English app, VOA learning English app, and Real-world videos. Using the new technologies motivates students to participate in listening activities actively and makes students improve their listening skills. Students are more interested and enthusiastic in learning listening skills by using new technologies.

Among the above-mentioned new technologies, some of the most useful and interesting ones for students are as follows:

2.2.1 Internet

Internet is widely used by the people around the world. In the classroom, students use this aid to learn English where they Google the suitable materials for their topics. Teachers ask students collect the information necessary for improving students' listening skills. And then, teachers make students look up difficult words in a dictionary on the Internet and phonetic symbols to develop their listening skills. Students can get various kinds of learning materials, such as audio, video, audio-video recordings for improving their listening skills by using the Internet.

2.2.2 Podcasts

Podcasts are useful for students to develop their listening skills. Podcasts can be created to practise their listening abilities. Teachers can get a free download of iTunes which gives teachers access to hundreds of free podcasts with various kinds of topics. Students are enthusiastic in learning listening by using the interesting podcasts and they are satisfied with their learning listening in the classroom. Students enjoy using video podcasts to improve their English listening skills.

2.2.3 Language laboratory

The language laboratory is very useful for assessing students' listening skills, which helps students to improve their listening skills and pronunciation. Students are acquired language easily by using the updated electronic devices in the language lab. Students can use computers with language lab software for doing listening activities in the language laboratory. Headsets with microphones can also be used by teacher and students to communicate and do listening exercises and activities. In addition, media player or recorder can be used by the students to listen to audio and watch video for improving their listening skills.

2.2.4 Overhead Projector

Overhead projector is used to be fixtures in the classroom, conference rooms and boardrooms. Teacher can create bulleted Power point presentations or notes for the class by using projector. Students can take better notes because of using projector and they can see the information teacher gives clearly. It is very useful for students and learners can listen to pronunciation of the speakers; and see their lively manner; so they can develop their listening skills.

2.2.5 BBC learning English app

BBC learning English app is very useful for English language teaching and learning. Teachers and students can get free resources and activities from this site. The updated vocabularies, idioms, news, and movies on BBC learning English are effective for students and help students to improve their listening and speaking skills because students are very interested in learning listening by using this tool.

2.2.6 VOA learning English app

VOA learning English helps students to learn new vocabularies, listening and speaking. Students can watch and listen to presidential debates, technology report, health report, education report, economic report with lively manner and know the new words. VOA learning English app gives students the updated information and helps students to develop their pronunciation and listening skills.

2.2.7 CALL

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is essential for teachers and students to improve their teaching and learning environment. The teacher can use the latest technologies which can encourage passive students to participate in listening activities. Using CALL is very easy for the students to learn listening and the content is very effective and helpful for them. In addition, students like the excellent structure of it and their listening skills can be improved by the use of this wonderful tool.

2.2.8 Real-world videos

To improve students' listening skills, teachers can show the video activities to the students. The real-world videos like music videos, commercials, news and inspiring talks are the best way to teach students because students are very interested in these live videos and they can learn English easily and comfortably. As a result, students can be good listeners and improve their listening skills.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

In order to investigate actual needs for improving the listening skills of the Fourth Year Students at the University of Information Technology, the following questionnaires are given to the students who are attending the Fourth Year course in the academic year (2019-2020).

3.1 Study Questions

1) What technologies are useful in learning listening skills of the fourth year students at the University of Information Technology?

2) To what extent are these technologies effective for learning listening at the University of Information Technology?

3) What tools are the most important ones to improve teaching English listening at the University of Information Technology?

3.2 Participants

The current survey was carried out at the University of Information Technology. The 100 participant students are studying Software Engineering and High Performance Computing. The students at the University of Information Technology have passed their Matriculation Examination with considerably high marks. The age is 19 to 20. They have already had more than ten years of exposure to learning English. Approximately 70% of the students were female and 30% were male.

3.3 Instruments

In this study, Questionnaire is the only investigating tool, but in order to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data, this questionnaire includes two parts, questions with the best choice and open-ended questions. Questionnaire on learning English listening skills through using technologies was distributed to 100 students attending the Fourth Year at the University of Information Technology. There were 18 items, the best choice and open-ended questions (shown in Appendix). Biographic details including name, age, specialised subject, academic year and university were asked for. Instructions were given in English.

3.4 Result Analysis

The survey shows that there are altogether 100 students majoring in Software Engineering and High Performance Computing attending the Fourth Year at UIT. Their ages range from 19 to 20. They have already had more than ten years of exposure to learning English. Most of the students are enthusiastic in

learning English and always try to develop their listening skills. 40% of the students are reluctant to learn English because English is a compulsory subject and their purpose is to pass the exam that mainly focuses on reading and writing skills.

According to the data collected by questionnaires, 80% of the students admit themselves that their listening skill is poor and the rest fair. They want to be good listeners. 90% of the students enjoy Podcasts to practise their listening skills. 90% of the students admit themselves that using language laboratory can improve their listening skills and the electronic devices in the language laboratory stimulate the eyes and ears of the learners to acquire language. 80% of the students also like using Overhead projector to improve their listening skills and students are very active in learning listening skills. 90% of the students enjoy BBC learning English, which can develop their listening skills. BBC learning English provides the interesting resources and activities for students. 80% of the students like VOA learning English, which can help students to learn the latest words and idioms to improve their listening skills. 90% of the students also enjoy CALL, which can transform the passive students into active students and improve students' listening skills. 90% of the students enjoy watching real-world videos, which is the best way to improve students' listening skills. Most of the students are much more interested in using the new technologies than using the audio files in language laboratory to improve their listening skills.

4. CONCLUSION

According to the students' questionnaire results, it has been revealed that most of the participants use the new technologies, such as, Internet, Podcasts, Language laboratory, Overhead projector, BBC learning English App, VOA learning English App, CALL, and Real-world videos. Most of the students are highly interested in using the new technologies to improve and update their knowledge. It is the most convenient to use the new technologies for students because they get a free Wi-Fi access at UIT.

Using the new technologies encourages silent students to participate listening activities through these tools. 80% of the students were reluctant to learn listening by using the traditional methods, such as audio files or CD players because using audio files, students just listen to the recordings and students cannot see the lively manner like the video. They are bored with learning listening skills in the language laboratory. For this reason, teachers should recognise students' interest and create the happy environment

for students to learn listening skills actively. 90% of the students are interested in using new technologies to improve their listening skills. By using the Internet and Podcasts, students get a lot of opportunities to learn the new vocabularies, practise the useful activities, and share much knowledge with others from different countries. The updated devices in the language laboratory help students to improve their listening skills. Overhead projector can stimulate students to learn listening in the classroom actively and interestingly. BBC learning English App and VOA learning English App are very useful tools for students to listen to the pronunciation and accent of great persons and to watch the happenings around the world, so students can get much knowledge and experience by using these apps and they can develop their listening skills. CALL is the vital role for teachers and students because teachers can use the updated technologies to improve students' listening skills. Real-world videos are very interesting for the students and the activities help students to improve their listening skills. In order to develop students' listening skills, teachers should realise which method is the most effective and interesting one for the students while integrating technologies in the classroom.

In this paper, the review literature indicated that using new technologies plays an essential role in improving the listening skills of the students and creates high motivation in students for the effective learning of listening skills. In addition, the paper represented that students should use the technologies to improve their listening because using technology in the classroom helps teachers and students to develop motivation skills, improve social skills, get fruitful results, and enhance the teaching and learning environment.

APPENDIX

This questionnaire is intended to obtain your opinion on your English-speaking skills using technologies. Please fill it in as completely as possible. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Name ----

Age ----

Sex ----

Specialised Subject ----

Academic Year ----

University ----

Please mark (\surd) in the appropriate box and answer the questions.

1. How many years have you learned English?

2. What is your purpose(s) of learning English?

- To pass the examination only
- To be helpful in your studies
3. To what extent do you think learning English is helpful to study Major Subjects?
 Very much
 To some extent
4. How is your listening skill?
 Excellent Good
 Fair Poor
5. How well do you listen to English speaking?
 With little difficulty
 With great difficulty
6. Do you think using the Internet can develop your listening skills?
 Yes No
7. Do you think language laboratory are very useful for you to improve your listening skills?
 Yes No
8. To what extent do you think using Overhead projector are effective for improving listening skills?
 Very much
 To some extent
9. Does the teacher give chances to speak and listen in the class?
 Yes No
10. Do you listen to English News on BBC learning English?
 Yes No
11. Do you think watching VOA learning English is very useful for you to improve your listening skills?
 Yes No
12. Do you think CALL is very effective for you to develop your listening skills?
 Yes No
13. Do you use podcasts to improve your listening skills?
 Yes No
14. Which type do you prefer to learn English listening?
 Videos Songs
15. Do you think good listening skills play a vital role in successful communication?
 Yes No
16. Do you think listening skill is useful after your course?
 Yes No
17. If yes, what advantages do you have for your listening skills?

18. If there are any approaches you want to use to improve your listening skills, please specify them.

Thank you for your cooperation.

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