USING VIDEOS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' ENGLISH LISTENING SKILLS

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Abstract. Listening is often the most difficult skill for English learners, because speech is fast, it cannot be read twice and real speakers use accents and connected speech. This article discusses how short videos can help students develop listening skills. It explains why video supports comprehension (pictures, gestures and context give extra clues), describes how to choose suitable videos and offers a simple three-stage lesson model: before watching, while watching and after watching. The article also gives practical advice on using subtitles, on the length of videos and on homework. The recommendations are based on the literature and on the authors' classroom experience; they have not been tested in an experiment.

Keywords: listening skills, video, English language teaching, subtitles, comprehension, authentic materials.

INTRODUCTION

Many students in Uzbekistan can read and write English quite well but find it hard to understand spoken English. In class they usually listen to short audio recordings from textbooks. These recordings are clear and slow, but real speech in films, interviews or online lessons is much faster. As a result, students often feel lost when they hear English outside the classroom.

Listening is not simply hearing words. The listener must recognise sounds, divide speech into words, understand grammar and connect the message with what he or she already knows, all at the same time [1]. Because spoken language disappears immediately, the learner has no time to go back, as in reading. This is why listening needs special attention and good materials.

Video is one such material. Today teachers can easily find short videos on almost any topic. The aim of this article is to show how videos can be used to improve students' listening skills and to give teachers a simple model for using them in class.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a descriptive and methodological article. We reviewed well-known works on second language listening [1; 2], comprehensible input [3], multimedia learning [4] and research on captioned video [5]. On this basis, and using our own experience of teaching English at the university, we prepared practical recommendations and a lesson model. No experiment was carried out, so the article does not give statistical results.

RESULTS

1. Why video helps listening. A video gives the learner more information than an audio recording. The student sees the speaker's face, gestures and the situation. These visual clues help to guess the meaning of unknown words and to follow the main idea. According to the theory of multimedia learning, people learn better from words and pictures together than from words alone [4]. Video also shows real language: natural speed, different accents and everyday expressions. Krashen argued that learners acquire language when they receive input that they can understand [3]; the pictures in a video make difficult input more understandable.

2. How to choose a video. A good classroom video should be short (about 2–5 minutes for one task), match the students' level, have clear sound and contain an interesting topic. It is better to choose a video slightly above the students' level, so that they understand most of it but still meet new

language. Educational channels, news for learners, short interviews and scenes from films are all useful.

3. A three-stage lesson model. Video works best when it is part of a planned lesson. Table 1 shows a simple model.

Table 1. A three-stage model of a listening lesson with video

Stage	Aim	Example activities
Before watching	Prepare students and raise interest	Discuss the topic; look at the title or a picture; teach 5–7 key words; predict what will happen
While watching	Practise listening for gist and for detail	First viewing: answer one general question. Second viewing: true/false, fill in the gaps, put events in order
After watching	Use the content for speaking and writing	Discuss in pairs; retell the story; write a short summary; role-play a similar situation

Source: prepared by the authors on the basis of [1; 2].

4. Using subtitles. Subtitles can help or hinder. Research shows that captions in the same language (English subtitles for English speech) can improve comprehension and vocabulary learning [5]. A practical approach is to watch the video first without subtitles, then with English subtitles to check understanding, and finally again without subtitles. Subtitles in the native language should be used carefully, because students may stop listening and only read.

5. Homework. Students can watch one short video at home every week and write three new words and a two-sentence summary. In the next lesson they discuss the video in pairs. This builds a habit of regular listening outside class.

DISCUSSION

Video is not a magic solution. If the teacher simply shows a film and asks no questions, students may enjoy it but learn little. The value of video depends on the tasks. The three-stage model helps students to listen with a purpose and to think about how they listen, which is an important part of developing listening skill [2].

Teachers should also remember some difficulties. Internet access and equipment are not available in every classroom; in this case the teacher can download videos in advance. Some videos are too fast or use slang, so the teacher must watch them before the lesson. Finally, students have different levels, so it is useful to give easier and harder versions of the same task.

The main limitation of this article is that it is based on literature and experience, not on an experiment. A future study could compare two groups of students, one taught with video and one with audio only, and measure their listening scores before and after the course.

CONCLUSION

Short videos are a useful and easily available tool for improving students' English listening skills. They give visual support, show real language and make lessons more interesting. To be effective, video should be used in a planned way: prepare students before watching, give clear tasks while watching and use the content for speaking or writing after watching. English subtitles can

support comprehension when used step by step. We recommend that English teachers include short videos in their lessons regularly and test the effect in their own classes.

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