

Effects of Digital Technology on Listening Instruction for College Students

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Abstract

This article presents research exploring the use of digital technology to enhance students' proficiency in listening comprehension through online resources, a custom learning site, and popular apps. The study aims to demonstrate how digital tools can effectively support listening skills development. Research methods include questionnaires to assess students' attitudes towards learning with digital resources and tests to measure their progress in listening competence. Findings indicate a positive correlation between digital technology usage and improved listening comprehension, suggesting that thoughtfully integrated online tools can provide valuable support in language learning. The study highlights the potential of digital platforms to make listening practice more engaging and effective, offering insights for educators on incorporating technology into listening education.

Keywords: teaching listening, technology, audio, video, listening activities.

Introduction

Listening is a complex process in which sounds and speech are interpreted in mind. This process consists of hearing, attention intensification and interpretation stages. Listening is different from hearing, it requires mental processes such as attention, concentration and interpretation. Therefore, listening is a purposeful mental activity (MEB 2005). Listening begins in the womb before birth. Other language skills are acquired after birth. Since listening skill is an innate skill, it is not taken into consideration as much as other language skills. Yet skills do not develop spontaneously and without any effort; training is required to develop each skill (Dogan 2009). Therefore, training studies should be carried out for the development of listening skill. Funk & Funk (1989) stated that most of the teachers believe that listening naturally improves and they do not need to teach listening. The relevant literature clearly shows that listening skills can and should be taught (Funk & Funk 1989). Listening

should be considered as a learnable and teachable language skill (Celenk 1999). Early listening education is the way to raise good listeners who can set goals for listening, listen carefully and reach a result from what they listen to (Bulut 2013). Researchers argue that students should be given regular listening training and this training will be very useful for the individual (Funk & Funk 1989).

Listening is a complex mental process where sounds and speech are actively interpreted. Unlike passive hearing, listening requires focused mental activities, including attention, concentration, and interpretation, making it a purposeful mental exercise. Interestingly, listening skills begin developing in the womb, well before birth, while other language abilities are acquired postnatally. Although listening is innate, its development still requires conscious effort and training, just like other language skills. However, many teachers assume listening skills improve naturally and often overlook the need for structured instruction. Research, however, strongly suggests that listening can and should be taught as a core language skill. Early listening education fosters effective listeners who can set objectives, listen attentively, and derive meaningful insights. Regular listening practice is recommended to strengthen this skill, benefitting students' overall communication and comprehension abilities.

To enhance students' attention and motivation in listening education, incorporating technological advancements and digital materials is highly effective. These innovative tools, such as interactive listening apps, podcasts, and multimedia resources, present significant opportunities for engaging students in dynamic ways. The visual and auditory stimuli provided by digital resources can make listening practice more immersive, capturing students' interest and keeping them motivated. Additionally, by presenting authentic listening scenarios through digital platforms, students can experience real-world listening contexts, which boosts both relevance and excitement in the learning process.

Moreover, appropriate methods in listening comprehension help students identify key points and structure in what they are hearing, making the listening experience clearer and more approachable. This structure not only reduces listening anxiety but also increases the efficiency of the learning process, allowing students to engage with content confidently. Selecting teaching strategies, methods, and tools that meet the demands of today's tech-savvy generation is essential in building a comprehensive listening education. Integrating age-appropriate and needs-based resources creates a supportive learning environment where students can thrive in developing their listening skills effectively.

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). Many experts assert that listening is far from a passive process; rather, it is an active, dynamic skill. In listening activities, listeners engage deeply with the material, actively interpreting and making sense of what they hear. This process involves drawing on their own background knowledge and linguistic understanding to contextualize and comprehend the information presented in the audio. Through this interpretative approach, listening becomes an interactive experience that requires attention, analysis, and cognitive involvement, transforming it into a meaningful and effective component of communication.

Digital technologies offer a powerful means to integrate diverse practices and media—textual, visual, auditory, and interactive—to build immersive online environments and enhance communication. These tools allow educators to create dynamic and flexible activities that engage students in listening comprehension, promote cognitive engagement, and foster critical and creative thinking. By

expanding access to varied exercises, tests, and communicative scenarios, digital resources make lessons more interactive and engaging, supporting student motivation and deeper comprehension. Experimental findings reveal that listening skills often lag behind other language abilities, highlighting a promising area for future research focused on improving listening proficiency through targeted digital resources, online platforms, and educational apps. This opens pathways for advancing comprehensive English language proficiency by incorporating these technologies in language learning settings.

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