

# Improving Students' Listening Ability through Movie Report

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## *Abstract*

This paper discusses one of the ways to improve students' listening ability. Listening subject provides students with the materials of oral communication by English native speakers that mostly focuses on language expressions. It needs the learners to have listening practice a lot, inside and outside the classroom. Actually in teaching listening many activities can be done and many media can be used to provide students with listening activities in order to improve their listening abilities. One of the students' favorite activities is watching movie. By watching movies students are introduced to the real context of language and a wide range of vocabulary. After watching movie students are assigned to make the movie report. Since many people like watching movie, assigning students to watch the movie and make the report of what they have watched is expected to be more enjoyable. However they need to understand the movie itself before they make their reports. They may watch the movie twice or even more than twice to understand it, before they are able to make and present the movie reports in the class. In these activities, the students have to watch and listen to the words, expressions, and sentences said by the characters. There are many advantages of these activities. By watching movies students can learn the correct pronunciation, useful expressions from native speakers. Beside those activities, the students are also asked to write a synopsis of the movie, find the meaning of useful expressions, understand the moral lesson of the movies and present their own reports.

**Key words:** listening ability, movie report.

## **Introduction**

In this globalization era, where internet can be easily accessed finding the authentic materials such as movie or film for teaching material is not so difficult. They can be exploited in language classroom because movies or films are contextually rich source of authentic material that can be used in teaching Listening, Speaking and Writing skills. Therefore various listening activities can be done by using movies or films. Teaching of listening skill needs students to practice a lot. It will make them familiar with the spoken language and help them to understand more, because by having more practices students will have many opportunities to listen to spoken language. Since many people like watching movies, asking students to watch the English movies, and make the reports of them can be interesting and challenging activities for them. By watching movies students are introduced to the real context of language and a wide range of vocabulary that they cannot get in learning in the classroom. In addition they will listen to the correct pronunciation, stress and intonation, and also useful expressions. When students are asked to watch the movie and assign them to do something related to the movie they have watched, like making movie report it will be enjoyable for them. While they are entertained they also learn many things. Students are expected to be able to comprehend spoken language and improve their ability in listening comprehension. The assignment is begun by watching the movie, and ended by presenting the report in the classroom. There are some reasons why the students assigned to watch the movie and make the report of it. First, watching movie is interesting and motivating because the students will feel entertaining by watching the movies. They may see their favorite actor/actress or even their idols. They can listen, learn and imitate how the characters pronounce the words, phrases or sentences. Second, they also can learn the context of the phrases or sentences. Third, students can learn meaningful expressions

through watching movies. Fourth, students can get moral lesson of the movie. So, by watching movies, the students are trained to listen and understand English spoken language. The explanations above are in line with Martin ideas (undated). According to her watching movies can improve the listening skills of students, whether they are learning English as a foreign language or whether they just want to improve their ability to listen, concentrate and comprehend. In addition she says that the use of movies enables students to improve their listening skill because they become engaged in the story line of the film, which offers both a visual and audio depiction of dialogue and story in a potential real-life situation, using real emotions, diction, tone and slang, which can sometimes be lost in a classroom environment.

## Discussion

### *What is Listening skill?*

For human being Listening is the first communication skill they acquired. It is an invisible mental process that plays a vital role in daily lives. People listen for different purposes such as entertainment, academic purposes or obtaining necessary information. In the foreign language learning, listening is a paramount important since it provides the language input (Rost, 1994).

There are many definitions of Listening proposed by many experts. Listening is the activity of paying attention to and trying to get meaning from something we hear (Underwood 1989). It is the ability to identify and understand what people are saying (Yagang, 1993). This involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and his vocabulary and grasping his meaning, Howatt and Dakin in Saricoban (1999). Listening is also an active process which requires the listeners to participate in that process (Yang 1999). Vandergrift (2002) adds that listening is a complex, and active process of interpretation which listeners match what they hear with what they already know. Helgesen in Nunan (2003) says that listening is an active process of not only what people hear but also how people connect it to other information they have already known.

Based on theory of communication, Rost (2002) views listening as a part of transactional process in which all participants are simultaneously 'sending' and 'receiving' messages. He says definitions of listening based on four orientations or perspectives. First, from the perspective of receptive, listening is viewed as receiving what the speaker actually say. Second, from the perspective of constructive, listening can be defined as constructing and representing meaning. Third, viewed from collaborative perspective, listening is negotiating meaning with speakers and responding it. Fourth, from the view of transformative perspective, it means creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy.

### *The Process of Listening*

Listening is not a passive activity as many people thought but it is an active activity that has an internal process. The process of listening passes three stages, Underwood (1989). The stages are:

1. The sounds go into echoic memory for a very short time to be organized into meaningful units according to the knowledge of the language the listener already has.
2. The information is then processed by the short time memory. In a matter of seconds, words are checked and compared with information already held in the long-term memory and meaning is extracted.
3. The meaning extracted is stored in the long-term memory for later use.

Wilson in Adnan (2013) distinguishes the process of listening comprehension into two categories; bottom-up processing and top-down processing. Bottom-up processing refers to the listener's decoding of the incoming message by analyzing it at the level of sounds, words and sentences. Top-down processing refers to the listener's use of background knowledge such as

previous knowledge of the topic, situational or contextual clues, schemata or script stored in long term memory. However comprehension can only occur when the listener can place what is heard in a context.

Flowerdew and Miller in Amelia (2011) describe the process of listening as follow: Auditory messages are first received by the sensory memory from the environment around us. The sensory memory activated, and the message is held for a period of not more than one second. In this period, the message is held in its exact form. Then depending on a number of factors, such as the quality of messages, the urgency of the messages, and the course of messages, it is either passed on your short term memory or lost.

#### *Learner Problems in Listening*

Underwood (1989) identifies the problems encountered by listeners as

- Lack of control over the speed at which speakers speak.
- Not being able to get thing repeated.
- The listener's limited vocabulary.
- Failure to recognize the 'signals.
- Problems of interpretation.
- Inability to concentrate.
- Established learning habits.

The speed of delivery can be quite fast and of course there is no possibility of asking the speaker to repeat or clarify. However there are certain factors which should be less problematic. Moreover Underwood adds that many learners believe that their greatest difficulty with listening is their inability to control the speaker's speed. But the teachers can see that the other problem faced by the students in listening, such as being not familiar with words or pronunciation and do not understand the context of the language.

According to Yagang (1993) listening difficulties comes mainly from four sources:

1. The message to be listened to. Many learners find it more difficult to listen to a taped message than to read the same message on a piece of paper, since the listening passage comes into the ear in twinkling of an eye, whereas reading material can be read as long as the reader likes. The listening materials may deal with almost any area of life. It might include street gossip, proverbs, new product and situation unfamiliar to the students. Also in a spontaneous conversation speakers frequently change the topics.
2. The speaker. Ur in Yagang (1993) points out that "in ordinary conversation or even in much extempore speech-making or lecturing we actually say a good deal more than would appear to be necessary in order to convey our message. Redundant utterances may take the form of repetitions, false starts, re-phrasing, self-corrections, elaborations, tautologies and apparently meaningless additions such as I mean or you know".
3. The listener. Foreign language students are not familiar enough with clichés and collocations in English to predict a missing word or phrase. They cannot, for example to know that rosy often collocates with cheeks nor to predict the last word will be something like rage when they hear the phrase he was in a towering... Lack of sociocultural, factual, and contextual knowledge of the target language can present an obstacle to comprehension because language is used to express its culture (Anderson and Lynch in Yagang (1993).
4. Physical Setting. Noise, including both background noises on the recording and environmental noises can take the listener's mind off the content of the listening passage. Listening material on tape or radio lacks visual and aural environmental clues. Not seeing the speaker's body language and facial expressions makes it more difficult for the listener to understand the speaker's meaning.

Looking at the problems above the teachers need to help students to develop their skills of listening such as listening for specific information, listening for gist, interpretation and inference

etc. The teachers may provide them with a variety of tasks, exercises and activities of listening. Underwood (1989) says that in their objectives the teachers have to include:

- Exposing students to a range of listening experience.
- Making listening purposeful for the students.
- Helping students understand what listening entails and how they might approach it.
- Building up students' confidence in their own listening ability.

Related to Underwood ideas about exposing students to a range of listening experience and making listening purposeful for the students, therefore asking students to watch the movies and make their report will be an interesting and challenging of listening activity.

#### *Watching Movies in Listening Class*

Listening skill like other language skills needs students to practice a lot not only at the classroom but also outside the classroom. To make the students practice listening outside the classroom, the teacher may ask them to do listening activities, such as listening to the English song, news, lectures, speeches and watching movies.

The listening activity discussed in this paper is asking students to watch the English movies outside the classroom. The idea to ask students to watch the movie is inspired by Norris (1993) thought. He states that teachers need to design activities to facilitate the practice of the listening skills, based on students' knowledge about the characteristics of the informal oral English language, in order to help students succeed in their learning. Thus watching movies could become an interesting activity of learning a foreign language especially listening skill since students like watching movies. The activities of watching movies are followed by making report that will be presented in the classroom.

Movies can be good authentic learning materials for listening skill, because they contain dialogues from highly proficient English speakers, which could contribute to an easier understanding of their pronunciation. Movies allow students to access to more information in listening. That is, the learners can listen and see what is happening at the same time (Potosi: undated). According to Gallacher in Potosi "A good idea is to choose scenes that are very visual. The more visual the video is, the easier it is to understand – as long as the pictures illustrate what is being said". Selected English TV series, movies, advertising, could increase student's motivations as Van Duzer (1998) claims that students listen to relevant and interesting things for them which keep their motivation and attention high. Furthermore he claims that movies provide real situation, intonation and real pronunciation and allows students to a real context. Miller (2003) says that non-verbal behavior or paralinguistic features of the spoken text are now available for the learners, so the learner can develop their listening skills in a richer context. It is because of the movies contain a lot of setting, dialogues, meaningful expressions, wide range of vocabularies, phrases, and also sentences. In addition movies also have correct pronunciation, since it is stated or dubbed by native speakers.

The previous ideas are in line with Porcel (2010) ideas. She states that the students can benefit a lot from watching films in English. They can improve their listening and speaking skills, they can enlarge their vocabulary knowledge and they can make their pronunciation and intonation better. Furthermore, she says that using movies in English class has been one of the most rewarding experiences she has ever had.

Related to asking students to watch and make the movie report in Listening class, it needs students to understand the movie. To be able to understand the movie, the students need to watch the movie several times. It is needed because the students have to report the movie they watched written and spoken. Even though the students are asked to write only seventy five words for their reports but their understanding of the movies are needed. It is because they also have to fill the work sheet provided that needs their understanding of the movie.

According to Flowerdew (2005) general viewing of videos can be exploited. Learners can be encouraged to employ their extensive listening skills by having group in or out the class after watching a particular movie. In addition, generic worksheets may be developed to help those students who would like more focused attention when watching movies. He suggests the

students to use the worksheet form to help them focus on their attention in watching movies to employ their listening skill.

Student's work sheet

Name of movie: _____			
Kind of movies: comedy/ drama/ horror/ action/ science fiction/ other.			
Names of main characters in the movie:			
Male	Female	Animal	Others
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
Setting: Where does the movie take place? _____			
Does the setting change during the movie? _____			
What is the main theme of the movie? (a) Relationship (b) Religion, (c) Politics, (d) Love, (e) Survival (f) Others			
Write the summary around 75 words to express how you felt while watching this movie. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____			
Write five useful expressions and their meanings. _____ _____ _____			
What is the moral value of the movie?  After watching the movie, talk to your friend about it. See if they agree with your perception and feelings about the movie.			

Adapted from: Flowerdew (2005)

By filling the work sheet the students will be guided to understand the movie. They have the clear step about what they are going to do. When they have to report the movie to, and asked questions by their friends, it is expected they will have no difficulties to answer the questions. If other students have ever watched the same movie they may add some additional information or correct the mistake made by their friends (the friends who report the movie). So that this activity will not only improve the students listening skill but also their speaking and writing skill as well.

### *How to Select Movie and What to consider*

In asking students to watch the movies, the teachers need to be aware of some potential problem concerning the contents of a movie. Garis in Flowerdew (2005) provides an overview of some of the problems in choosing appropriate movies. Such thing as sex and nudity, violence, profanity and slang, and controversial issues may all cause offense to some learners. In addition Stewart (2006) states that not just any film will do for teaching language. Indeed, it is often surprising what film will not do-meaning, film that students like, they may have nothing to say about. Many Hollywood films that appear every year designed to attract large numbers of young people with varying combinations of sex, violence and gross humor. These films do not work for this assignment.

According to Chan (2010), in general teachers should try to avoid films that contain some of the following elements as these make exploitation for language learning more difficult such as: high verbal density (lots of speech and very little action), naturalism in speech (very body talking at the same time will make it difficult to understand the dialogue), period language found in adaptations of period dramas and historical films, as it can create comprehension difficulties, because the words may be too formal, use of technical language (slang or jargon belonging to a particular group), dialect and regional accents, as they are notorious for mispronunciations of sounds. Moreover he suggests the teacher to select the film that have: (1) unambiguous action and a close connection between speech and action, (2) Clear conventional story lines, with simple story plot lines, (3) only one character speaking at a time, (4) elements that slow the diction (dialogue with a child or a non-native speaker). Based on the explanation above, the teacher has to tell the students not to watch the title of the movie contains the above problems. Therefore animated or cartoon movies can be the choices. The reason is animated and cartoon movies will have little or maybe no influence toward students.

### *Advantages of Watching Movies in Listening Class*

Teachers are suggested to use film as resources in teaching the language for some reasons. Chan (2010) argues that visual literacy (the ability to interpret and create visual and audio media) is a fundamental form of literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The use of film in the classroom or as an outside school activities provide an ideal vehicle for active learning as well as encouraging interaction and participation. The communicative potential of its use has been commended:

1. It facilitates comprehension activities that are perceived as 'real'
2. It creates a curiosity gap that facilitates the exchange of opinions and ideas about the film.
3. It helps to explore non-verbal elements
4. It improves oral and aural skills.
5. It provides meaningful contexts and vocabulary, exposing viewers to natural expressions and natural flow of speech.

In addition Martin (undated) says that watching movie enables students to improve their listening skill because they become engaged in the storyline of the film, which offers both a visual and audio depiction of dialogue and story in a potential real-life situation, using real emotions, dictions, tone and slang which can sometimes be lost in a classroom environment.

### **Conclusion**

Learning English Listening skill needs students to practice a lot whether inside or outside the classroom. Therefore teachers should provide activities in which they can practice their listening comprehension. Asking students to watch the movies and make the report of it can improve their listening skill because they are introduced to the real context of spoken language and a wide range of vocabularies. By watching movies students can learn how to pronounce the words correctly and useful expressions found in the movies. After watching the movie the students have to write the report of the movie on the work sheet and present it in the class.

These activities need students to understand the movie comprehensively and seriously even though watching movie is interesting for most students.

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