Research Article

IMPROVING VOCABULARY FOR ESL LEARNERS THROUGH LISTENING TO BBC CHANNEL: AN EXPERIMENT AT A UNIVERSITY IN SOUTHEAST VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

The primary goal of this study was to investigate how listening to English news on the BBC program impacts the vocabulary acquisition of students learning English as a foreign language at a university in central Vietnam. Sixty-nine students participated in the study: 35 were assigned to the experimental group, and 34 were assigned to the control group. Both groups completed a pre-test. Subsequently, the experimental group was instructed to regularly listen to English news to enhance their vocabulary. Additionally, participants completed tasks related to the English news they had heard. Pre- and post-test data were collected over ten weeks. A 10-statement questionnaire was developed to evaluate participants' attitudes towards applying BBC news in teaching vocabulary. The mean of the test results for the experimental group increased by 3.5, while the control group's increased by only 1.1. The research results showed that, compared to the control group, the experimental group's vocabulary growth was significantly higher. This showed that listening to BBC English news enhances students' vocabulary.

Keywords: *BBC English news; English vocabulary; ESL students; listening skill*

1. Introduction

Vocabulary acquisition is a crucial prerequisite for learners to study a second or foreign language and develop competence in comprehending or communicating in that language. To become proficient in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, one must build a robust vocabulary. As Wilkins (1972) asserts, while grammar plays a vital role in articulation, vocabulary is indispensable for conveying meaning. Nation (2001) argues that individuals lacking proficiency in their native language face greater challenges in understanding and communicating fluently. Consequently, vocabulary comprehension is a fundamental requirement for acquiring any language, be it first, second, or foreign (Decarrico, 2001). Recognizing the critical importance of vocabulary for comprehending a foreign language, particularly English, most Vietnamese students dedicate substantial time

and effort to expanding their vocabulary. However, when it comes to vocabulary expansion, learners often have limited access to reliable resources. The term "authentic materials" has been subject to varying interpretations in the literature.

For instance, authentic materials have been referred to as tasks involving spontaneous communication (Krashen, 1982). Rogers (1988) defines authentic materials as "natural" in terms of reflecting real-life situations and meaningful engagement, as well as appropriate and high-quality in terms of desired outcomes, learners' needs, and preferences. Furthermore, Jordan (1997) considers written materials not originally intended for language instruction as authentic resources. As stated by Kilikaya (2004), authentic materials share the commonality of exposing learners to language as it is genuinely used. Researchers have also identified several advantages of incorporating authentic materials, including English media, into English as a Foreign Language course. Since authentic resources are better tailored to the needs and interests of learners, they can provide substantial exposure to the language and intercultural discourse encountered in real-world settings, which is necessary for language acquisition (Kilickaya, 2004; Martinez, 2002; Peacock, 1997).

Empirical evidence suggests that individuals who lack exposure to authentic resources like English news become unfamiliar with essential grammatical features involving pronunciation, collocation, and parts of speech. Consequently, learners face difficulties in retaining new vocabulary, and some struggle with spelling or dictation. As a result, this study focuses on how to enhance English vocabulary for ESL learners through listening to English news on BBC News. By listening to English-language news, it was hypothesized that learners would be able to expand the breadth of their lexical repertoire and acquire new vocabulary. Auditory input is considered one of the most effective strategies for language acquisition.

Learners employ contextual clues and their existing linguistic knowledge to infer the meanings of words through auditory input. The overarching objective of this study is to explore the potential of listening to English news in facilitating the expansion of vocabulary among English majors at a Vietnamese institution, with a particular emphasis on real-world contexts spanning a diverse array of topics. The following research question served as a guiding principle, "To what extent does listening to BBC English news improve ESL students' vocabulary?"

Wallace (1992) asserts that authentic materials are those that originate from real-life situations and have not been artificially contrived for pedagogical purposes. By incorporating these authentic resources alongside approved teaching materials, educators can significantly enhance their English instruction. Likewise, Bloom (2000) posits that individuals can acquire new vocabulary by attending to the contextual setting in which words are uttered and inferring their implications from the linguistic context. Consequently, engaging with English news broadcasts may facilitate vocabulary acquisition among learners. Learners can access English news through various social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, radio, television, and other web-based sources. English news

predominantly covers topics about everyday life. These notifications may originate from local Vietnamese or English-language broadcasts. As a result of this prior knowledge, students can employ it to anticipate the salient elements of English news articles and deduce the meanings of unfamiliar words from the context.

In the context of EFL classrooms, the incorporation of the BBC channel is profoundly justified based on the myriad benefits of broadcast English news delineated earlier for language acquisition. Firstly, a few pertinent prior research endeavors about the current issue warrant reiteration. In the initial stages, Schmitt (2008) argues that learners merit encouragement to engage with information through visual aids, as learning becomes unproductive in their absence. Zhang (2009) offers an insightful account of university students' experiences in expanding their vocabulary in foreign languages, encompassing their perspectives regarding strategies and the extent of their lexical repertoire. It became evident that learners exhibited a proclivity for acquiring vocabulary in authentic, real-world contexts. Consequently, the adoption of the BBC program in vocabulary instruction has been regarded as a visual strategy for vocabulary acquisition, drawing from the seminal literature of Schmitt and Zhang. Zhang further argues that educators ought to assist their students in selecting and utilizing instructional methods that align with their learning preferences. As noted by Quirk and Widdowson (1985), vocabulary, frequency of practice, functional grammar, relevant subject matter, motivation, self-confidence, and environmental factors constitute additional variables that impact learners' speaking proficiency. It became apparent that the BBC serves as a valuable instrument to enhance English vocabulary.

English news may fulfill the aforementioned criteria. Through the consumption or observation of English news broadcasts, individuals have the opportunity to acquire vocabulary in the target language and grasp the conveyed messages by leveraging their prior knowledge, visual aids, and auditory cues. Speaking, as defined by experts, entails the articulation of ideas in oral form. It stands as a formidable language skill, demanding proficiency in fundamental syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation, and communicative competence.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

The experiment was conducted during the 2022–2023 academic year, specifically in the second semester. Participants in the experimental group allocated seven to ten minutes during class time to listen to English news from the BBC via YouTube. They were tasked with taking notes on vocabulary and phrases encountered during the session, as well as completing exercises involving ten blanks, aimed at enhancing vocabulary acquisition and retention across diverse contexts. The control group received vocabulary instruction solely from the textbook utilized in standard classroom teaching. The teacher-researcher was responsible for overseeing and assessing the academic progress of their students. Pre-test and post-test were employed to compare the outcomes of the two groups following the experimental intervention. Furthermore, an expert was enlisted to administer and oversee

both the pre-and post-tests, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the collected data.

2.2. *Sample and sampling procedures*

Seventy-nine sophomore English literature majors from a university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam participated in the current study. These students are aged from 19 to 20 years old. This cohort of seventy-nine English majors was divided into two groups: 39 students comprised the control group, without listening to the BBC news while 40 students were assigned to the experimental group, who consented to participate in the experiment. By assisting students in understanding the importance of vocabulary, this study aims to strengthen their capacity for literacy in English.

The experimental group was directed to listen to English News from the BBC three times weekly, for approximately seven to ten minutes per session, utilizing portable audio devices during two classes per week, equating to four sessions in total. Concurrently, experimental students were tasked with completing exercises while listening to the English news.

The assessment of pronunciation, spelling, and collocations was conducted both before and following the experiment, employing identical structures for the pre- and post-tests. Each of the three components comprised five questions. Part 1 focused on pronunciation, Part 2 evaluated comprehension, and Part 3 concentrated on word and phrase collocations. Both groups were required to complete the pre- and post-tests within a time frame of fewer than 30 minutes, facilitating an evaluation of the efficacy of the intervention.

The control group adhered strictly to conventional teaching methods during the allotted period of 10 weeks, focusing on their listening comprehension through the prescribed course materials in the classroom setting. The teacher-researcher provided listening instructions, played the audio materials, and guided students in verifying information from the audio. In total, students in the control group listened to the audio materials three times per task, with a timeframe of 3 to 5 minutes allotted for the completion of the cloze-test exercises.

Questionnaire

Alongside the BBC News Channel on YouTube, a questionnaire was compiled to explore ESL students' attitudes towards using BBC News to enhance their vocabulary. The questionnaire was developed to include ten statements focusing on two main aspects: students' perceptions of integrating BBC News in teaching new words and their acceptance of incorporating BBC News into vocabulary learning. The results of the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS to shed light on learners' behaviors in learning vocabulary through English News from the BBC. Five-point Likert scales were employed to collect participants' responses, ranging from 1 for 'strongly disagree' to 5 for 'strongly agree'.

3. Results and Discussions

Participants in both the experimental and control groups were administered vocabulary pre-tests and post-tests to evaluate the impact of listening to BBC English News on their vocabulary. The ANOVA in SPSS version 20 was employed to analyze the raw scores from

these tests. This analysis compared students' performance before the intervention (pre-test) and after engaging with BBC News for vocabulary acquisition (post-test). According to the statistical analysis, if the p-value exceeds 0.05, the scores of the two groups are statistically identical; however, if the p-value is less than 0.05, the scores differ significantly. The average scores from the pre-tests and post-tests for both the experimental and control groups are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Average scores of the experiment and control group in the vocabulary pre-test and post-test*

TEST	GROUP	N	Mean	SD	P	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Pre-test	Experiment group	40	4.3	0.7403	0.0711	-1.11231	-.50319
	Control group	39	4.2	0.7701	0.0709	-1.18601	-.50811
Post-test	Experiment group	40	7.8	0.8007	0.0000	-1.11780	-.59213
	Control group	39	5.3	0.8102	0.0509	-1.20097	-.50439

Table 1 shows that the pre-test scores for both groups were similar, with the experimental group scoring an average of 4.3 out of 10 and the control group scoring 4.2. The standard deviation (SD) was 0.7403 for the experimental group and 0.7701 for the control group, indicating that most students in both groups had approximately 50% proficiency in vocabulary. Furthermore, the p-values of 0.0732 and 0.0692 suggest that there was no significant difference in vocabulary scores between the two groups before the intervention, implying that students' vocabulary levels were similar and limited before the treatment.

The findings of the research indicated that learners' vocabulary may improve by following BBC News, those in the control group, who learned new words through traditional classroom instruction, made only modest progress. The results demonstrated that vocabulary instruction based on conventional materials did not significantly impact students' vocabulary development. Table 1 presented a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.0513 for the control group and 0.0000 for the experimental group, indicating a significant difference at the 0.05 level for the experimental group. The result was consistent with the final test results obtained during the trial, which showed a substantial improvement in the experimental group's vocabulary. Therefore, it can be concluded that utilizing BBC English News to enhance students' vocabulary is recognized as an effective strategy.

Students' perception

The perceptions of ESL learners on listening to the BBC channel in vocabulary learning are shown in Table 2.

***Table 2.** Students' perception of listening to the BBC News*

No.	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA
	ESL students' perceptions on integrating BBC News in teaching vocabulary.					
1	BBC News helps me awake.	0	0	0	2	43
		%	0%	0%	4.4%	96%
2	BBC News helps me relax.	0	0	0	5	40
		0%	0%	0%	11%	89%
3	BBC News can make me curious to follow.	0	0	0	4	41
		0%	0%	0%	8.9%	91%
4	BBC News is fascinating.	0	0	5	2	38
		0%	0%	11%	4.4%	84%
5	Integrating BBC News in learning vocabulary is novel.	1	5	6	10	28
		2%	11%	13%	22%	62%
	ESL students' acceptance of adopting BBC News in teaching vocabulary.					
6	Integrating BBC News when learning vocabulary is visual.	0	0	0	3	42
		0%	0%	0%	7%	93%
7	Integrating BBC News when learning vocabulary is interesting.	0	0	0	34	11
		0%	0%	0%	76%	24%
8	Watching BBC News and learning vocabulary at the same time incredibly attracts my spirit.	0	5	4	28	13
		0%	11%	8.9%	62%	29%
9	Learning vocabulary through BBC News is effective.	0	0	9	10	26
		0%	0%	20%	22%	58%
10	Learning vocabulary through BBC News is useful.	-0	0	0	21	24
		0%	0%	0%	47%	53%

Overall, ESL students had a positive perception of incorporating BBC News into their vocabulary learning. The majority of items in the first cluster received between 84 percent and 100 percent agreement or strong agreement. Additionally, 5 percent to 13 percent of participants had no opinion on using BBC News for vocabulary learning, while 13 percent did not believe in the effectiveness of this technique. Most learner-viewers had a supportive attitude towards the implementation of English news for enhancing their listening and vocabulary acquisition.

ESL listeners largely concurred with integrating BBC News into vocabulary learning, with 80 percent to 100 percent of participants endorsing the use of the BBC channel for this purpose. Participants recognized BBC News as a visual tool for learning new words and acknowledged that vocabulary learning through BBC was effective and engaging. The findings of this study support previous research by Schmitt (2008), Zhang (2009), Bloom (2000), and Yen (2023), confirming that using BBC English for vocabulary instruction is an effective approach. Specifically, this study demonstrated a significant improvement, with approximately 40% higher overall scores in the experimental group compared to their initial scores. The present study used BBC News for teaching vocabulary, which has not received sufficient attention from the scientific community and other researchers worldwide. The author has developed a robust experimental program and integrated a valuable theoretical framework to ensure the relevance of this study for future research. Therefore, it can be concluded that the BBC channel is an appropriate tool for English teachers to help students

acquire vocabulary, which is particularly crucial for developing speaking, listening, and overall communication skills

4.   Conclusions and Recommendations

The pre-test results show that students struggled significantly with vocabulary acquisition. Despite the widespread availability of English news on the internet, many learners rarely listen to it specifically to build vocabulary. The vocabulary pre- and post-test findings revealed a significant improvement in the experimental group's performance, while the control group showed only a small difference between their pre-test (4.2) and post-test (5.3) scores. This indicates that the experimental group's vocabulary improved significantly, even though the experiment lasted only eight weeks. These key findings effectively answered the research question.

The research findings led to several recommendations. First, for educators, using authentic resources, like English News, significantly aids language acquisition. Therefore, a syllabus incorporating these materials should be developed. Second, students should watch or listen to a large amount of English news. Third, educators should encourage their students to tune in to English News more regularly. Fourth, since listening strategies are crucial for listening comprehension, educators should teach their students how to use them effectively. Fifth, administrators should implement a systematic approach to teaching vocabulary acquisition procedures that align with listening practices. Lastly, while students can listen to English news from various sources, not all are suitable for their level. Teachers should help students choose appropriate sources. Recommended English news sources include BBC News, CNN News, VOA News, Euronews, and Eurosport."

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NÂNG CAO VỐN TỪ VỰNG CHO SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN ANH QUA KÊNH BẢN TIN TIẾNG ANH BBC

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TÓM TẮT

Với mục tiêu tìm hiểu tác động của việc nghe tin tức tiếng Anh trên chương trình BBC đến việc học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ tại một cơ sở giáo dục đại học ở miền Trung Việt Nam, bài viết này khảo sát 69 sinh viên, trong đó, 35 sinh viên được đưa vào nhóm thử nghiệm và 34 sinh viên còn lại được đưa vào nhóm đối chứng. Sau khi cả hai nhóm hoàn thành bài kiểm tra trước khi thực nghiệm (pre-test), trong 10 tuần, nhóm thực nghiệm nghe Bản tin tiếng Anh trên kênh BBC để nâng cao vốn từ vựng, đồng thời hoàn thành bài tập cloze-test được thiết kế trên lời thoại và hoàn thành bài post-test để kiểm tra hiệu quả tác động từ thực nghiệm. Bên cạnh đó, bảng hỏi với 10 phát biểu về thái độ của sinh viên đối với thủ thuật đưa bản tin BBC vào việc dạy từ vựng. Kết quả phân tích từ SPSS cho thấy, so với nhóm đối chứng, mức độ tăng vốn từ vựng của nhóm thực nghiệm cao hơn đáng kể sau 10 tuần thực nghiệm với điểm trung bình tăng lên 3,5 điểm trong khi điểm số của sinh viên nhóm thực nghiệm chỉ tăng 1,1 điểm bình quân. Điều này khẳng định rằng vốn từ vựng của người học chuyên ngành tiếng Anh được nâng cao đáng kể nếu nghe tin tức tiếng Anh trên kênh BBC thường xuyên.

***Từ khóa:** bản tin tiếng Anh BBC; từ vựng tiếng Anh; sinh viên chuyên Anh; kĩ năng nghe*