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Research Article

THE EFFICACY OF INTERACTIVE VIDEOS IN DEVELOPING LISTENING SUB-SKILLS: A STUDY OF VIETNAMESE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Interactive videos have demonstrated significant potential in L2 listening instruction compared to conventional linear videos. This study investigates the efficacy of interactive videos in developing high school students' listening sub-skills. A quasi-experimental design was employed with 67 10th-grade English majors at a Vietnamese high school over five weeks. Participants were assigned to experimental (n=34) and control (n=33) groups based on pre-test scores. T-test results revealed that the experimental group significantly improved in listening for specifics and inferential listening, while the control group showed no significant improvements in these sub-skills. However, no statistically significant differences were observed in gist listening proficiency for either group. These findings suggest that interactive videos positively influence learners' ability to listen for specifics and make inferences, but not their gist-listening skills. Consequently, L2 teachers are advised to consider integrating interactive videos strategically within listening lesson procedures.

Keywords: interactive videos; inferential listening; listening sub-skills; listening for gist; listening for specifics

1. Introduction

1.1. Research problem and purpose

Classified as one of the two receptive skills alongside reading, listening skill plays a crucial role in L2 acquisition thanks to the comprehensible input it equips the learners with (Feyten, 1991). However, this skill is believed to pose the greatest challenge for both teachers and learners during the process of teaching and learning foreign languages. The fact that listening often renders learners stressed and anxious is attributable to the demand for them to process the input immediately (Arnold, 2000). On the other hand, there is a paucity of in-depth studies into this field, hence its alternative name- "Cinderella" (Nunan, 2002).

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This is also reflected in the context of Vietnamese L2 instruction in that more investments are needed for listening skill research (Miller, 2014). According to Nguyen and Hoang (2023), one of the prominent causes of learners' limited competence in listening skills lies in their disinterest in studying this skill, inevitably resulting in teachers' reduced motivation to teach it.

In an attempt to ameliorate the practice of listening skill education, there has been an increasing involvement of videos as an effective teaching strategy to supplant audio-only materials (Lesnov, 2022). Brame (2016) also appreciates the role of videos in alleviating learners' anxiety levels, yet "the use of video is only beginning to meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's learners" (Mendoza et al., 2015, p. 81). A remarkable breakthrough of ordinary linear videos is enhanced videos with interactive elements, particularly embedded questions, which encourage better learner-content interaction (Zhang et al., 2006). When it comes to L2 teaching and learning contexts, interactive videos have been empirically said to yield a positive effect on learners' grammar competence (Taslibeyaz, 2020) and writing skills (Zou & Xie, 2019). The teaching of listening skills is an auspicious ground for applying these videos as indicated by He (2022) because the majority of participants in her study express their preferences for interactive videos. The rationale behind their marked preference is reported to be the reduction in distracting factors that normally goes hand in hand with increased attention span during test time. Nguyen (2024) found that interactive videos as innovative teaching media almost led to significant improvements in learners' listening skills and their overall acceptance of this method as a form of listening practice rather than summative assessment. According to Xu (2017), improved listening competence can stem from learners' dynamic adjustments of their learning strategies (i.e. metacognitive strategies) while taking listening tests based on interactive videos.

Regarding teaching listening practices from the perspective of Vietnam, the General Education Curriculum for English (Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training – MOET), 2018) explicitly requires learners to achieve two main learning outcomes for English listening skills: listening for main ideas and listening for specifics. Moreover, there is a close alignment between the aforementioned outcomes and the required exit proficiency of level 3 of the 6-level VSTEP (Vietnamese Standardized Tests of English Proficiency) for listening skills, equivalent to the B1 level of CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) (Phuong, 2020). In this study, the authors have difficulties accessing random samples representing the population of high school students in general, which rationalizes the addition of the "inferential listening" category as an extra outcome for English majors, a prominent characteristic of competent listeners at level 4-5 VSTEP (or B2-C1 CEFR) according to the Decision 729/QD-BGDDT dated 11/3/2015 by MOET. This study aims to evaluate the extent of effectiveness of listening lessons integrated with interactive videos for

improving each separate sub-skill, a rarely investigated topic in previous studies, and suggest further innovations for this method of teaching listening.

This study addresses the following research question: What effects does the use of interactive videos in teaching listening skills have on high school students' listening sub-skills, specifically gist listening, listening for specifics, and inferential listening? The research hypothesis posits that students will demonstrate significant improvements in these listening sub-skills following the intervention.

1.2. An overview of interactive videos in comparison with linear videos

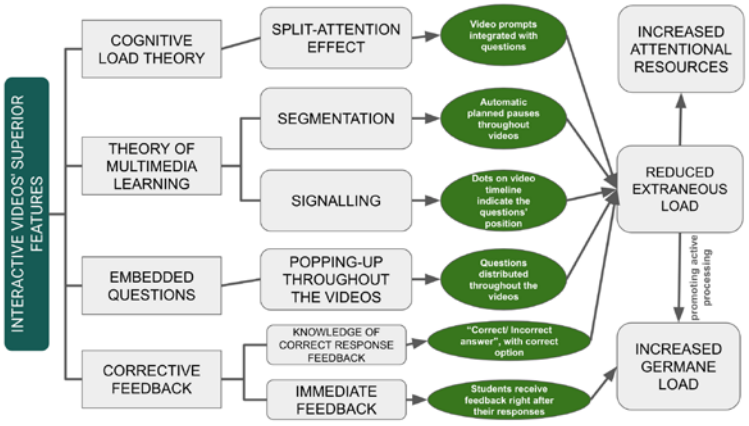

Figure 1. *Several outstanding features of interactive videos*

The superiority of interactive videos compared to conventional linear ones is illustrated in Figure 1. Sweller (1994) reports that every individual's working memory has a limited capacity to process and store information, or the so-called "cognitive load." Cognitive overload occurs as a consequence of processing an amount of input exceeding the allowed cognitive capacity. This is believed to be a prevalent problem for test-takers during the while-listening performance (WLP) tests, as they are supposed to watch the videos attentively, jot what they hear down, and determine the optimal time to answer each test item concurrently (Suvorov & He, 2022). The separation of comprehension questions from videos in paper-based listening tests induces a split-attention effect and an increased cognitive load ensues (Sweller et al., 2011, as cited in Suvorov & Li, 2023). Therefore, interactive videos outweigh linear ones in that pop-up test items enable learners to watch the video and respond to each question at two discrete time points, which bear a close resemblance to post-listening performance (PLP) tests (Ayadoust, 2012).

In terms of the segmentation principle, Mayer (2014) says that it aims to split the long and complicated texts into shorter comprehensible chunks and facilitate learners' acquisition. Adam (2022) asserts that the application of this principle into interactive video design makes them an effective approach to free up "more space" in learners' working memory, thereby reducing cognitive load. Another feature of interactive videos based on the signaling principle is the timeline with stretching color and the dots indicating the locations

of the questions, which is also a contributory factor to an overall decrease in learners' cognitive load (Loman & Mayer, 1983). Suvorov and Li (2023) report that the participants in their study reaped some benefits of better preparations for the upcoming questions from these dots as a result of their feeling of being guided throughout watching time, and enhanced ability to extract keywords from the input.

Rice et al. (2019) argue that embedding questions throughout the videos is more effective than post-video mass questioning due to decreased cognitive load and increased attention span. The inclusion of questions within videos serves to bridge new information with existing knowledge (Mayer, 1975, as cited in Chang, 2021). These questions, strategically placed within the videos, highlight important points identified by the instructor that facilitate learners' comprehension and retention. Furthermore, these questions can function as a cognitive guide for viewers to recognize the connections between key concepts and understand the overall structure of the presented materials (Chang, 2021).

According to Chang (2021), immediate feedback promotes learners' active processing, which is conducive to an increased germane load by instantly rectifying their misunderstandings of the stimuli and reconstructing more accurate representations in mind. Lee et al. (2012) state that despite better records of performance for learners receiving instant feedback, their stress levels are not even kept in moderation but heightened instead; however, this kind of stress is termed "eustress-like anxiety," which results in the positive impact of increased attention afterward. Similar results are also reported in Suvorov and Li (2023) that those expressing their favor for instant feedback appreciate its motivating effect to be more cautious in responding to the subsequent questions, though learners hold mixed perceptions regarding this aspect.

1.3. Listening sub-skills

Several scholars have categorized listening into distinct sub-skills which are essential for learning progress. Moran (2005) identifies these as grasping the main idea, drawing conclusions based on background knowledge, and comprehending contracted consonants. Similarly, Nunan (2002) breaks down listening into three categories: listening for the main idea, listening for details, and listening for making inferences. Field (2009) specifies that learners might listen for a gist, a single piece of information, or in-depth understanding depending on the task and input provided. On the other hand, Peterson (2001) emphasizes the importance of combining global (gist-oriented) and selective (detail-oriented) listening exercises in L2 classrooms. According to Buck (2001), understanding the gist of a text involves linking idea units together for interpretation. In favor of this, Siegel (2018) states that neither a piece of information nor an idea unit alone serves the same interpretive function. However, Alderson (2000) questions the classifiability and measurability of these comprehension sub-skills, while Buck (2001) defends their collective existence as significant for understanding listening comprehension.

1.4. Listening strategies

As defined by Rost (2001), "listening strategies are conscious plans to deal with incoming speech, particularly when the listener knows that he or she must compensate for incomplete input or partial understanding" (p. 10). Buck (2001) declares that there are two categories of listening strategies, namely metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies. Meanwhile, many other studies add another group termed "socio-affective strategies" (Graham et al., 2011; Peterson, 2001), but this pales into insignificance compared to the others in this particular study due to limited peer discussions during the lesson time. Yang (2009) asserts that the difference between successful listeners and unsuccessful ones lies in their utilization of metacognitive strategies, advocating for the teaching of metacognitive roles in L2 listening to enhance listeners' effectiveness in approaching listening tasks. Wenden (1998) suggests that listeners equipped with metacognitive strategies outperform those ignorant of metacognition's role in L2 learning, partially attributed to the former group's clearer considerations about their failed solutions during an activity.

Field (2009) acknowledges loose differentiation between metacognitive and cognitive strategies because it depends on whether the learners think about what courses of action they will take or not. Cognitive strategies are described as "operat(ing) directly on incoming information, manipulating it in ways that enhance learning" (O'Malley & C'hamot, 1990, as cited in Field, 2009, p. 294). Specifically, these encompass listening for gist and details, making inferences and predictions, visualization, note-taking, and summarizing (Graham et al., 2011). Metacognitive strategies, on the other hand, involve learners' mental processes, whether deliberate or automatic, in directing cognitive strategies (Richards, 2009). Graham et al. (2011) pinpoint the components of this type of strategy which are directed attention, selective attention, planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

Planning strategies entail establishing learning goals and seeking ways to accomplish those objectives, such as main ideas previewing, language rehearsal, and determining crucial parts in the text to focus on (Goh, 1997, 1998, as cited in Richards, 2009). Moreover, the differences in learning effectiveness between instant feedback and delayed feedback lie in the learners' monitoring and evaluating strategies respectively. In the same studies, Goh defines monitoring strategies as tactics for tracking learning progress while completing a listening task, enabling the learners to detect repeated mistakes and underlying causes of their listening struggles. Evaluating strategies, on the contrary, refers to checking "the appropriateness and the accuracy of what has been understood" (Goh, 1997, 1998 as cited in Richards, 2009, p. 12), which necessarily means that evaluation only happens when WLP is completed. As argued by this author, post-listening evaluation enables the listeners to self-assess their holistic comprehension of the text. Also, according to Nguyen (2018), directed attention and selective attention are used to grasp the gist and specifics in their respective order. Regarding this, Nguyen Dinh (2023) and Rost (2011) define directed attention as a

technique that listeners employ to maintain focus and remain engaged, including regaining concentration after distractions and intensifying focus during comprehension challenges, which is in line with the reported effect of interactive videos on learners' metacognitive strategies in Suvorov and Li (2023). In terms of selective listening, students can improve their focus by prioritizing essential task-related information, initially concentrating on synonyms and keywords they have underlined or noted before listening (Nguyen & Dinh, 2023). This is enabled in most conventional listening tests where test items are informed to the students before playing the soundtrack, allowing test-takers to preview the questions and answer choices, followed by note-taking of keywords (Chang, 2008).

Suvorov and Li (2023) found different response time among the study participants while taking interactive-video-based listening tests for different items sorted by the question length, difficulty level, and question type. It was specified that the test-takers spent more time on longer questions and gap-fill items, suggesting that learners' metacognitive strategies are flexibly applied to different test items.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

This study employs a quasi-experimental research design with a non-equivalent (pre-test and post-test) control group design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2.2. Research participants

The study sample comprised 67 English-major students from a Vietnamese high school. Given the initial variation in listening competencies among participants, a pre-test was administered before the intervention. Based on these pre-test scores, participants were allocated to either the experimental group (n=34; 20 males, 14 females) or the control group (n=33; 22 males, 11 females). This assignment procedure aligns with the quasi-experimental research design proposed by Borg and Gall (1979, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007). Both groups exhibited an average listening proficiency level of B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale.

2.3. Research instruments

The instruments used in this study encompass two B2 FCE listening tests, which serve as pre-test and post-test. Each test consists of 30 items, which are sorted into three groups of sub-skills by an experienced Master in TESOL, each worth 1 mark (Table 1). The two tests are later tested using a Chi-square test on SPSS to determine whether the differences are statistically significant. The raw results of the pre-test and post-test of both the experimental and control groups are converted to an accuracy rate (in %) for statistical analysis on SPSS 26.

Table 1. *Pre-test and post-test items sorted by tested listening sub-skills*

Tested sub-skills (number of items)	**Listening for gist**	**Listening for details/ specific information**	**Inferential listening**
Pre-test	2	15	13
Post-test	4	18	8

In terms of treatment materials, this study adapted learning content from the four English coursebooks providing authentic videos to design 10 treatment listening lessons for the experimental group within a 5-week duration (Table 2).

Table 2. *Adapted coursebooks for designing treatment lessons*

Coursebook title	Adapted for lesson
Hancock, M., & McDonald, A. (2014). *Authentic Listening Resource Pack.* Delta Publishing.	1, 3, 5
Barber, D., Learning, N. G., Lansford, L., & Jeffries, A. (2017). *Perspectives Intermediate: Student's Book*. National Geographic Learning.	2, 4
Williams, J. (2020). *21st Century Communication 2: Listening, Speaking and Critical Thinking*. Cengage Learning.	6, 9, 10
Learning, N. G., Walkley, A., Dellar, H., & Lansford, L. (2017). *Perspectives Upper Intermediate: Student's Book*. National Geographic Learning.	7, 8

The treatment involved exposure to interactive videos and receipt of instant feedback on responses via personal devices. In contrast, the control group studied listening skills using conventional video materials and received delayed feedback on paper-based question responses. While both groups were permitted to preview questions, only the control group had the opportunity to highlight keywords on the provided question paper for reference during subsequent listening tasks. The listening lesson structure for both groups adhered to a consistent sequence: gist listening, listening for specifics/details, and inferential listening.

2.4. Data collection procedure

The gathered data include the pre-test and post-test scores. Before the treatment, 67 students took the pre-test on paper and were supervised by two teachers. The test length was approximately 40 minutes, including 4 parts. Students' performances were assessed using the marking scheme formulated by the test designer. Likewise, for the post-test, 67 students took the post-test equivalent to the pre-test regarding difficulty level, test format, and allotted time. The scoring process of the post-test papers was similar to that of the pre-test.

3. Data analysis and discussions

Since the B2 FCE pre-test and post-test have different distributions of items for each of the three question categories, the raw scores of both tests recorded in each group have to be converted to the percentage of accuracy, calculated by dividing the number of correct answers by the total number of items for each sub-skill then multiplied by 100 to ensure equivalent scale of measurement. This is one of the limitations of this study due to the selection of pre-test and post-test, which do not explicitly determine the definite number of tested items for each sub-skill. However, results from a Chi-square test (Table 3) suggest that the pre-test and post-test are not different in terms of sub-skill components ($p = 0.345 > 0.05$, which means the differences between the two tests are not statistically significant). The

mean accuracy rates regarding the sub-skills performance of both tests in the control and experimental groups are also presented in Table 4.

Table 3. *Chi-square test results for the difference between pre-test and post-test*

Pearson Chi-square	Df	Two-sided p
	2	.345
N= 60		

Table 4. *Average accuracy rates of the pre-test and post-test for each sub-skill*

	Control		**Experimental**	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Listening for gist	48.48	46.96	52.21	47.06
Listening for specifics	53.37	56.97	50	53.52
Inferential listening	45.08	48.5	48.9	53.4

The accuracy rate (%) for each listening sub-skills performance (i.e. gist listening, specifics listening, inferential listening) in the post-test was compared with that rate in the pre-test for the experimental group and control group respectively, using paired-sample t-test and SPSS 26. The results of these tests are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *Results of paired-sample t-tests for each sub-skill performance of the experimental and control groups in the pre-test and post-test*

Group	**Sub-skill**	**Pre-post**	**SD**	**N**	**Sig. 2-tailed *(p)***	**95% confidence interval of the difference**	
						Lower	**Upper**
Exper	Gist	5.15	46.97	34	.13	-20.47	1.47
Contr	Gist	1.52	47.16	33	.86	-15.21	18.24
Exper	Specifics	-3.52	47.07	34	.00	-28.78	4.07
Contr	Specifics	-3.6	54.38	33	.61	-24.10	14.47
Exper	Inferences	-4.50	30.95	34	.04	-20.47	1.47
Contr	Inferences	-3.42	27.86	33	.36	-14.67	5.42

It can be seen in the table above that students' listening for gist proficiency in both groups does not show significant improvements after the intervention (p-value control= 0.86 > 0.05; p-value experimental= 0.13 > 0.05). On the contrary, statistically significant increases can be witnessed in the accuracy rates of listening for specifics and listening to make inferences in the experimental group (p-value= 0.00; 0.04 respectively < 0.05), while the control group's accuracy rates of these two listening sub-skills see no significant differences (p= 0.61 > 0.05 for specifics listening; 0.36 > 0.05 for inferential listening).

These findings are supported by literature on changes in learners' viewing habits and learning strategies. As students adjust their strategies, such as response times, to different task formats (Suvorov & Li, 2023), they will likely allocate their time more effectively for each question while listening in class, underscoring the value of pauses in interactive videos. However, this study's findings explicitly indicate that the use of interactive videos for teaching listening's effect varies when it comes to questions testing different sub-skills.

Specifically, their most robust effect is on skills of listening for specifics and inferential listening, with little influence on learners' listening for gist skill. These findings are not in agreement with the authors' predictions based on studies of Chang (2008), Nguyen and Dinh (2023), and Rost (2011) that the experimental group would outperform the control group with regards to gist listening thanks to directed attention better facilitated by signaling principle of interactive videos, and that selective attention induced by underlining keywords on the question papers in the control group would lead to better performance of listening for specifics. To rationalize this contradiction, it is reported by Goh (1997, 1998 as cited in Richards, 2009) that the delayed feedback received by students in the control group is associated with evaluation strategies, contributing to an overall comprehension of the material compared to the monitoring strategies observed in the experimental group, where immediate feedback was provided. Listening for gist, in addition, requires the mental incorporation of many separate idea units, so segmented parts of interactive videos which allow short phrases to be "analyzed, interpreted, related to the rest of the message and comprehended" (Peterson, 2001, p. 92) do not serve to achieve that purpose. As for the other two sub-skills, monitoring strategies enhanced by immediate feedback from interactive videos help learners recognize error patterns, leveraging their efforts to stay focused on the subsequent questions (Goh, 1997, 1998, as cited in Richards, 2009; Suvorov & Li, 2023); therefore, the level of students' attention increases towards listening-for-specifics and inferential questions considering the designed intervention lesson steps.

In light of previous similar studies, even though Abdel-Hafez et al. (2022) use the pre-post tests composed of items testing "listening to predict the content, listening to identify the speaker, listening for details, listening to short story to infer the meaning of new words and reach to the moral value, identify short and long vowels" (p. 20), the effectiveness of interactive videos is concluded for improving listening test scores as a whole. In addition, Mawaddah et al. (2022) find that interactive videos can affect students' overall listening skills positively based on their performance scores on Edpuzzle and the fulfillment of the required success level for Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal, minimum standardized learning outcomes used in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the current study investigates the effectiveness of improving students' listening competence via using interactive videos rather than conventional lessons on the level of sub-skills, using a quasi-experiment study, pre-test and post-test, and t-test to test the hypothesis. These are the new contributions of this study.

The sampling method of this study has three main limitations. Firstly, the authors had difficulties accessing a large sample size within the population. Secondly, as the design of quasi-experiments normally lacks random assignment in sampling, the representativeness of the samples for the population is limited. The third limitation is due to a short intervention duration compared to the suggested guided learning time of 180-260 hours for a B1-level learner to achieve B2 proficiency in listening (Knight, 2018).

4. Conclusions and implications

This 5-week study investigates the effectiveness of teaching listening skills with interactive videos in improving students' listening sub-skills. Results from the t-test enable us to partially reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, which means that significant improvements are solely seen in students' skills of listening for specifics and inferential listening in the experimental group whereas there are no significant differences between gist listening proficiency in the pre-test and post-test in each group. Due to limitations regarding the intervention time of five weeks, relatively shorter than that of similar studies such as Abdel-Hafez et al. (2022) which lasted for six weeks on elementary learners, effects on gist listening have yet to emerge. This suggests longer intervention duration in similar future studies to draw useful conclusions that help improve the procedures of listening lessons utilizing interactive videos. Still, with the current findings from this study, teachers can consider simplifying the steps by implementing the application of interactive videos for teaching skills of listening for specifics and inferences only in a classroom listening lesson.

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TÍNH HIỆU QUẢ CỦA VIDEO TƯƠNG TÁC TRONG VIỆC CẢI THIỆN CÁC KĨ NĂNG NGHE HIỂU NỀN TẢNG CỦA HỌC SINH TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG

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TÓM TẮT

Video tương tác đã có những cải tiến so với video tuyến tính như việc lồng ghép các câu hỏi, cho thấy tiềm năng trong việc giảng dạy kĩ năng nghe ngoại ngữ. Bài viết này đề cập hiệu quả của phương pháp dạy nghe bằng video tương tác nhằm cải thiện các kĩ năng nghe nền tảng của học sinh trung học phổ thông. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp định lượng và bán thực nghiệm, trên 67 học sinh lớp 10 chuyên Anh tại một trường trung học phổ thông ở Việt Nam. Nhóm thực nghiệm có 34 học sinh, nhóm kiểm soát có 33 học sinh được chia dựa trên điểm số bài kiểm tra nghe đầu vào. Kiểm định t-test sau 5 tuần can thiệp cho thấy nhóm thực nghiệm có cải thiện kĩ năng nghe chi tiết và suy luận đáng kể hơn nhóm kiểm soát, trong khi cả hai nhóm đều không có sự khác biệt có ý nghĩa thống kê ở nhóm kĩ năng nghe ý chính. Nói cách khác, phương pháp dạy nghe bằng video tương tác có tác động tích cực đến kĩ năng nghe chi tiết và nghe suy luận của học sinh, nhưng không có tác động đáng kể với kĩ năng nghe ý chính. Vì vậy, giáo viên có thể cân nhắc điều chỉnh việc dùng video tương tác cho một số bước trong tiến trình của một tiết học nghe.

Từ khóa: video tương tác; nghe suy luận; kĩ năng nghe nền tảng; nghe ý chính; nghe chi tiết