Using Multimedia to Improve Listening Comprehension in the EFL Classroom

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The four skills of a language are basically required for a communication. They are very important for a learner to develop the balanced language acquisition. Today both listening and speaking skills are emphasized in the global era rather than reading and writing proficiencies. The reason is really why the learners' communicative competence is more needed than the accurate knowledge of a structure in the language. For this reason, the listening comprehension should be taught effectively using the following strategies. First, the sound difference of a language must be taught. Language is a complicated process to convey the comprehensive meaning combined with the internal and external factors of a language. In other words, the meaning for the sound of language should be transmitted by the unit of vocabulary and syntax. Second, a good listening comprehension requires the familiarity and much experience with a lot of English words to understand English sentences unconsciously. Third, as understanding the structure of language is effective for the listening comprehension, the better listening comprehension can be possible through the meaningful exercise. Fourth, the compound process of listening comprehension requires the comprehensive understanding of language, but not the separate understanding of language. Fifth, the appropriate application of the multimedia courseware helps improve the listening comprehension better than that of the existing audio, video, tape recorder and so on. Using multimedia courseware is useful as follows: A learner is able to take as much lesson as he/she wants. It does take little time to repeat about what he/she takes a lesson. It gives the lively picture with the native speakers' voices. It gives him/her(a learner) a feedback effect continuously through the interaction of computer. It controls his/her lesson in accordance with the level of a learner.

Ⅰ. INTRODUCTION

In the era of rapid information exchange and globalization, both written and spoken proficiency in English are required for international communication. In fact, those who learn English should be as fluent as possible when they attend classes and conferences delivered in English, and when they listen to radio and watch television broadcast in English, etc.

The four different skills(listening, speaking, reading and writing) of English communication need to be considered according to the learners' level. It is necessary for learners to develop equally the four areas of language competence in English. However, in the era of globalization, it is particularly important to improve both listening and speaking skills(Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Of listening and speaking skills, listening comprehension skills are more important than speaking skills. This approach can be illustrated when a child starts learning his mother tongue. Furthermore, the importance of listening comprehension is definitely emphasized in the introductory stage of learning a language.

In most cases, the English education has been conducted by non-native speakers in Korea. Using multimedia helps motivate learners of English , as especially considering the present situation of English classes in Korea. It also makes the learners have great interests in self-study and gives them a sense of confidence without hesitation when talking with native speakers(Choi, 1998). The appropriate use of multimedia with letters, graphics, images, sound, voice, animation and so forth can be a good tool for learners' internal motivation and better listening comprehension.

Ⅱ. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. The importance of listening

Listening is the activity of understanding the meaning which is transmitted by the units of vocabulary and syntax recognized from sound.

Posovsky(1977) insists that listening improvement precedes the promotion of speaking skills as follows: First, it is required that we base language learning on understanding rather than utterance. Second, "transfer effect" is useful in the

learning process of language. Third, time is utilized economically in the process of understanding-oriented learning. Fourth, the language acquisition process of understanding-oriented learning itself is a means of communication. Fifth, multimedia tools can be used as the best method of learning language. So, listening integrates the positive, active, and creative activities taking place in various situations regardless of the linguistic background knowledge of listener.

2. The teaching methods used for listening

Listening exercises are primarily required at an early stage before beginning learning to speak. Speaking exercises are needed after the improvement of listening ability to some degree. In so doing, listening comprehension and other linguistic abilities will be more effective. The following teaching methods give priority to improving listening.

1) Total Physical Response

Mother tongue acquisition for children seems to be a similar process to foreign language acquisition. Total Physical Response(TPR) is an example of behavioristic psychology to show the physical responses of learners using words, phrases and sentences through oral stimuli. This is related to trace theory which states that physical behavior conducted during conversation stimulates and reinforces learners' memories. The dynamic activities used in the games create a comfortable learning environment. It is based on the learning of humanism(Asher, 1974). Listening comprehension needs to be developed before learners start speaking. In the TPR procedure, teachers primarily supervise the class and give the students some review they are taught and them exercises for new vocabularies through an imperative sentence as follows:

    Review: Chulsu, throw the yellow flower to Tom.
           Sunny, screem.
           Insu, pick up the flower and put it on the desk.
    New commands: wash your face/hands/the cup
                look for a comb/the magazine/the tape recorder
                hold the eraser/the pencil/the calculator
                triangle/Draw a triangle on the whiteboard/
                Pick up the triangle from the books/

quickly Walk quickly to the window/
Quickly walk to her and hit her on the arm/
Asking questions: Where is the radio? Youngsoo, point to the radio/Where
is the TV? Mingu, pick up the TV/

2) Natural Approach

Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell(1983) suggest that English be used in
communicative situations, which are not dependent on mother tongue. The goal of
this approach is to develop fundamental communication abilities and the acquisition
of academic skills. In this approach, the teachers′ role is to provide learners with
understandable language input. In addition, teachers provide learners with an
interesting, friendly, affectionate, and positive class environment through
harmonious learning activities with various groups. The following example is
relevant to;

(1) Start with TPR(Total Physical Response) commands.
ex) ″Stand up. Turn around. Raise your right hand.″
(2) Use TPR to teach names of body parts and to introduce numbers and
sequence.
ex) ″Lay your right hand on your head, put both hands on your shoulder,
first touch your nose, then stand up and turn to the right three times.″
(3) Introduce classroom terms and props into commands.
ex) ″Pick up a pencil and put it under the book, touch a wall, go to the
door and knock three times.″
(4) Use names of physical characteristics and clothing to identify members of
the class by name.
ex) Teacher: hair, long, short, etc. and then a student is described. ″Class,
look at Barbara. She has long brown hair. Her hair is long and
brown. Her hair is not short. It is long.″
(5) Combine use of pictures with TPR.
ex) Jim, find the picture of the little girl with her dog and give it to the
woman with the pink blouse.″
(6) Combine observations about the pictures with commands and conditionals.
ex) ″If there is a woman about the picture, stand up. If there is something
blue in your picture, touch your right shoulder.″
(7) Using several pictures, ask students to point to the picture being
described.

Picture 1. "There are several people in this picture. One appears to be a father, the other a daughter. What are they doing? Cooking. They are cooking a hamburger." *Picture 2.* "There are two men in this picture. They are young. They are boxing." *Picture 3* ...

(Krashen and Terrell 1983: 75-7)

III. THE LESSON PLAN FOR LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Listeners make use of two kinds of knowledge: the sentence construction of their target language and actual world knowledge. They are not able to remember all phonetic materials given in the process of listening comprehension and predict the general meaning of the context through the partial understanding of the listening materials. In fact, it is not possible for foreign language learners to understand the comprehensive details of listening information. For this reason, listeners need to try to find clues or main ideas from the context utilizing either inference or surplus listening materials. The following is in detail: First, the discriminatory instruction of phonetics. Second, the acquirement instruction of vocabulary. Third, the instruction of sentence construction. Fourth, the instruction of comprehensive understanding.

1) Teaching of Sound Discrimination

Listening is the understanding of words and differentiation of sounds through lexical and syntactical units which can be comprehensible. This is a complex process of comprehensive meaning with the combination of a variety of internal or external factors. For native speakers, it is in the natural process of using their mother tongue. But for target language learners, they face a barrier of listening comprehension. So learners intensively need the exercises of articulated phonemes, ultra-articulated phonemes, and changed phenomenon of sounds.

2) Teaching of acquiring vocabulary

Vocabulary is essential for four language learning skills. Listening comprehension is not available in case of deficient learning words. Familiarity and abundance are necessary to recognize the words unconsciously while listening. It

includes the meaning of words with picture, behaviour, actual object, etc. It is also learned faster in the relationship between the contexts with other words.

3) Teaching of sentence structure

The speakers who use mother tongue are born with Language Acquisition Device(LAD)(Noam Chomsky, 1965). It is already fossilized when adults learn a language. Taken into consideration a complementary function to understand the sentence structure for listening, the language acquisition such as top-down approach is applied and necessary to teach essential or useful sentence structure. The meaningful drill is set importance on improving listening comprehension(Park, 1995). The following is to show how a sentence is made by words and each part of speech plays a role in the sentence.

4) Teaching of Comprehensive Understanding

Listening includes the complex understanding of activities that happens at the same time rather than separately. Firstly, it is making a prediction. It is an activity for a learner to predict a topic before listening. This activity makes a learner have a vigorous imagination freely about the situation given. Secondly, it is a role playing. A learner plays a role on the stage group by group like an actor/actress. He takes much of an interest in learning while playing a real role. Thirdly, it is a dictation such as spot dictation and full dictation. This is beneficial to four skills(listening, speaking, reading, and writing), especially for the improvement of listening comprehension which is one of the useful ways. In addition, a useful variety of activities for listening are applied to the pictures, songs, cartoons, humors, etc.
The following is one of the example activities.

> Narrator: Wecome to "Love'Em and Leave'Em." Glenda and Alan are in their
>   apartment.
> Glenda: Where are you going, Alan?
> Alan: I'm going on a business trip.
> Glenda: Not another business trip!
> Alan: Glenda, this is it. I'm leaving you I'm in love with another woman.
> Glenda: No! No! You can't leave me!
> Alan: It's true, Glenda. I'm sorry. I'm going now. Goodbye.

Glenda: Robert? It′s me, Glenda. Alan is leaving me! Now we can be
together!
Robert: Oh, Glenda! That′s wonderful! I′m coming right over!
Glenda: I′m waiting, Robert. I′m waiting!
(Radio Drama - English Discoveries)

IV. THE INSTRUCTION OF MULTIMEDIA COURSEWARE

The goal of language learning through use of computer multimedia is to actualize learners′ visualized experiences and to provide a variety of practical time or real world experience. Multimedia CD-ROM courseware has a number of specific characteristics. First, learners can start at any point they wish. Second, it takes little time to repeat or return to the content they want. Third, the courseware is easy to operate without a lot of background computer knowledge. Fourth, learners enjoy the lively voice of native speakers and pictures relevant to the lesson. Fifth, learners can interact with a computer under the actual situation. Sixth, learners can control the level and rate of learning equivalent to their needs.

1) Radio-Drama

teacher〉 Fill in the blanks with the words from the box below.
student〉 You are listening to ″Love,Em and Leave,Em.″
Glenda and Alan are in their _____. Alan is telling Glenda that he′s going on a _____ trip. But now he′s telling her that he′s in love with another _____. Alan is _____ Glenda! Now Glenda is making a _____ call. She′s talking to _____! They are very _____.

sad, apartment, Robert, leaving, woman, business, kissing, car, happy, telephone

2) TV-Drama

teacher〉 Complete all the activities in Listening, TV, Drama, Explore, Practice, Test.

student〉 For the statements below, write ″T″ if it is true, ″F″ if it is false and ″NI″ if the text does not give that information.

① Katie is looking at Mark.

② Amy is looking at Mark.

③ Amy wants Katie to talk to Mark.

④ Mark is listening to music.

⑤ Katie likes Mark.

3) Answering Machine-Sales

teacher〉 Complete the activities below.

student〉 Listen to Answering Machine, Sales, Practice and take a message. (The message may not have all the information.)

WHILE YOU WERE OUT

To: ···

From: ···

When: ···

Telephone Number: ···

Message: ··

V. THE STUDY OF QUESTIONNAIRE ON USING MULTIMEDIA

1. Questionnaire

This study is to find out how effective the students improve their listening comprehension either with the use of multimedia or without the use of multimedia. Each group has 30 university freshman students. This experiment is done for one semester as follows:

Percentage of usage	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%	Student
CD-Rom Title	1	5	11	12	1	30
Cassette Player	3	9	15	2	1	30
Listening (CD)	0	3	10	11	6	30
Listening (Cassette)	4	10	13	3	0	30

2. The Results of Experiment

Most students who answered the questionnaire agreed to the importance of listening comprehension which was influential in learning English language. They thought that using multimedia in the laboratory was much more effective or convenient than using the existing video and audio in class. In short, CD-Rom

Title with various contents for listening gave students a greater opportunity to learn English with interest than we expect.

VI. CONCLUSION

Multimedia courseware has various characteristics of its utility. It especially provides a stereophonic language learning environment. It now plays an important role learning language. It will be used with greater effectiveness than ever. Of course, multimedia utilizing computer does not give the only solution to the problems related to English education.   When considering the four different language skills, I'm sure that the use of multimedia courseware can make great contributions to the improvement of listening comprehension skills.

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