

Improving Listening Skill at Primary Level in Tamil Nadu among the Non-Native Speakers of English with the Help of Cartoons and Animations

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Abstract

Listening is the most important ability to learn any language. Hence, in language learning listening plays a vital role. From primary level listening must be given importance. But normally primary level students are unable to listen if we teach in chalk and talk method. Primary level students are very much interested in watching cartoons and animations. Through cartoons and animations we can teach language. In this paper, the researcher has used cartoons and animations as a tool to improve the listening skill of primary level learners.

Key words: Language learning, Listening skill, Cartoons and Animations, primary level learners

1.0.Introduction

A language is a systematic means of communication by the use of sounds or conventional symbols. It is the code we all use to express ourselves and communicate to others. It is a communication by word of mouth. It is a system for communicating ideas and feelings using sounds, gestures, signs or marks. And means of communicating ideas, specifically, human speech, the expression of ideas by the voice and sounds articulated by the organs of the throat and mouth is a language. This is a system for communication.

1.1. Importance of English

English is known to be the language spoken by 1000 million people of the world either as a native language, as a second language, or as a foreign language. English has a status of associate official language in India, but in fact it is the most commonly spoken language in the

country. English symbolizes in Indian minds, better education, better culture and higher intellect. Indians who know English will always try to show that they know English. There are four skills in English language learning; they are Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. These skills should be developed in the students.

1.2. Listening Skill

Listening skill makes you successful in workplace, family and in society. Good listening skill is mandatory to get into a profession in communications, management, planning, sales, and so on. Listening skill involves a different set of etiquette, questioning for explanation, showing empathy and providing a suitable response. Good listening skills include the understanding ability. Body language is also a part of listening skill. Eye contact with the speaker, sitting straight and being alert are the good posture and attitude respectively, of a good listener.

1.3. Importance of Listening Skill

We may think of listening as something that requires no thought or effort, but there is a vast difference between hearing someone and actually listening to him. While it's natural for a person to day dream or think of a rebuttal while someone else is speaking, doing so can result in strained relationships, failure to absorb important information and a general disconnect between people who are trying to work toward common goals.

1.4. Using Cartoons and Animations

Using cartoons in English for kids to let them enjoy and learn English by picking up the language with their favorite Cartoons is a successful method for developing their listening skill. So primary students studying at this level take much interest in Cartoons; so an environment for listening must be created in schools by using Cartoons and Animations(ICT) for teaching kids the English language at the primary level. Many students at this level will be able to grasp a lot by hearing voices or sounds and animated videos.

Most of the people think that listening comes naturally, but it is not true. Listening skill is the most difficult skill to be acquired by students. There are some problems in acquiring the listening skill that the students might encounter.

1.4.1. Problems of Listening Skill

1. Lack of teaching aids
1. Lack of Motivation
2. Lack of interest
3. Lack of proper pronunciation
4. Lack of good environment.

1.4.2. Listening Skills among Non- Native Speakers in Tamil Nadu

The second language is introduced to students from first standard in primary education level. When the children learn some of the basic skills in their mother tongue they easily pick them up, whereas the same students find it very hard to pick up those skills with the second language. They start to learn this alien language around the age of 8 or 9. Most of the schools do not have sufficient number of qualified teachers who can teach English as the second language. Many students hail from rural areas and so they need some more training at the schools. Almost in every school, English is not given as much importance as they give for their vernacular. They never have the desire to learn another language in addition to their mother tongue.

The major barrier is that teachers themselves do not know how to teach English to the budding citizens of future India. When they come to college for graduation they again find it hard to acquire language skills without the basic skills they should have acquired in their primary education. They are supposed to have learnt the basic skills, but the standard of the students' level of language learning skills is very pathetic. The teachers of the high schools cannot go down to the level of VII & VIII standard students and teach them listening skills, to the detraction of the majority of the class which has to be taught the basic units which are needed for their final exams.

1.4.3. Significance of the Study

This study will guide low level EFL/ESL learners on methods to improve their language proficiency through effective exposure to news, cartoons, or films as authentic audiovisual programs from various technologies. The findings may also be important to language teachers, practitioners, and institutions for investment in authentic audiovisual mass media programs for language learning by exposing the low level language learners more than before to news, cartoons, or films as authentic language input for the enhancement of language proficiency.

The researcher plans to conduct a survey among the teachers of the Tamil primary schools in Tirupattur area, Tamil Nadu, to understand and identify the problems faced by the teachers in imparting listening skills and the possible solutions. Based on the outcome of the survey, the researcher plans to use the cartoons and the animations to teach English and find out the effectiveness of this new method. This method will help to create interest among the students of the primary level.

In view of the above mentioned fact, the researcher finds discovering the effectiveness of exposure to animations and cartoons, as two types of authentic audiovisual mass media programs in developing the language learning skills of primary level learners.

In the learning of the language, listening is the basis of everything. Practice in listening is the first and foremost principle in language learning. Without it, the whole foundation of language learning will be weak and defective. Listening skill is thought to be the most difficult skill according to the learners. A number of studies have been done and are still being done in this important area. The researcher intends to present some of the important findings and observations of the researchers and experts in this field.

2.0. Literature Review

Abbott and Wingard (1981) say that, to develop listening skills we need to consider what types of material they will ultimately want or need to listen to.

Stephen Krashen (1987) explains that listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and vocabulary, and grasping his meaning. In other words, listening is as active as speaking. It requires attention, thought process, interpretation, and imagination.

J.C. Richard and T.S. Rodgers took a special interest in listening as a field of study by commenting that listening is the most frequently used mode of communication among human beings.

Paul Verghese rightly points out that listening skill is vital in the language classroom because it provides input for the learner. Hence this skill invites great attention on the part of teachers too.

H.D. Brown explains that the natural approach recommended a significant silent period during which learners were allowed the security of listening without being forced to go through the anxiety of speaking before they are ready to do so.

3.0. Research Methodology

The research methodology adapted in this study comprises research design, population, instruments of data collection, validity and reliability of the data collection, procedure for data collection and data analysis. This paper is aimed at finding the most effective way of developing the Listening skill at primary school level in rural areas of India, using Cartoons and Animations.

3.1. Questionnaire Survey Method

The questionnaire survey method was preferred in this study because all the teachers who participated in the study were literate and therefore were capable of answering the questionnaire items adequately. The survey had a three scale answering pattern.

YES	NO	SOMETIMES
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3.2. Research Instrument

The researcher used a questionnaire survey and an observation schedule.

3.3. Methodology

3.4.1. Cartoons and Animations

Students studying at this level are much interested in Cartoons and Animations. With the help of Cartoons and Animations they can improve their Listening skill. If they listen, they can learn the language (LSRW). By using Cartoons and Animations, the researcher shows that all the five problems, mentioned could be overcome.

3.4.2. Cartoons

Step: 1

The researcher shows the cartoon pictures to the students.

Step: 2

The researcher explains the picture.

Step: 3

The researcher asks questions to find out if they have followed the cartoon pictures.

3.4.3. Observation of the Teacher

Students are very much interested in seeing the cartoon pictures. Each and everyone is looking at the picture. They are listening very carefully to understand the Cartoons. After showing the cartoons the teacher questions the students to test their comprehension abilities. The students immediately raise their hands to give the answers. No one is distracted. Through this we can understand that Cartoons could be used for the Primary level students to improve their Listening skill.

3.4.4. Animations

Step: 1

Introduce the Animation pictures, encourage the students to listen to the language.

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R. Pavithra, M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil.

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Step: 2

Show the Animated clip.

Step: 3

The researcher questions the students individually at random.

Step: 4

The researcher asks for words, sentences from the Animation movie.

3.4.5. Observations of the Teacher

Students are very much interested in seeing the animated clips. Each and every one is watching the animated movies. They are listening very carefully while watching the Animation movie. After showing the clip, the teacher questions the students to test their comprehension abilities. Everyone raise their hands to give the answers. No one is distracted. Through this we are able to understand that Animations are really helpful for primary level students to improve their Listening skill.

4.0. Results and Findings

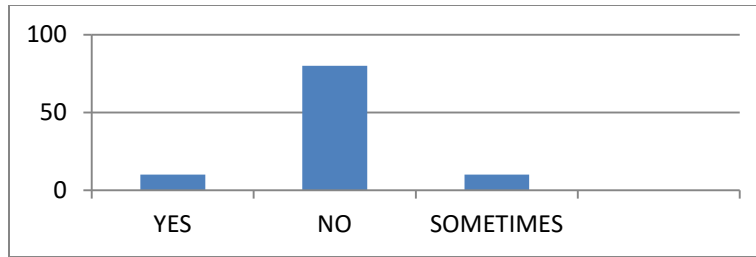
The researcher presents the interpretation of the data collected from researches in rural schools around Tirupattur. A survey questionnaire was given to the teachers for data collection. And the researcher also gives the findings from own observation. Some of the findings of the researcher are from observation, and by giving questionnaire for the possible reasons for the lack of listening skill among the students are:

1. Lack of teaching aids
2. Lack of Motivation
3. Lack of interest
4. Lack of proper pronunciation
5. Lack of good environment.

4.1. Lack of Teaching Aids

In the questionnaire the following question deals with the lack of teaching aids.

1. Do you use Teaching Aids in classroom?



In this study 10% of teachers use teaching aids, while 80% of teachers do not use teaching aids and 10% of teachers use teaching aids sometimes. Because of this the listening skill is not highly developed.

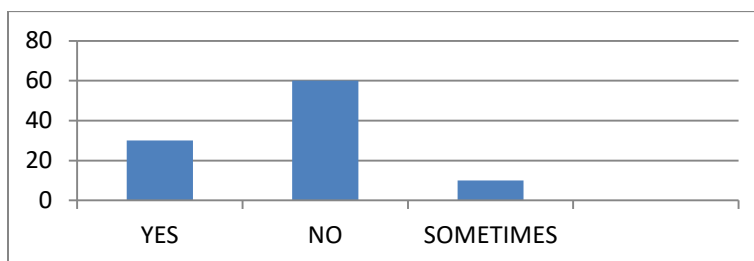
If the teachers use teaching aids like cartoons and animations to teach, listening skill of the learners will improve.

4.2. Lack of Motivation

Motivation is perhaps the greatest factor: ‘Let us say that, given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he is exposed to the language data.’

The following question in the questionnaire deals with the lack of motivation.

1. Are the students motivated to learn?



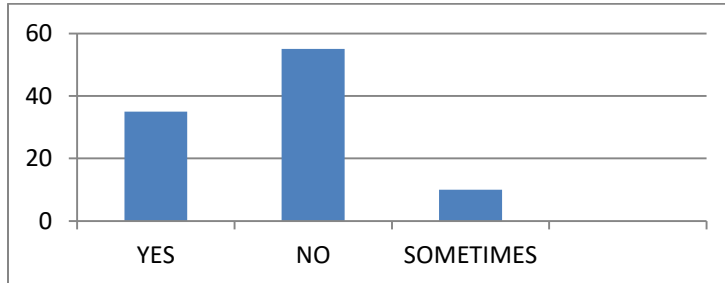
This figure shows 30% of the learners get motivation from the class, while 60% of the learners does not get any motivation in classroom. 10% of the learners get motivation sometimes in class. So learners are not able to listen in the class.

If the teacher gives them the motivation with the help of Cartoons and animations, the listening skill of the learners will improve.

4.3. Lack of Interest

The following questions in the questionnaire deals with the lack of interest.

1. Are the students interested in listening?
2. Are the teachers using cartoons in classroom?



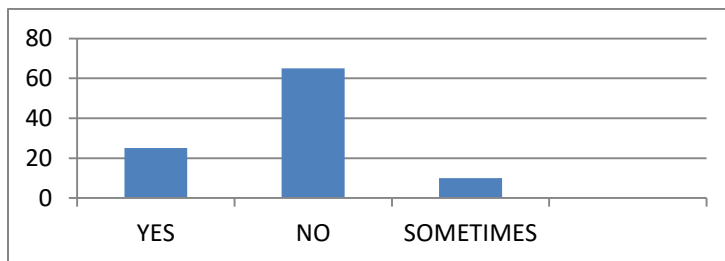
This figure shows 35% of learners are interested to listen in the class. 10% of learners are interested in listening in the class sometimes. So listening skill is underdeveloped.

If the teacher uses cartoons and animations the listening skill will improve among the learners.

4.4. Lack of Proper Pronunciation

The following question in the questionnaire deals with the lack of pronunciation.

1. Did the students become good in their pronunciation?



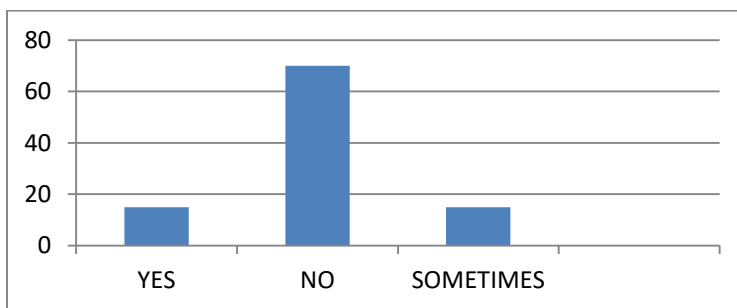
This figure shows 25% of the learners have good pronunciation. 65% of the learners are sometimes good in their pronunciation.

If the teacher uses audio-visual cartoons the pronunciation will improve.

4.5. Lack of Good Environment

The following question deals with the lack of good environment.

1. Did you use animations to teach English language?



In this study 15% of teacher use animations, while 70% of teachers do not use animations and 15% of teachers use animations sometimes. Because of this reason listening skill is not well developed.

If the teachers use animations to teach, listening skill of the learners will improve.

4.6. Solutions and Suggestions

Factors like lack of motivation, lack of teaching aids, lack of interest can be improved upon to play a better role in the learning of the English language. Here we can implement the showing of cartoons and animations to find solutions for the problems stated through the charts. This will produce really effective results.

5. Conclusion

Through survey the researcher found out that Students are much interested in Cartoons and Animations. The researcher created such an interesting environment in schools by using Cartoons and Animations for teaching kids at the primary level. If the teacher uses this method to teach, the learners will be interested in listening in the class.

In view of the above findings, the researcher has been discovering the effectiveness of exposure to animations and cartoons, as two types of authentic audiovisual mass media programs on developing the language learning skills of primary level language learners.

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Questionnaire to Teachers

1. Do you use Teaching Aids in classroom?
2. Are the students motivated to learn?
3. Are the students interested in listening?
4. Are the teachers using cartoons in classroom?
5. Did the students good in their pronunciation?
6. Did you use animations to teach English language?

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