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PROCEEDINGS

Use of English Language Learning Software to Develop Listening Skills of Undergraduates: Performance and Perceptions of Students

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Abstract

There has been a tremendous influence of information communication technologies in English language teaching across the world in the recent years. The ubiquitous intervention of technology has shaped language teaching and established a constructivist language learning approach. As it is observed by the researchers, undergraduate performance in listening skills is not satisfactory due to lack practices by using language learning software and modern tools in the English as Second Language (ESL) classrooms. Thus, this study aims at facilitating the ESL learners through computer assisted language learning (CALL) to develop listening skills of undergraduates at University of Vavuniya. Even though, a number of previous studies focused on enhancing ESL listening skills, this study attempts to develop undergraduates' listening skills by using the language software "Study Skills" through Computer Assisted Language Learning sessions conducted in language laboratory. This study is based on a mixed method. The data were collected through pretest and posttest from focused group to analyze learners' listening performance while questionnaires were collected to identify learners' perception about the conservative listening practices and computer assisted listening practices. The quantitative data were analyzed by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) while qualitative data were analyzed in thematic analysis. The findings of the study demonstrate that there is a significant improvement in the learners' performance in listening skills by using language software and most of the learners expressed that the listening practices based on language learning software was more effective than the traditional listening practices in the ESL classroom.

Keywords: CALL; language learning software; listening skills; traditional practices; technology

1.   Introduction

The trend in education has changed from conservative classroom approaches to language laboratory mechanisms, where a number of innovative tools and language learning software have been introduced and practiced in English Language Learning (ESL) in order to enhance undergraduates' language skills. There has been a revolutionary impact of information communication technologies in English language teaching all over the world in the recent past. The innovative discoveries of technology and incorporating them in teaching have created a productive language learning approach. In the contemporary language teaching practice, ESL educators at the Faculty of Business Studies, University of Vavuniya have been conducting a substantial number of listening practices for a semester in the first year. It is observed that conducting listening practices within the classroom is a challenging task as it needs proper infrastructure, electronic devices and network facilities. Lack of listening practice in the ESL classroom imposed adverse effects on learners' listening comprehension and listening test results. Thus, this study aims at facilitating the ESL learners through computer assisted language learning (CALL) to develop listening skills.

2.   Literature Review

Sejdiu (2017) emphasizes the importance of competency in listening skills of the L2 learners, and confirms how listening comprehension enhances other language skills. In addition, his study demonstrates that L2 learners have access to several multimedia and technology resources (such as audio, video, internet, podcast, blogs and others) to develop their listening skills. Likewise, Maulia et al (2022) have attempted to demonstrate the effectiveness of certain Technology based media such as mobile, multimedia technology, radio news, podcast application and mobile – based audiobooks in the teaching of listening skills. It is mentioned that there are many difficulties to learn English and decreased potential for the successful learning though there are other not technology – based materials.

Further, the study of Gokce (2022) shows that the use of multimedia materials has not only positive influence on the listening skills of the learners but also have enhanced their perceptions, interests and motivations while reducing anxiety. In addition, Nachoua (2012) studied the effectiveness of CALL for improving students' listening skills and demonstrates the use of CALL to develop their listening skills by encouraging motivation of the students at Mohamed Kheider University. This study confirmed CALL is motivational and effective in improving the listening skills. Further, Chandradasa and Jayawardane (2018), demonstrates the language laboratory as the best place to develop listening and speaking skills but not successful in practicing writing and reading skills than the traditional classroom in Sri Lanka.

The review of the literature shows that Computer Assisted Language Learning sessions had a positive impact on improving learners' listening proficiency. However, this study explores how effective is the use of Study Skill language learning software in CALL sessions to improve learners' listening skills.

3.   Methodology

This study facilitated listening comprehension through "Study Skills", a language learning software in the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) laboratory. Students practiced 10 online listening practices based on British English, in which they were guided to listen to the audio clips and mark their answers on the worksheet in online. Both the pretest and posttest were dichotomously marked. It considered twenty-five students' listening test scores, obtained through the pretest and posttest, and the marks were analyzed by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) tool. Questionnaires were used to obtain the learners' perceptions about the language learning software in the CALL sessions from the focused group, which were thematically analyzed. As this study deals with both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, it is based on a mixed method approach and tends to examine the impact of language learning software on improving the listening skills of the focused group compared to the test scores obtained before and after the intervention.

4.   Results

The findings of both the qualitative and quantitative data shows that there is a significant improvement in listening skills after learners' participation in the CALL sessions. The posttest scores of the focused group are highly significant ($p < 0.001$) compared to their pretest scores obtained before their participation in the CALL session whereas there was no significant improvement ($p > 0.1$) in the posttests when the students were not facilitated with the software practices. The following table shows the positive impact of language learning software and learners' perception about the technology based listening practices.

Table 1: Paired Sample T-Test of Pretests and Posttests of the Focused Group

Topics	Tests	Number	Mean	Sig. (2-tailed)
CALL Session 1	Pretest	25	40.43	0.000
	Posttest	25	40.96	
CALL Session 2	Pretest	25	40.42	0.000
	Posttest	25	50.73	
CALL Session 3	Pretest	25	40.22	0.000
	Posttest	25	60.21	
CALL Session 4	Pretest	25	40.56	0.000
	Posttest	25	50.67	
CALL Session 5	Pretest	25	30.89	0.000
	Posttest	25	50.43	
CALL Session 6	Pretest	25	30.45	0.000
	Posttest	25	50.76	
CALL Session 7	Pretest	25	30.63	0.000
	Posttest	25	50.46	
CALL Session 8	Pretest	25	30.31	0.000
	Posttest	25	50.92	
CALL Session 9	Pretest	25	30.74	0.000
	Posttest	25	50.35	
CALL Session 10	Pretest	25	30.87	0.000
	Posttest	25	50.41	

In the questionnaire analysis, 85% of learners expressed that practicing listening by using 'Study Skills' software is highly effective rather than practicing listening activities in the conservative language classroom. The qualitative data were analyzed under the themes of "use of technological based listening practice" and "use of traditional listening practice". It is worth noting that students were given pre- and post-listening tests based on British English; however, they proclaimed that it was more comprehensible provided that software-based listening practices were used rather than traditional listening practices inside the classroom. In relation to students' perceptions of the importance of their listening skills, though the majority of students acknowledged that laboratory-based listening practices are more effective than classroom-based listening practices in which they encountered external or environmental noises and technical issues, some students disclosed the difficulties in the software-based listening sessions, such as unfamiliar words, limited vocabulary knowledge, unfamiliar topics, and the length of spoken texts.
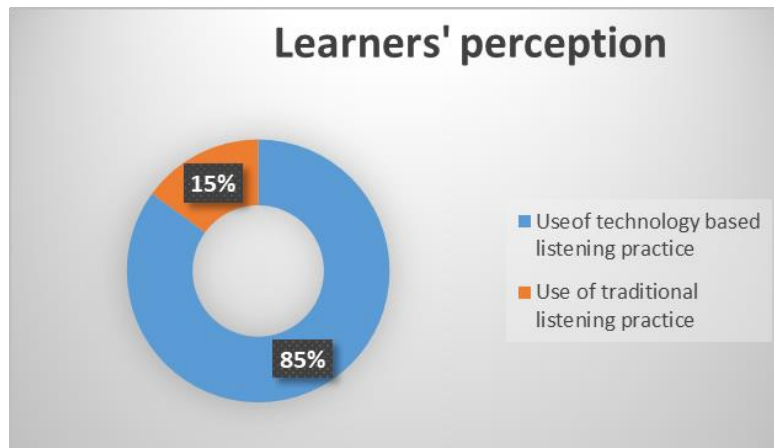
Figure1: Learners' Perception

5.   Conclusion

The findings emphasized that there was a significant improvement in listening skills, facilitated through Computer Assisted Language Learning compared to that of conservative methods and the listening tasks incorporated with technological materials should enhance the performance in the listening practices. This study finds that using technology based listening tasks will be an effective language teaching tool to improve learners' listening skills and proficiency.

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