

## Film Clips to Improve Listening Skills in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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### *Abstract*

A qualitative method and an exploratory research study were carried out to analyze the use of film clips to improve Module III students' listening skills at the Universidad Estatal Peninsula de Santa Elena language center. The aim was to analyze and establish the relevance of using audio-visual materials as communicative activities in which students participate in their teaching-learning process. There are many approaches and methods, such as Audio Lingual, which according to theories such as Cognitivism, prove that students are more attracted to learning through graphics in which they can understand the context of the situation. In addition, using film clips opens up opportunities for students to improve their pronunciation and communicate in a natural environment. It is foreseen that more studies are needed in order to implement activities that reinforce the advantages of this type of activity in which films play an important role.

KEYWORDS: listening skills, film clips, improvement, qualitative research

### **Introduction**

English is a fundamental tool for the development of both nations and individuals in general. Therefore, learning has become not only imperative but also indispensable for a person's personal and professional fulfillment. The identification of difficulties in learning English as a foreign language for a Spanish speaker is relatively simple since English, being a foreign language, entails a certain type of difficulty in learning.

Related articles such as, "Using Films to Teach Listening Comprehension", "Students' Perception about Improving English Listening Skills using Movies among the Vocational High School

Students", and "English Major Students' Perceptions Towards Watching English Movies in Listening and Speaking Skills Development" among others, demonstrate the effectiveness of the use of audio-visual materials such as films and how this opens a door for reflection on existing theories and methodologies and their adaptation for a versatile lesson plan where students feel comfortable to learn and since for the authors of these studies, listening goes hand in hand with improving students' pronunciation and their confidence in communicating in their environment. Numerous articles cited in the theoretical framework have been observational processes of theories and implementation in countries such as India, Saudi Arabia, and South Korea, among others, which show that it is possible to improve students' listening skills through the use of films, mini-videos, and other audio-visual materials.

On the other hand, it should be noted that studies such as "Video-based task teaching for non-English major students at HUFU", and "Adapting Adult Learning Theory to Support Innovative, Advanced, Online Learning" show that there is a certain percentage of disapproval from teachers who indicate that the use of films can cause distractions.

At the same time, it is imperative to know the opinions of the students because education should be student-centered. These opinions were collected through a focus group whose aim was to answer the questions of the project and whose focus is to show where the problem comes from and provide a possible solution. Since there are many audiovisual materials from which resources can be drawn to learn and teach how to develop students' listening skills.

This project aims to analyze the use of film clips for educational purposes to improve the listening skills of petroleum engineering students belonging to module III of the language center at the Universidad Estatal Peninsula de Santa Elena because not all films are appropriate to show in a classroom. In addition to identifying which techniques or strategies are the most appropriate and examining how it is advantageous for students to be educated through this communicative activity. Finally, it seeks to establish the relevance of the use of film clips and their influence on the development of students' listening skills which in turn influences communication.

According to [12] in his article "Films as a teaching resource"; "films are a comfortable familiar intermediate to contemporary students that can keep student interest in the theories and concepts under dialogue." The world changes constantly, therefore the strategies and techniques for teaching must adopt a more contemporary measure that allows and facilitates the students a better understanding of what is to be taught. English is known to be one of the most spoken languages in the world, thus this project seeks to present films as a teaching-learning tool.

### Listening skills

Listening comprehension is characterized as challenging for foreign/second language learners not only because of the phonemic differences but also all the different types of accents that prevail around the world. Unlike other language skills, listening requires an immediate understanding and processing for the learner to be able to communicate effectively. “Therefore, listening is an integrated performance that requires the listener to use his/her sight and hearing senses and the power of the mind in following up with the speaker's speech to understand, comprehend, and determine ideas” [24].

For an understanding of both written and verbal information, learners must use “bottom-up” and “top-down” processes; the first process draws on the learner's previously acquired knowledge of vocabulary and language grammatical and syntactic structure, while the second process relies on the learner's abilities to use that previously acquired data to interpret meaning through background experience. Both are vital processes in the teaching-learning of active listening skills in students. To be more specific, the process of “bottom-up” listening is to pay attention to every detail regardless of experience or personal knowledge. [30]

In this way, a foreign listening environment is created where learners will effectively communicate and listen based on context which is part of the “top-down” process. “The two processes cannot be separated during listening comprehension. In other words, listening comprehension is not either top-down or bottom-up processing, but an interactive process during which listeners use both prior knowledge and linguistic knowledge in understanding.” [32]

This implies that active learning is not only meaningful for the development of listening skills but also for the learner to be immersed in an interactive learning environment in search of improvements in the target language. Active learning is the cognitive process that the learner goes through and is based on the learner's previously acquired knowledge to help him/her understand the text, context, or situation in which it is found. It is a communicative process where the student will be able to understand the audio-visual material independently of the context. [7]

According to [22], there are controversies surrounding the nature of listening comprehension. Two views influence this process: the traditional view, which states that the learner is a tape recorder who is able to memorize auditory messages in such a way; and the alternative view, which states that learners can combine new information with their prior knowledge and experience in order to fully comprehend the information presented. Anderson and Lynch argued that in the

interpretation of prior knowledge lies the essence of a good listening process.

#### Films as an Educational Resource

By establishing why listening comprehension is fundamental to the development of English as a foreign language (L2) teaching and learning, film clips are identified as a modern alternative for developing listening skills inside a classroom environment. Due to its high rate of accuracy in engaging and motivating adult learners to be participants in their learning. The relevance lies in making students aware of how listening skills can be developed through other methods. [2]

According to [11], the definition of a movie or film is a series of moving images that tell a story or event. There are many types of film genres such as science fiction, thriller, horror, romance, comedy, educational, documentary, and real-life case histories that aim to entertain a certain type of audience.

Teaching English through films has attracted the attention of many EFL teachers since in this way they can illustrate real-life content. "These audiovisual media lead the learners to use and optimize their sight and hearing to grasp the information delivered by the films. These two senses, sight and hearing, enable the learners to absorb the input more optimally." [6] Because of that, students can actively participate in class while developing their skills.

English films are one stimulating listening media to be used since they can attract and interest the pupils. "Watching movies in foreign languages is beneficial for students, such as their speaking skills increased, their pronunciation improves, they get new vocabulary from the movies, they can develop self-expression ability, and their listening skill increase." [8] Those are, to mention a few, some advantages of the use of films in class.

By using films as a communicative activity in a classroom, students are motivated by seeing and hearing real-life situations rather than listening to monotonous conversations proposed in textbooks. In turn, this provides a relaxed, guided environment for students to increase their enthusiasm for learning, and, through teacher-guided activities, students will improve their vocabulary and word recognition. The process of language acquisition via audio-visual material such as films is considered to be effective in the teaching space. [21]

On the other side, many English native speakers produce spoken sounds that, in terms of syntax, are easier to understand orally than written. Therefore, being aware of this information is helpful for adult learners as they can apply it in their development of listening skills and learn certain phonological sounds based on their experience, which is linked to the "top-down" process. [32]

Among the advantages of using films as a teaching method for the development of listening skills is that students stimulate their perception directly whereas in written work they do so indirectly. Films are more sensory than texts in terms of sounds, graphics, and colors. Films capture students' immediate attention in a classroom as it is something new for them, becoming an alternative model to the traditional approach.

According to [22], films are accepted as the most reliable material that educators can use in a classroom environment. In turn, films tend to motivate people because it is made to entertain and impress the audience. Thus, the experience becomes more interesting when it is focused on teaching the target language and even more engaging when it comes to developing students' listening skills.

Students, at the same time, will be immersed in different socio-cultural environments where non-verbal language also represents a small percentage of learning. In other words, through gestures, students will be able to identify what the actors or actresses are trying to say; how people interact in different situations, including idioms, collocations, and even the diversity of accents that can be found in the same country. [31], agreed "Video is richer than audio: speakers can be seen; their body movements give clues as to meaning; so, do the clothes they wear, their location, etc. Background details can be supplied in visually."

Despite that, [17] in his article "A Review of the Literature on the Integration of Technology into the Learning and Teaching of English Language Skills" states that educators' attitudes toward new teaching methodologies influence their strategies in the classroom. Thus, even if students are willing to learn through innovative technological methods, teachers might affect the students' motivation to participate in the learning process, which is an essential factor, so it may become a disadvantage of using films in a classroom.

Moreover, there are some disadvantages to the use of films as a communicative strategy namely that without adequate resources, students can easily get distracted. This would cause teaching to be relegated to the background and the film would no longer serve as an educational resource. In addition, designing activities correlated to the curricular plan of the subject may take more time since including films requires educators' research on what kind of films are recommended as educational material for teaching adults. [6]

**Table 1 Advantages and Disadvantages of the Use of Films to improve Listening Skills**

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Improvements in the student's fluency development.</li> <li>✓ Films are more sensory than texts.</li> <li>✓ Films tend to motivate people.</li> <li>✓ Students can understand better in context.</li> <li>✓ Video is richer than audio.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Students can easily get distracted.</li> <li>✓ Including films requires educators' research which takes time.</li> <li>✓ Educators' attitudes toward new teaching methodologies influence the use of films as a teaching-learning resource.</li> </ul>

For those authors, not only the films could be quite time-consuming which would cause students not to pay attention but also confusing for the students because the level of language spoken may be beyond the students' listening comprehension at A2.1 level. Added to this is the fact that commonly in films the cast often shortens sentences and uses many contractions which would become a barrier to students' learning and listening skills development. That is why fragments of films are necessary to adapt students to learn in that way. With film clips, students will catch the idea easily and the learning effect will be quick in comparison with the whole movie.

### Methodology

Based on the objectives of this research project, the use of the qualitative method is presented, in which it is imperative to conduct an interview focused on the use of films as a communicative activity for the development of listening skills. The qualitative method is defined by its focus on the humanistic approach to understanding the beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and experiences of the target audience. [10] Therefore, a reliable and comprehensive research strategy is used to accomplish the needs of the project.

#### Type of Research

A phenomenological study of specific delimitation to analyze characteristics of a population and the viability of the investigation of the use of a modern alternative such as film clips as an activity for learning a foreign language is aimed to be accomplished as a type of research. According to [19], Phenomenology is a philosophical method of reflection and research that aims to understand the lived experiences of a human being. It allows visualization and reflection in a way that

enables it to be appropriated to the construction and orientation of a project or case study.

The phenomenological research method is used in this research in relation to the topic and problem stated as the deficiency in the development of listening skills and how film clips are an alternative and contemporary activity for this process; the collection of experiences by the target audience is necessary. The aim of the interview is to focus on a group of students from module III of the language center.

#### Data Collection Techniques

According to the Britannia dictionary, the technique is defined as the set of rules, procedures, and/or protocols that are implemented to fulfill a specific and specific objective. This concept can be applied to various areas, from art, computers, and sports, to science and nearly any human commotion. The techniques are considered by relying on unceasing practice and exercise. They involve certain kinds of aids and abilities, whether knowledgeable, corporeal, or otherwise, as well as the use of special tools. This research is aimed to use a focus group interview.

[26], state that a focus group is a technical strategy used in detailed interviews of a specific population sample focusing on the topic on which information is expected to be obtained based on the criteria and experiences of the interviewees. Therefore, participants must meet a series of requirements such as being in the same age range, studying, or working in the same environment. This approach is applicative since the sample subjects are selected based on the above-mentioned requirements. The focus groups provide diverse points of view depending on the perspective of the individuals.

To ensure that the evidence provided is clear, a data analysis procedure must be carried out so that everything needs to be properly documented and understandable. This will allow future researchers to verify findings, increase the rigor of the research and preserve against selective perception. To achieve these objectives, sufficient data must be available to allow the construction of an evidence trail.

#### Instruments

The main instrument of this project is a focused interview with a group of students. An interview is understood as a conversational modality aimed at achieving specific objectives. During the interview, the interviewer asks and formulates a series of questions directed to the sample population, through these pre-selected individuals it is anticipated to obtain intelligible answers that assist the researcher to have a clearer vision of the project. [16] Thus, the interview is required as sociological field research based on the experience of the students.

### Questionnaire

An adequate questionnaire should be unbiased, able to answer the researcher's doubts, and without leading questions (unambiguous). One of the key steps of an ethical questionnaire is in the design, selecting inclusive elements is as relevant as the presentation of the questionnaire. In the first instance, a draft should be prepared to evaluate the type of questions that fit the research, and then the interview can be conducted. [29]

The questionnaire consists of a series of questions created for a focus group. It contains six open and closed questions which students are expected to answer honestly based on their experience. The questions are in a specific order in relation to the qualitative research variables. The application will be carried out virtually through a Zoom meeting where the selected students will be recorded with their consent for better data collection and analysis.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to examine the students' preferences, their past experiences, and how the use of films as a communicative activity influences the development of their listening skills. In this way, the students will be involved in their teaching-learning process which involves an alternative and innovative educational design that involves learners becoming capable of working with the activity in a meaningful form.

### Data Collection Processing and Resources

The interview was conducted through a Zoom session in which the participation of the students was successful. It was performed on Friday, July 8th of the current year to the students of Petroleum Engineering 5/1 who receive module III in the language center of the Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena. The students attend classes in the evenings from 7 to 10 p.m., thus, it was proposed - with the permission of their professor in charge - to conduct the interview from 7 to 8 p.m.

The interview was conducted through a focus group in order to collect information related to the use of film clips to improve their listening skills. Following the qualitative method, the students felt comfortable expressing their opinion based on their experience with English classes. The focus group helped to collect information depending on the views of each student giving different perspectives for a fruitful data analysis.

The aim of the interview goes hand in hand with knowing and analyzing the use of film clips as an activity for the development of students' listening skills. At the same time, to know the preferences of the students since this way they will be able to participate in their own teaching-learning process. This provides a basis for establishing the relevance of the use of film clips in an educational environment.



### Population and Sample

The effectiveness of the application of communication activity is undoubtedly based on how well the target audience is known, hence it is necessary to be aware of the characteristics and qualities of the person or public to whom the message is addressed, in order to address the objectives and goals to which the institution owes its existence as an entity. According to [18], it is significantly beneficial to know the target audience, as well as being the first step in the creation of communication activity, it will make it possible to analyze the type of instruments that could be implemented to achieve the aim of the objective of the institution.

Therefore, under the delimitation of the population sample of the present project, and following the guidelines provided by the university, it was taken as a population sample the 5/1 Petroleum students of the language center who are coursing module III as a requirement for obtaining its degree, since the basis of the research problem arose from an observational study in the 2022-1 cycle through pre-service teaching practices. Hence, of the sample population, 95% of the students participated in the interview providing an effective analysis that corresponds to the method to be used.

### Analysis of Findings

From the interview conducted with the sample population, it is established that each student freely expressed their opinions in relation to the questions, which allows the data analysis to be 100% truthful. Each question is related to the objectives and variables presented in the project, so its development and analysis are fundamental for its interpretation. The students completed the interview in two stages, a questionnaire in Microsoft forms and a brief explanation and oral participation in a zoom meeting.

Interpretation of Data from the Focus Group

**Figure 1 How difficult is it to understand the audio from the books when learning?**



Most frequently used words: unintelligible, fast, practice, complicated, accent.

The interviewees agreed that understanding the audio provided by the books is very difficult for them. Various factors such as accents, pronunciation, contractions, people speaking very fast, and their low level of English which does not allow them to catch complete sentences influence their learning process. Besides the fact that the audios are usually repeated only twice.

**Figure 2 What challenges do you face when developing listening skills?**

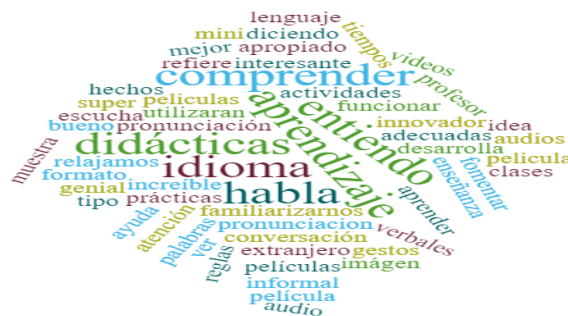


Note. Retrieved from Microsoft Form.

Most frequently used words: understanding, pronunciation, audios, context, conversations.

For the interviewees, one of the biggest challenges in developing their listening skills is understanding the information in the audio. In addition, one hundred percent of the students consider that pronunciation is fundamental when listening and most of them find it difficult due to the different accents that are presented when learning, as well as the differences between words depending on their context. On the other hand, a small number of respondents said that they found it easy to understand pronunciation and accents, but that they found it difficult to comprehend when native speakers are talking quite fast.

**Figure 3 What do you think about film clips as an activity to develop listening skills?**



Note. Retrieved from Microsoft Form.

Most frequently used words: learning, pronunciation, teaching, didactics, innovative.

Film clips as a learning activity in the classroom are a didactic, strategic, and innovative tool for the interviewees. According to the students, it would be highly interesting because in this way they could familiarize themselves with the language and learning would not be monotonous. Film clips would help students to better comprehend each audio if a picture of what it refers to is shown. For them, this would improve their pronunciation because they would be practicing their listening with native speakers of the target language.

**Figure 4 Do you consider learning English through films would be helpful for your listening skills? Why? Why not?**



Note. Retrieved from Microsoft Form.

Most frequently used words: pronunciation, learning, listening, attention, phrases.

One hundred percent of the respondents agreed that it would be beneficial for them to develop their listening skills through film clips. For them, the practice involved in listening comprehension training can be exhausting, but films would improve their reception of language and also help them to better understand the context of certain situations that may be presented in textbooks. Still, many argue that the type of films should be considered since some categories may be too informal for them to learn.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Through the process of collecting information, interviewing, and interpreting data, the reflections of the study vary around the variables and objectives set out. In accordance with the qualitative

phenomenological study, a discussion of the results is made, the reflections and conclusions of which are the following.

In addition, because of the time, it would take an educator to introduce in the lesson planning films that are included in an educational environment, it is more feasible to use film clips to promote the use of vocabulary, phrases, or grammatical structures to help students to improve their listening skills with native speakers. In this way, they will improve their understanding and pronunciation which is fundamental in language acquisition as well as increase their overall linguistic level. On the other hand, the students are enthusiastic about improving their listening skills in class through activities that allow them to feel immersed in an English-speaking environment. Learners say that this will not only help them with their listening but also with what they consider to be extremely necessary, which is pronunciation. Each student learns in a different way, being necessary the use of alternative and participative activities that go beyond the use of the audios provided in the texts, being the first advance in the use of audio-visual materials. Therefore, a relationship is established between listening and speaking through the use of the aforementioned resources.

Furthermore, it is established that there are different types of methodologies and techniques for the use of film clips as an activity to improve students' listening skills. Such as the audio-lingual method and the direct method which function is to use the target language in a classroom which encourages communication and participation of students by making them active participants in their teaching-learning. In addition, various learning theories such as Behaviorism support how behavior influences learning hence different teaching-learning techniques are necessary.

In turn, the relevance of the use of film clips lies in the fact that students believe that through this type of activity they can significantly improve their skills. Focusing on the improvement of listening skills, studies affirm that it is fundamental that audiovisual resources are used from the first instance, as they allow students to communicate effectively in their environment through sight and hearing. In addition, as mentioned above, there are homophonous words that are better understood in context, as well as idiomatic expressions and common English phrases.

This project helped the researchers to learn how to research in a different way. As students, learning is often considered the first instance, but as a teacher one learns to reflect on what one is researching so that it becomes an experience. A set of experiences that consists of applying the knowledge acquired throughout the major and demonstrating that these skills can be applied in the field.

At the same time, as a teacher it is crucial to have vocation, this project was born from the idea of improving the listening skills of petroleum

students in module III. As the research was conducted and supported, the information was obtained, and it became evident that the theory is present, but the practice is not. There are many articles stating that the use of audio-visual materials leads the improvement, even so, most of these articles only show the theory and show that there is a certain unfavorable reaction on the part of the educators. This is because among the disadvantages of using films in class, the fact that students can easily get distracted and their attention diverted from the main objective of learning predominates. That is when vocation opened the way for the researcher to investigate the subject in depth so as not to make mistakes in the future.

Finally, there is a need for further studies related to the topic, field studies where the advantages are reinforced and improvements are proposed to limit the disadvantages. As a researcher, a qualitative in situ study is proposed to develop various activities to be presented in different educational institutions and to be involved in initiating innovation and change for the improvement of students' listening skills.

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