

## **POPULAR INDIAN ANIMATION FILMS & MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS A MORE HUMANISTIC WAY TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE LISTENING SKILLS IN THE CLASSROOM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Listening as a language skill involves receiving language through ears followed by appropriate comprehension & retention of the message or intention of the speaker. In both student and professional life, effective listening makes an individual more productive and efficient. But no such attention is given in developing this crucial language skill in Indian Schools. So it becomes a difficult job for English language teachers like us to motivate learners and develop their listening skills at the under graduate level. The question remains, what could be the ways to develop this Listening skill among our learners [especially engineering students] in a more Humanistic way? Since these learners have no such formal training on developing Listening skill at the school level, the primary task is then to motivate them to listen and to keep them free from any kind of anxiety or threat while practicing listening skills.

In a quantitative method of research it has been found that Popular Indian Animation films help the learners to remain motivated to listen while Multiple Choice Questions instead of fill in the blanks or any other type questions keep the learners free from anxiety or threat. In my paper I focused on the importance of Popular Indian Animation films and Multiple Choice Questions to develop effective Listening Skills in a more Humanistic way.

**KEYWORDS:** Popular Indian Animation Films, Multiple Choice Questions, Humanistic Approach & Listening Skills

### **INTRODUCTION**

Listening as a language skill is one of the most vital yet neglected skill in and outside our Indian classrooms. It is neglected primarily because we take it for granted that learners automatically acquire this skill without any special training. With interactive teaching in the classroom we think we give enough practice in listening to our learners, but classroom interaction and activities may not be enough in learning language skill like listening. Listening as a language skill involves a lot many things than only hearing a language from the teacher or friends and in responding them.

The other problem we face at the undergraduate level especially with the engineering students is that as the engineering students have no or very less orientation in listening as language skill at the school level, a fresh start in teaching and learning Listening Skills to these adult learners becomes a threat to them. During the first few classes these learners seem to be reluctant in learning any language skills whether listening, speaking, reading or writing once again at these undergraduate level, they feel in secured of committing mistakes as adult learners and remain demotivated in learning these language skills as language learning is not their main stream subject for which they have taken admission in these engineering colleges.

The main goal of this research is to see whether popular Indian animation films are a better option to increase the interest of these engineering students to learn language skill like listening and whether Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) is a more humanistic way of teaching and learning listening skills.

## **METHODS & MATERIALS USED**

The research paper is an outcome of a quantitative survey conducted at Global Institute of Management and Technology at Nadia District, West Bengal, India.

The survey includes 40 1<sup>st</sup> year 1<sup>st</sup> semester students of the Institute.

The survey was conducted in five (5) phases.

**Phase 1:** Day 1 Students are asked to listen to an English story **Look What the Cats dug up** (audio file) by Chris Rose and then are asked to answer 9 short answer type questions and 1 question where the student should guess from their own experience the story that might follow. The audio file is of 4 minutes 30 seconds.

**Phase 2:** Day 2 Students are asked to observe and listen to a Hollywood English animation film **Beauty and the Beast** (video file) by Gary Trousdale & Kirk Wise and then are asked to answer 9 short answer type questions and 1 question where the student should guess from their own experience the story that might follow. The video file is of 13 minutes 16 seconds.

**Phase 3:** Day 3 Students are asked to observe and listen to an Indian English animation film **Ramayana; The Legend of Prince Rama** (video file) by Yugo Sako and then are asked to answer 9 short answer type questions and 1 question where the student should guess from their own experience the story that might follow. The video file is of 10 minutes 30 seconds.

**Phase 4:** Day 10 Students are asked to observe and listen to the same Hollywood English animation film **Beauty and the Beast** (video file) by Gary Trousdale & Kirk Wise and then are asked to answer 9 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) and 1 question where the student should guess from their own experience the story that might follow.

**Phase 5:** Day 11 Students are asked to observe and listen to the same Indian English animation film **Ramayana; The Legend of Prince Rama** (video file) by Yugo Sako and then are asked to answer 9 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) and 1 question where the student should guess from their own experience the story that might follow.

For each one of these phases of survey, there was a Pre-Listening Activity, Listening Activity and Post Listening Activity.

In the Pre-Listening Activity, questions were asked and group discussions were held to motivate the students towards listening. As Listening Activity, they were asked to listen to the above mentioned audio and the videos. In the Post-Listening Activity the students were asked to peer review their worksheets and discuss the answers and then give feedback in a feedback form.

At every phase the worksheet was provided early at the pre-listening stage so that the students could get contextualized with the content they are supposed to listen. They were allotted 10 minutes to answer the questions.

The entire audio and the video extract is played only at the end of phase 5 so that the participants may get to know the actual story line that follow in the concerned audio and the videos.

Participants who could not match the actual story line but has guessed and attempted the question were highly appreciated for their creativity.

Every audio, video extracts, worksheet, feedback form is preserved for future reference.

## RESULTS

**Phase 1:** Of all the participants, 27.5% attempted all the 10 questions. However, only 07.50% could write the answers of all the 9 short answer type questions correctly. As a matter of fact none could guess the next story correctly.

Of course there are students who could tell the answers of two or three questions orally but did not try to write them fearing spelling mistakes and faulty sentence structure.

**Phase 2:** The percentage of participation attempting all the 10 questions slightly rises to 32.5%, but the percentage of answering all the 9 short answer type questions correctly were considerably low than before.

Since the video played is from a folktale, so this considerable increase in guessing the next story line. However, there were several spelling mistakes in the story they framed.

In this case too few students could give correct answers to few more short answer type questions which they avoided to write those fearing spelling mistakes and faulty sentence structure.

**Phase 3:** In this case, the percentage of participation attempting all the 10 questions rises considerably to 85%. There is also an increase in percentage of answering all the 9 short answer type questions correctly without spelling mistakes to 52.5%.

As the video played is from the most popular Indian epic, almost all participated in guessing the next story line. 12.5% could not finish the answer and 1 did not attempt.

Out of 85% participants who could finish writing the answer to question No. 10 could frame the storyline correctly but the percentage of students committing spelling mistakes in the story is high too.

As seen earlier, few students could give correct answers to few more short answer type questions, but they avoided to write those fearing spelling mistakes and faulty sentence structure.

**Phase 4:** With 9 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) the percentage of participation in attempting all the 9 questions rises to 90%.

There is also an increase in the percentage of guessing the next storyline up to 45% compared to the earlier 32.5%.

The increase in guessing the storyline may be due to repetition of the same video and extra time they could save after answering the MCQs.

There are no cases of correct oral answers or any avoidance from attempting to answer the questions (especially the MCQs) out of fear of spelling mistakes or faulty sentence structure.

**Phase 5:** For this popular Indian animation film extract and Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) the percentage of participation in attempting all the 9 questions rises to 97.5%.

There is also a considerable increase in percentage of guessing the next storyline up to 97.5% too.

The increase in guessing the storyline may be due to repetition of the same video and extra time they could save after answering the MCQs and their familiarity with epic.

There are no cases of correct oral answers or any avoidance from attempting to answer the questions (especially the MCQs) out of fear of spelling mistakes or faulty sentence structure.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

### **Teaching Listening as Language Skills**

#### **Listening as Language Skill Defined**

Listening as Language Skill is not hearing. While hearing is more an 'involuntary physical process' (Busby and Major, 1987) of sensing sound waves through ears, listening is a conscious and voluntary mental process of perceiving the auditory stimulus or a set of related aural and visual stimuli followed by its comprehension and preservation.

Frederick S Berg (1987) has explained these phases as 'detection, discrimination, recognition and comprehension of speech through audition, vision, or both in combination.'

Listening therefore involves four separate but interrelated processes:

- **Attention:** Remaining mentally and physically motivated to listen with unbiased concentration to the speaker's words and silence.
- **Hearing:** Receiving visual and or verbal stimuli [the speaker's expression and message] through eyes and ears.
- **Understanding:** Assigning meaning to the messages received.
- **Remembering:** Keeping of meaningful information in the mind to recall and review at a later time.

An active and efficient listener then is the one who attends to the speaker's words and silent expressions; could determine his/her intention appropriately and holds the information for future references.

#### **Learners at Technological Institutes**

In most of the technological Institutes, especially in the suburbs of West Bengal, most of the learners are from Bengali/Hindi medium schools and they speak Bengali/Hindi as first language. Their interest for education is primary to get a job. Learning English language is secondary to them. A slight inclination for the subject is shown by them only to crack interviews.

#### **Major Challenges Faced by Language Teachers**

The major challenge lies in the fact that these learners have no or very minimum exposure to English as a language. With constant use of vernacular in and outside the classroom in schools and at college, their ear remains unaccustomed to English. So, they fail to recognize an English sound and fail to read the lips of English speakers.

#### **Practicing Listening in the Classroom**

Considering the entry level aptitude and behavior of such learners it becomes very essential to for any language teacher to practice listening skills with certain considerations –

- The learners should not feel any threat to get into the classroom and practice the language skills.
- The learners should feel good inside the language classroom or the laboratory for the class or practice.
- The learners should remain motivated to listen to the content.
- The learners should enjoy listening to the content.
- The learners should also learn the strategies to develop the skill while listening.

So, once into the language classroom or laboratory, we have to be magicians every moment. The task of maintaining an interesting classroom consistently definitely calls for better understanding of the learner's variables and sentiment. From topic selection to delivery, task formation to task presentation and execution, we have to be selective and considerate.

### **The Contents for Listening or the Listening Tasks**

World wide, listening skills are primarily practiced in classroom with the help of audio files only. Institutes with Language Laboratory play audio files in audio players while others without the Language Laboratory practice listening by giving oral dictations.

In our Institute, Global Institute of Management and Technology, Krishnanagar, India, we do not have a proper Language Laboratory, yet to make things interesting and effective we try to facilitate listening skills practice through audio and video files.

In my experiment I have selected the following audio and video files.

- Audio file **Look What the Cats Dug Up** by Chris Rose.
- Animation video file **Beauty and the Beast** by Gary Trousdale & Kirk Wise
- Animation video file **Ramayana; The Legend of Prince Rama** by Yugo Sako

### **With the Audio File**

#### ***With Audio File Look What the Cats Dug up by Chris Rose. [Phase 1]***

After a short pre-listening session I played the audio file **Look What the Cats Dug Up** by Chris Rose, recorded and released online by the British Council.

During the pre-listening session, a worksheet comprising of 1 fill in the blank question, 8 short answer type questions and 1 long answer type question to frame the story next was distributed so that they may contextualize themselves with the content.

Following results could be observed

- Of all the participants, 27.5% attempted all the 10 questions.
- Only 07.50% could write the answers of all the 9 short answer type questions correctly.
- And none could guess the next story correctly.

- Most of them showed evidences of getting into the content of the audio file after few initial seconds as none could answer the first fill in the blank question correctly.
- However, those who attempted the question seem to have problems with the accent of the British lady and with her narration speed.
- In question where they have to listen to more than one content words the percentage of remembering the first content word is very high.
- There are several spelling mistakes, incomplete sentences and incomplete sense and grammatical mistakes in the answer.
- There were starts to the answer but no proper finish to them.
- Few answers are based on wild guesses too.

Apart from the above findings some learners show accuracy in answering two or three questions orally but did not try to write them fearing mistakes and lack of confidence.

#### **With the Video Files**

##### ***With Animation Video File Beauty and the Beast by Gary Trousdale & Kirk Wise. [Phase 2]***

After a short pre-listening session I played the animation video file **Beauty and the Beast** by Gary Trousdale & Kirk Wise.

During the pre-listening session, a worksheet comprising of 9 short answer type questions and 1 long answer type question to frame the story next was distributed so that they may contextualize themselves with the content.

Following results could be observed:

- The percentage of participation attempting all the 10 questions slightly rises to 32.5%.
- But the percentage of answering all the 9 short answer type questions correctly were considerably low than before.
- Since the video played is from a folktale, so this considerable increase in guessing the next story line.
- There are still evidences that showed that learners taking more time for getting into the content in the few initial seconds as none could answer the first question correctly.
- The learners seem to get involved more into the video than the listening content in this phase.
- However, it is due to the video part, they could try attempting more questions than before.
- Learners showed evidences of guessing the contents more often from the video where they failed to listen.
- However, the learners complained of loud background music and speedy conversation with foreign accent.
- There are several spelling mistakes, incomplete sentences and incomplete sense and grammatical mistakes in the answers.

Apart from the above findings some learners show accuracy in answering two or three questions orally but did not try to write them fearing mistakes and lack of confidence.

***With Animation Video File Ramayana; The Legend of Prince Rama by Yugo Sako. [Phase 3]***

After a short pre-listening session I played the animation video file **Ramayana; The Legend of Prince Rama** by Yugo Sako.

During the pre-listening session, a worksheet comprising of 9 short answer type questions and 1 long answer type question to frame the story next was distributed so that they may contextualize themselves with the content.

Following results could be observed:

- The percentage of participation attempting all the 10 questions slightly rises to 85%.
- There is a considerable increase in the percentage of answering all the 9 short answer type questions to 52.5%.
- As the video played is from the most popular Indian epic Ramayan almost all could guess the next story line.
- There are no such particular evidence to show that learners taking more time for getting into the content.
- Learners seem more confident from the very beginning and were more attentive to listen to the content.
- In this case learners' attention towards the video part could not overlap their attention for the listening content.
- Learners showed evidences of guessing the contents more correctly where they failed to listen.
- There are less complains of loud background music and speedy conversation with foreign accent.
- However, there are several spelling mistakes, incomplete sentences and incomplete sense and grammatical mistakes in the answers.

## **TEACHING LISTENING AS LANGUAGE SKILLS IN A MORE HUMANISTIC WAY**

### **Humanism Defined**

Humanism emphasized the role of human emotions, thoughts and feelings, which shape human learning. The humanistic approach tries to understand mental states through subjective experience rather than objective experimental study.

The key assumptions of humanistic psychology are:

- The significance of conscious awareness.
- The human capacity for personal agency.
- Each person is a whole.

Humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers advocated an educational approach where teaching and learning become meaningful and personal for learners. He believed that human beings have a potential for learning and a natural desire to learn. It is the responsibility of educators to create conditions for facilitating learning among learners.

His educational philosophy is based on certain key humanistic learning principles.

- Authentic engagement in the classroom.
- Learner's active initiative in the learning process.
- Learner's perception of learning as of real-life value.
- Learning environment free from threat.

So, it the responsibility is on the teachers who should create an atmosphere of warmth and trust wherein learners can freely experiment, take risks without worrying and constantly update ones knowledge, discover resources and test them.

### **Popular Indian Animation Films a Humanistic Approach**

Practicing Listening comprehension with an audio file has its own advantage of keeping the learner's attention only to the listening content than to the video part.

But practicing Listening comprehension with a video file is a more humanistic approach. Following are the advantages of practicing listening skills with popular Indian animation films like **Ramayana; The Legend of Prince Rama, The Pandavs in Hiding, Hanuman or Hanuman to the Rescue**

- With popular Indian animation films learners remain mentally and emotionally motivated to listen to the content.
- The slow paced story and action sequences of these animated cartoon films imposes very little or no distractions while listening.
- The moderate and distinctive musical clues and the prominent expressions or sketch of the characters always provide useful insight to the listener's mind.
- Indian learners are not alien to these popular Indian animation films as most of them have at least a slight acquaintance with these ancient Indian mythologies and Epics.
- So, the learners could easily and immediately relate to the film which is quite difficult to establish with other Hollywood animation films or audio extracts.
- The dialogues are in General Indian English (GIE) and are spoken by Indians. So, accent problem is always at its minimum.
- Irrespective of the learner's habitual mindset, ego or prejudice, popular animation films help the listeners to moderate their personal demands with lighter moments. With these animation films they adopt willingness to listen and enjoy.
- Unlike audio files where they have no other options but to listen only, learners feel more comfortable and threat free while listening and enjoying an animation film.

So, with popular Indian animation films learners could be thoroughly engaged into learning all the skills of listening in classroom. The learners are more actively involved with all their emotions, thoughts and feelings while listening to such popular animation film extracts. And as they are getting a chance to observe and listen they get a chance to trust on their own abilities and freely experiment without worrying.

### Multiple Choice Questions and Humanism

In **Phase 4 & Phase 5**, I asked my learners to observe and listen to the same Hollywood English animation film **Beauty and the Beast** (video file) by Gary Trousdale & Kirk Wise and the same Indian English animation film **Ramayana; The Legend of Prince Rama** (video file) by Yugo Sako respectively and then asked to answer 9 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) and 1 question where the student should guess from their own experience the story that might follow.

In both case following results could be observed:

- With 9 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) the percentage of participation in attempting all the 9 questions rises to 90% for the Hollywood English animation film **Beauty and the Beast** and 97.5% for the Indian animation film **Ramayan; The Legend of Prince Rama**.
- Learners could answer maximum question correctly as they have at least three to four options from where they could choose.
- There was no provision to guess the listening content from the video.
- They could easily practice the top-down or bottom-up technique of language processing with the help of the audio and video part on screen and the given options at the worksheet.
- Learners could save enough time to narrate the next story to follow.

Considering the entry level aptitude and behavior of the engineering students here in this remote part of the West Bengal where maximum learners are taking direct admission with the minimum qualifying marks of only 45% in science and 30% in English, it would be a tough ask to make them answer question from audio files and to write them in full sentences.

Since these learners have very few or no orientation in listening as language skill at their school level, practicing listening skills in classroom or language laboratory for the first time to these adult learners [age group in between 19 to 22 years] would be truly a difficult task. However, with popular Indian animation films and multiple choice questions (MCQ) the learning environment is free from threat where learners have an authentic engagement in the classroom and are actively involved in the learning process.

### CONCLUSIONS

Teaching English Language skills especially to engineering students may be a difficult task. But being a facilitator in the language classroom or in language laboratory we have to be innovative.

Considering the entry level behavior, age group and other variables of the engineering learners we should be more humanistic in the teaching learning process. We should inculcate conscious awareness among the learners in learning the language skills especially listening skills; facilitate a learning environment free from threat where authentic engagement of learners with active participation in the classroom is possible and where learners get to learn something of real-life value.

Perhaps the popular Indian animation films and multiple choice questions (MCQ) is the tool that would help developing effective listening skills in the classroom in a more humanistic way.

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