The Impacts of Lyrics Training on Improving Listening Skills for ESL Students

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Abstract

This study found out the impacts of the apps Lyrics Training on learning and teaching Listening skills. A few papers still researched this app and its impact on how students learn the English Language. The qualitative research happened in two weeks with the content analysis method. The researcher collected all highlighted points from the available papers, affecting the learning process. Furthermore, Lyrics Training is a beautiful app because it helps students to achieve their learning goals via music and detect new beautiful songs to add to their playlists. Therefore, it is an ideal tool for teachers to consider applying in their Listening class. After the research process, the researcher will analyze its pros/cons. She also suggested effective ways of learning the Listening skill and teaching this skill with Lyrics Training in class.

Keywords: MALL, listening skill, mobile apps, Lyrics Training, music, ESL learners

Introduction

Background of the study

Nowadays, most Vietnam companies require their candidates to have good English, especially listening skills. As we can see, students now are not only learning to listen to English via their coursebook's CD. They can gain the technics of listening efficiently from different sources like movies, podcasts, and clips in which the contents come from various domains like food and drink, travel, arts and history, etc. However, there is also one more kind of material that we should not skip as it can make students practice listening comfortably. That is the app called "Lyrics Training". According to Mashayekh & Hashemi (2011), music connects people all over the world and lets people learn English in a comfortable atmosphere. It also reduces the pressure and stress in the class. In addition, it may shorten the distance between teachers and students. Listening is a difficult skill. It is a barrier for students to achieve high scores when learning English (Harmer, 2010). In Vietnam, listening has been an underrated skill in most schools. It is because the curriculum of English teaching mainly focused on exam-driven construction (Tham et al., 2019), so they failed in doing the English listening test because they had few chances and types of exercise to practice independently (Thi & Hoang, 2013). Therefore, this app was established to inspire students to learn listening skills when they can practice gap-

filling exercises by listening to some world hits. They can also add the songs they learned to their playlist for listening in their free time.

Statement of the problem

Nowadays, listening skills have become an essential skill that students should pay attention to when they learn a new language. All over the world, there are various books and papers of academic materials from famous publishing houses and universities. However, it will be boring to learn from only one type of material, which contains monotonous daily speeches and conversations. Therefore, changing the form of learning materials into lively songs is necessary for the teachers to make a better learning period.

Aims of the study

This study explores the impacts of the app Lyrics Training on students' listening skills. Simultaneously, it also provides suggestions for applying the app to a Listening class as a good source of materials that can make students enjoy learning this skill.

Significance of the study

Most previous research has shown this app's drawbacks and advantages for learning to speak and listen. However, they still need more solutions to make a practical class with this app, and this research seems like an excellent supplement for the app research.

In particular, this paper suggests that teachers use one app to design efficient and exciting teaching materials for their listening classes. However, students may get bored quickly if they only listen to the academic tapes that their teachers or the university provide. This article hopes to make Lyrics Training the ideal suggestion for teachers and students in teaching and learning listening skills.

Scope of the study

Because of the limitations of time and available materials, the author only focuses on the impacts of the apps Lyrics Training on the English teaching and learning process.

Literature review

Introduction to Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

As we know, many researchers worldwide proposed different definitions of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). According to Miangah & Nezarat (2012), MALL uses gadgets in language learning. This app lets students spend less time in the classroom or in front of computer/laptop screens to learn for many hours per day. Therefore, it seems ideal to conduct two interactions: student-student and student-teacher when students can do the teamwork with their friends in class and also show their opinions about the lesson to the teachers.

Yang (2013) stated that MALL is a small subdivision of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). This method uses advanced mobile applications to develop language skills. Moreover, Kim et al. (2017) showed that the first MALL was used in the 1980s when Twarog and Pereszleyi used the mobile phone to organize the distance learning class with feedback and

support. On the contrary, Valarmathi (2011) emphasized that mobile devices play a vital role in modern education and can create the best learning environment for a language class. This learning method integrates pocket electric dictionaries, personal digital assistants, mobile phones, mp3 players, tablets, and PCs (Zhao, 2005). Nuraeni et al. (2020) described MALL as the latest learning method that combines technologies and traditional learning methods. Finally, Linh & Khuyen (2022) also emphasized that MALL can let students concentrate in the lesson when they must learn via an online platform during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lyrics Training Apps

According to Augusto & García (2012), Lyrics Training is a tool that provides ESL learners with learning sources that stick with learners in real life. To use this app, learners need to prepare a gadget, a good internet connection, and the predisposition to achieve the goals in learning.

Meilinda (2019) stated that Lyrics Training is also an app that uses songs inserted from YouTube. It aims to provide funny ways for students to practice their listening skills in English and other languages. It helps students learn six languages: English, Spanish, German, French, Italian, and Dutch).

Garlaza (2022) also showed that Lyrics Training is a free technological resource for students and teachers. It encourages students to practice listening skills by themselves when they are free.

Garib (2021) listed six outstanding features of the Lyrics Training such as: home-page features, the game-opening page, the game in progress, and the game score.

Home-page features

This page displays some featured music videos, "Try it". The content on this page will be updated frequently every time new songs are released, and all new ones will be put into the playlist called "Latest Lyric". On the other hand, the most popular videos that have been replayed many times will be added to the "Top Lyrics" area, which is located on the bottom-right of the screen, and the viewer can find it by the artist's name and song lyric on the tools.

Game opening page

In this game, learners can choose among thousands of selections of songs. The music video will be shown without the lyrics by pressing the "play" button. On the other hand, when learners press the button "Karaoke", the song with the lyrics will appear. There are three levels for this game. In the beginner, students should complete at least 10% of the blank. Similarly, the intermediate levels will require students to finish with a score of 25%, and the expert mode will be 100%.

Game in progress

When the video plays, students are required to complete the gap-filling exercise. The exercise can only be completed if students meet all of the blanks. There is also a tool for counting the words the users have yet to see. In addition, if students would like to quit the game, they can select "withdraw".

Game score

After finishing, the game will automatically show the scores and the number of words students have missed.

Why choose Lyrics Training

According to Garib (2021), Lyrics Training is a free app that provides learners with 32 different types of music, with two million users in nearly 13 languages. It gives students multiple choices to learn the languages they like via listening to music and doing a task about the song's grammar points. This app can help students improve their listening skills, pronunciation, lexical grammar, and language expressions.

There are a lot of differences that can make this app becomes different in academic life. Azhari & Adnan (2018) showed that in the class, students only learn by listening via scholarly conversation and watching the news on TV passively. They need to join in interactive activities to practice their knowledge. The researcher chose this app because she hoped to let it contribute more attractive materials for students, like some songs and music videos, which can make their learning process enjoyable.

Then thanks to Aldas (2020), this app can improve students' listening and speaking skills via segmental and supra-segmental features. It is a tool that can avoid the monotony in the classes. It is a good representation of the modern English classroom nowadays.

Benefits of music in learning language

According to Lems (2016), watching musical performances can help students learn about Western culture and improve their vocabulary when they hear the content of the songs.

Next, Romé (2014) has shown that music produces a vibration that connects the brain to provide the learning process. It can increase the students' concentration with speaking and listening ability.

Mora (2000) stated that music creates a rich condition for learning listening skills by improving the awareness of rhythms, sounds, stresses, and intonations.

Rosová (2007) also emphasized that songs can teach all skills like speaking, listening, vocabulary, grammar and writing.

Millington (2011) added that songs could be used to teach sentence structure and sentence patterns in the classroom and reinforce the questions that teachers taught.

The effective ways of teaching and learning Listening Skills

English (1979) listed different ways for students and teachers to teach and learn listening skills effectively. Regarding learning methods, students should take about 15 minutes daily to listen to speeches, songs, and conversations in English. Then they should practice repeating the records to learn the new words, which helps do the listening tests when they can deeply save all the latest words in the tape in their brain.

Using the mobile apps is also an ideal way for students and teachers in learning and teaching Listening Skills. According to Luu et al. (2021), mobile learning apps let students to be more

active in their learning process when they can learn whenever and wherever they like. Besides, it also helped students to become more confident in doing Listening test and also in communicating with the foreigners. Then, it corrected the students' mistakes when they did the exercises and made their products looks more perfect.

Simultaneously, Hardiah & Bengkulu (2020) also analyzed the teacher's roles in the Listening class. Firstly, the teacher should be a guide and the learning program designer who can design the teaching plan suitable for the students. Secondly, teachers should apply authentic materials like music and movies into their teaching plan to diversify the knowledge they would like to provide to their students.

On the other hand, (Anugerah et al., 2019) also suggests how teachers apply music to their teaching plan. Firstly, they should use laptops, MP3 players, or cassette tapes to serve the teaching purpose. These tools will help the students recognize the different accents of English by hearing the English sounds the native speakers speak. Then, to make this process more convenient, teachers should let students listen to a simple kids' song to motivate their brains to learn.

From another viewpoint, (Mobbs & Cuyul, 2018) have shown two methods teachers can use for applying music to teaching English listening: global listening and Presenting in song. In global listening, this method means using the world's hits which contains different speech pattern of sounds like unstressed endings, articles, inflections and tones, and function words such as prepositions or conjunctions. This method allows students to engage with the songs' meaning and content easily. Then, we can use the technic "Highlighting the fluency and accuracy presented in pieces for students to learn the new grammar rules. In this method, teachers should choose a song with a high level of accuracy in language to introduce to the students.

Related studied

A few articles study the Lyrics Training apps; below are all the papers that the researcher has collected.

The first researcher, Augusto & García (2012), learn about how students use the Lyrics Training app. This research was conducted on the participation of 20 participants (17 beginners and three pre-intermediates) at the Universidad Veracruzana. The experiments contain two rounds with exercises and questionnaires. As a result, the researchers find out that this app helps them to improve their pronunciation and listening skills. Besides, students have a wider variety of songs to choose from (besides the pieces inside the coursebook), making them interested in learning English and listening skills. In contrast, this researcher also felt disappointed that there are some unknown words and spelling ways.

The second one, Angelina (2020) learns about the impacts of strengths and drawbacks of Lyrics Training. It was conducted at the English Language Educational Study Program of Sonata Dharma University in the last four months of 2019. Thirty students join in this experiment. It contains two steps, like the Likert scale and opened-ended questions. Finally, the result showed that there were two advantages and one disadvantage. The first advantage is that it can help students to increase their learning motivation when it reduces their pressure in learning

Listening skills; the second is that they can remember the song's lyrics they like. The disadvantage, it still contains many advertisements, and sometimes it loses the clues.

Then the third researcher, Dharmawan et al. (2019) has done the research with 34 freshmen of Universitas Bandar Lampung, who have been learning English for 12 years but they still confused about listening. So they joined the study with observation from the teachers, questionnaires, and interviews. As a result, most students showed that they were pleased with using this software, which motivated them to learn English. Besides, it makes them concentrate more deeply on the lesson.

The next researcher, (Wahyuni et al., 2019) researched the use of Lyrics Training to improve listening comprehension. First, they examined a group of Indonesian sophomores who have a high level. After finishing the process, students can acquire knowledge of relative pronouns, vocabulary, auxiliary, modal verbs, and listening skills.

Finally, Dixon & King (2016) also researched the technology use of Lyrics Training. They use the content analysis method. Ultimately, they discover this app is better for university students than younger ones. It can also engage their concentration in the lesson well. Next, the way students play this app is also easy, from the path of choosing the app's language and the game's level. It also has various kinds of music that students can choose.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, this paper aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What advantages and disadvantages does the Lyrics Training bring to English-Majored students?

2. How can the teachers effectively apply the Lyrics Training to the English Listening class?

Methods

Design of the Study

This study will use the qualitative method with the content analysis process to save time. The researcher will collect some great points from the available papers related to this content in about one month and analyze them to serve the purpose of this research: learning about the impacts of Lyrics Training and music on improving students' listening skills. Collecting the opinions of the participants is difficult.

Results/Findings and discussion

Benefits of using Lyrics Training

According to Angelina (2020), Lyrics Training can bring students two benefits, including improving students' academic knowledge, especially some factors related to speaking, pronunciation and listening. It includes pronunciation, accent, and amounts of vocabulary. In addition, the game design is also friendly to the players. For example, the music will pause when students give any wrong answer until they get the correct one. Finally, the score will be

saved on the leaderboard to let them compete to improve their skills.

Simultaneously, Dharmawan et al. (2019) listed some more benefits of Lyrics Training, in which some tools will directly impact each skill of the English learning process. In particular, multimedia exercises will help students maintain an excellent ability to use vocabulary. Next, movies and TV shows available on the app will help students improve their communicative competence and use language and grammar more smoothly. Then, it is beneficial when the video stops because it gives students time to think about what they have heard at the last attempts. The final benefit is the social networking tool, in which they can share the game's result with their friends and followers on Facebook and Twitter.

After that, Augusto & García (2012)also showed that the methods of playing music and activities allow them to hear the song they like. From that, they may learn about what the words inside it sound like. It also helps them to improve their pronunciation. Furthermore, there are also a lot of song lyrics along with activities that the students can choose to learn. When they are free to choose the learning content, they will have more interest in their learning.

Setiawan et al. (2019) also showed Lyrics Training could provide students with significant visual stimuli via the combination of illustrations, sounds, graphics, and texts. This app is also a cultural bridge where the students can watch many movies. Some sounds and film subtitles in Lyric Training can affect the fluency of the students' pronunciation skills and glossaries. Besides, the actors' body language will help the students gain knowledge more efficiently.

Disadvantages of Lyrics Training

According to Dizon & Gayed (2021), although Lyrics Training has many advantages, there are still some disadvantages. Firstly, the grade students receive after finishing one activity sometimes does not fit their level (this disadvantages did not always happen, so it did not affect the trustworthy level of the app). Secondly, some users who were at the beginner and pre-intermediate level have shown that some activities prevented them from understanding the lesson clearly. Besides, listening to the songs they do not like also disappoints them.

Then Angelina (2020) also listed two more drawbacks this app brought to the students. Firstly, the pop-up advertisement from the Flash Player, the software that runs this app, appears continuously, which can control the concentration of the students. Next, sometimes the clues are disappeared from the exercises, which causes misunderstanding for students to repeat the English sounds that they only heard once.

After that, Dixon & King (2016) also showed some other disadvantages of this app. First, it uses Flash Player, which is insecure for most internet browsers. Students should turn on the cookies to continue to access the site. Cookies are used for tracking the user's habits to set up the website and collect the data. Then, some MV contains adult content. Therefore, it is sometimes confusing for high school or first-year students to use without the teacher's control.

Using Lyrics Training as a tool of teaching and learning listening skill

Teachers and students can use this app for creating an effective Listening Skill class at the campus. The gap-filling exercises taken from this app can help students practice listening in three stages: pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. This kind of exercise aims to help

students improve the skill of listening for gist, detail, and specific information.

Besides, this app is also suitable for a teacher to design classroom activities. According to Wahyuni et al.(2019), teachers can let students listen to the main grammar points in the songs they like and analyze their meaning. For example, they can hear the song "Somebody that I used to know" by Belgian-Australian singer Gotye, which won a Grammy award in 2013. Then, they find out all the relative clauses "which"," that", and "who" in that song and find out each word's meaning as well as learn the new vocabulary in it.

Simultaneously, Erasmus+ (2022) suggests one more way for teachers and students to apply this app in offline classes; it is a prerequisite. Then, the teacher sends the lyrics paper of that song to students and asks them to listen to it and fill the lyrics into the gaps on the paper. Then the teacher will use the paper without gaps to check students' answers.

Discussion

In this integration era, listening and speaking skills become essential in teaching and learning a foreign language, especially with a lingua franca like English. However, it will be very boring if the students only learn listening skills with the coursebook and audio CDs. Therefore, the establishment of mobile apps and or mobile learning is really helpful for students to learn Listening skills, both in class or at home (Van et al., 2021) . In particular, Lyrics Training is a new evolution of Learning English, especially in listening skills, when it lets students learn English via music on the mobile phone. As we know, learning English via this app helps students become more interested in the contents of the lessons than the traditional materials.

Nowadays, music has become an essential part of our lives. It joins in many aspects like jobs, entertainment and learning, so avoiding music, especially US-UK music, from learning English is hard (Kuśnierek, 2016). To make the English listening process with music and Lyrics Training apps more effective, teachers should know how to design tasks that can apply this app suitably and efficiently.

In addition, our result has shown all the important pros and cons of Lyrics Training and the ways of applying it in the offline classroom. However, because of the limitations of previous studies about this app and other similar apps, the author could not compare it with the others. Therefore, this article only suggests some activities with this app that the teachers can hold in the traditional class.

Last but not least, most of the previous research has shown the drawbacks and advantages of this app for learning to speak and listen. However, they still lack the solutions to make a practical class with this app, and this research seems like an excellent supplement for the app research.

Conclusion

Lyrics Training has provided students and teachers with many advantages in learning and teaching English, especially listening skills. Therefore, this app is ideal for teachers to prepare

and develop teaching materials. Likewise, Lyrics Training also provides the students with a good source of exercises they can practice at home and entertain with the music simultaneously.

The paper also provides teachers and students with suggestions for effectively using it at home and in class.

Finally, the researcher will try hard to get her students' opinions and attitudes toward using this app in the following paper. Unfortunately, in this paper, time limitations have prevented her from doing it.

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