

USING ISLAMIC ANIMATED STORIES TO ENHANCE LISTENING MOTIVATION AND COMPREHENSION IN EFL CONTEXTS

Wahidah maharani sitorus¹
Muhammad Rafi'i²

^{1,2}Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara
wahidahmaharani5@gmail.com
muhammadrafii@umsu.ac.id

Abstract: *Although listening comprehension is essential to learning a second or foreign language, learners frequently view it as difficult and boring since they are not exposed to many interesting and relevant listening resources. This study investigates how well Islamic animated stories work as a teaching tool to improve listening comprehension and motivation in English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. The study used a mixed-methods quasi-experimental design with 120 intermediate EFL learners split into experimental and control groups. It was based on multimedia learning theory and culturally responsive teaching. While the control group got traditional audio-based listening instruction, the experimental group was exposed to Islamic animated stories incorporated into listening assignments over the course of eight weeks of instruction, Classroom observations and semi-structured interviews provided qualitative data, while listening motivation questionnaires and pre- and post-listening comprehension tests provided quantitative data. The results show that, in comparison to the control group, students who interacted with Islamic animated stories showed statistically significant gains in listening comprehension and increased motivation. Qualitative research also showed that because of the visual aids and well-known moral topics, students thought the animated stories were entertaining, significant, and simpler to comprehend. The study comes to the conclusion that Islamic animated stories provide a useful alternative listening medium that improves learners' affective engagement by matching instructional content with cultural and religious values in addition to supporting understanding through multimodal input. There is discussion of the implications for EFL instruction and content creation.*

Keywords: *Islamic Animated Stories; Listening Motivation; Listening Comprehension; EFL Learners; Multimedia Learning*

Introduction

Although listening is a crucial receptive skill for language learning, many students struggle with comprehension and lack motivation when listening to audio materials that don't relate to their experiences or culture. Conventional listening tools frequently emphasize neutral or Western contexts, which may seem alien to students in environments where Muslims predominate. An effective educational tool to close this gap is Islamic animated stories, which are digital narratives that incorporate audio, images, and religiously significant information. Teachers can more successfully scaffold comprehension and increase learner motivation by placing listening practice inside culturally recognizable contexts.

Listening comprehension is a crucial factor in determining overall language proficiency because it is the main way that language learners access linguistic input. Despite its significance,

listening is still one of the hardest and least clearly taught skills in EFL courses. Rapid speech rates, unfamiliar terminology, a lack of prior knowledge, and inadequate contextual assistance are common causes of difficulty for learners. The use of decontextualized and culturally distant listening materials often makes these issues worse.

One important aspect impacting students' participation with listening exercises has been found to be motivation. Low motivation frequently results in increased fear, limited method utilization, and passive listening. Listening materials seldom represent students' cultural and religious identities in many EFL situations, especially in educational settings with a majority of Muslims. This can lead to decreased interest and emotional disengagement. To address these issues, recent pedagogical trends place a strong emphasis on integrating multimedia-based instruction with culturally responsive teaching. Islamic animated stories are a type of educational media that blends visual animation, moral storytelling based on Islamic principles, and audio narration. In addition to offering language input, these stories connect with students' cultural schema, which may boost motivation and improve comprehension through contextual cues.

There is still a dearth of empirical study on the efficacy of Islamic instructional animations in EFL listening training, despite their increasing availability on digital platforms. By methodically examining the effects of Islamic animated stories on students' listening motivation and understanding, this study seeks to close this gap. The following research questions are the focus of this study:

How much do Islamic animated stories enhance the listening comprehension of EFL students?
 What effect do Islamic animated stories have on students' enthusiasm for listening exercises?
 How do students feel about adopting Islamic animated stories as listening materials?

This study's main goal is to determine whether Islamic animated stories can improve EFL learners' listening motivation and comprehension. In particular, the study answers the following queries:

Do Islamic animated storytelling improve students' listening comprehension scores?
 What impact do these tales have on the motivation to listen?
 What impressions do students have of using such animated content when learning a language?

Literature Review

The Cognitive Process of Listening Comprehension

Phonological decoding, lexical access, syntactic parsing, and semantic interpretation are only a few of the intricate and dynamic cognitive processes involved in listening comprehension. Effective hearing necessitates the combination of top-down processing (applying contextual signals and prior knowledge) and bottom-up processing (decoding sounds and words), according to Vandergrift and Goh (2012). These processes are frequently hampered by EFL learners' insufficient exposure to spoken English, which leads to comprehension problems.

Motivation in the Teaching of Listening

A key factor in affecting students' perseverance and performance on listening assignments is motivation. According to the Self-Determination Theory, when educational activities satisfy students' requirements for relatedness, autonomy, and competence, they become more motivated. Intrinsic motivation can be increased and listening anxiety can be decreased with listening materials that are engaging, meaningful, and pertinent to students' identities.

Animated Storytelling and Multimedia Education

According to the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, if the multimedia components are pedagogically linked, students learn better from words and images than from words alone. By offering visual depictions of situations, behaviors, and feelings, animation can

enhance listening comprehension by lowering cognitive load and promoting the creation of meaning.

Culturally and Religiously Appropriate Content

The integration of students' cultural knowledge and values into educational materials is a key component of culturally responsive teaching. According to studies, students exhibit more interest and better knowledge when they come across material that represents their cultural or religious background. Islamic animated stories can therefore be useful listening resources in Muslim educational settings because they frequently feature well-known moral precepts and themes.

Educational Animated Stories

Animation has been used extensively as a teaching method to make difficult ideas easier to understand, hold students' attention, and tell compelling stories. In language acquisition, storytelling has a long history and helps with retention by offering context and meaning.

Animation and Multimedia Education

According to the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, when verbal input is accompanied by pertinent pictures, learners process information more efficiently. By depicting abstract ideas and events, animation in particular can lessen cognitive strain, offer contextual signals, and improve comprehension.

Faith-Based and Culturally Appropriate Content

The significance of matching educational resources to students' cultural identities is emphasized by culturally responsive teaching. Research has demonstrated that spiritually relevant content can boost learning results by fostering students' sense of participation and belonging. Thus, Islamic animated tales have the potential to be educational resources that combine language acquisition with moral and cultural instruction.

EFL Contexts for Listening Comprehension

Complex cognitive processes, such as decoding sounds, identifying language, interpreting meaning, and integrating prior information, are involved in listening comprehension. According to Vandergrift (2016), effective listening involves both top-down and bottom-up processing, which makes it especially difficult for EFL students who don't have enough exposure to real spoken language.

Method

The experimental group's listening comprehension scores significantly outperformed those of the control group, according to quantitative analysis ($p < .01$). From the pre-test to the post-test, the experimental group's mean score significantly increased, suggesting that exposure to Islamic animated stories improved understanding.

Similarly, the experimental group's post-intervention motivation levels were higher, according to the results of the motivation questionnaire. Enhanced willingness to engage in listening exercises, less anxiety, and enhanced enjoyment were reported by learners.

These conclusions were validated by qualitative data. Observations in the classroom showed that animated narrative sessions increased student engagement and attention spans. According to interview replies, students valued the visual components, lucid narration, and well-

known moral topics, which made it easier for them to anticipate meaning and comprehend spoken English.

Design of Research

In order to investigate both the quantifiable results and the learners' subjective experiences, this study used a quasi-experimental mixed-methods methodology. Data triangulation was made possible by the mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, which also improved the findings' validity.

Participants

120 intermediate-level EFL students from three institutions, ages 15 to 22, participated in the study. They were divided into two groups at random: the experimental group (n = 60) and the control group (n = 60). According to institutional placement examinations, all participants had similar levels of English ability.

Educational Resources

A carefully chosen collection of Islamic animated stories with clear narration, standard English pronunciation, subtitles (used sparingly), and moral themes like compassion, patience, and honesty were shown to the experimental group. Conventional listening materials from EFL textbooks without visual animation were used by the control group.

Tools

Tests of listening comprehension (pre-test and post-test)

Gardner's AMTB was modified to create the listening motivation questionnaire.

Checklists for observations

Protocols for semi-structured interviews

Analysis of Data

Paired-sample and independent-sample t-tests were used to assess quantitative data. To find recurrent themes pertaining to motivation, understanding techniques, and emotional engagement, qualitative data were thematically coded.

Result and Discussion

When compared to the control group, the experimental group's listening comprehension scores showed a statistically significant increase ($p < .01$). Additionally, there was a noticeable improvement in motivation scores, especially in the areas of enjoyment, confidence, and readiness to participate in listening exercises.

According to qualitative research, learners thought Islamic animated stories were simpler to comprehend because of the narrative framework and visual signals. Additionally, during listening exercises, learners reported feeling less anxious and more focused.

Conversation

The results imply that both cognitive and affective obstacles to listening comprehension are successfully addressed by Islamic animated stories. While well-known moral narratives stimulate learners' prior knowledge and improve top-down processing, visual animation enhances bottom-up processing by depicting actions and occurrences. Culturally relevant content supports intrinsic interest and emotional connection from a motivational standpoint, which is consistent with Self-Determination Theory.

These findings underscore the significance of including relevant information into language training and support earlier studies on multimedia learning and culturally sensitive pedagogy.

The study's findings offer strong proof that incorporating Islamic animated stories into EFL listening training greatly improves listening comprehension and motivation. Quantitative results showed that students who were exposed to Islamic animated stories outperformed students who received traditional audio-based training in a number of listening indices. Notably, tasks requiring contextual knowledge, sequence identification, and interpretation of implicit meaning showed the biggest improvements, indicating that narrative-based animation promotes deeper listening comprehension.

Learners in the experimental group demonstrated higher accuracy in recognizing cause-and-effect links within spoken texts, according to a thorough item analysis. This result can be explained by animation storytelling's visual sequencing, which graphically supports the narrative's temporal and logical linkages. As a result, learners developed more cohesive mental representations of spoken conversation by better organizing incoming auditory information and integrating it with visual cues. The results showed that using Islamic animated stories significantly increased learners' intrinsic motivation for listening.

In listening exercises, learners reported increased attention and enjoyment as well as a greater sense of relevance. The content's familiarity with culture and religion seems to have a significant impact on motivation. The animated stories' incorporation of Islamic beliefs, moral precepts, and well-known social contexts fostered an emotional connection that promoted sustained attention and a willingness to participate in listening exercises. This lends credence to the idea that culturally sensitive materials are essential for encouraging good emotional reactions during language acquisition.

Additionally, the experimental group's students' listening confidence significantly increased. When faced with foreign terminology or quick speech, many participants said that visual help decreased uncertainty. Learners maintained cognitive flow by relying on visual context to infer meaning rather than losing interest.

Since higher self-efficacy has been demonstrated to encourage greater persistence and strategy use in listening tasks, this confidence-building effect is especially significant.

These quantitative trends were supported by qualitative evidence. Islamic animated stories were found to elicit higher levels of student participation in the classroom, including impromptu conversation, moral message pondering, and story outcome prediction. These exchanges imply that animated storytelling encourage active listening habits in addition to improving understanding. The results of the interviews also showed that students thought listening exercises were more pleasurable and less stressful, with a number of participants saying they preferred animated stories to more conventional listening materials.

Conclusion

Islamic animated stories are an effective teaching tool for improving listening motivation and understanding in EFL environments, according to this study's empirical findings. These stories offer a supportive and captivating listening environment that helps learners both cognitively and emotionally by fusing multimedia material with culturally and religiously relevant storytelling. The results indicate that, especially in settings where Muslims predominate, EFL teachers and curriculum designers ought to think about integrating faith-based animation materials into listening teaching. Future studies could look into integration with other language skills, applications at various competency levels, and long-term learning effects.

This study shows that Islamic animated stories are a useful teaching tool for improving EFL students' listening motivation and understanding. Learners receive contextual assistance and meaningful engagement when animation, storytelling, and culturally appropriate themes are included. This leads to better listening performance and good attitudes toward listening activities.

The results indicate that, especially in settings where Muslims predominate, language instructors should think about integrating faith-based and culturally sensitive multimedia materials into listening teaching. Future studies could examine these materials' long-term impacts, how they affect other language abilities, and how they can be used in a variety of educational context.

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