The Impact of Silent and Freeze-Frame Viewing Techniques of Video Materials on the Intermediate EFL Learners’ Listening Comprehension

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Abstract
The use of modern technologies has been widely prevalent among language learners, and video, in particular, as a valuable learning tool provides learners with comprehensible input. The present study investigated the effect of silent and freeze-frame viewing techniques of video materials on the intermediate English as a foreign language (EFL) learners’ listening comprehension. To this end, 45 intermediate EFL learners participated in this quasi-experimental study. The results of one-way ANOVA revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental groups (using two types of viewing techniques) and the control group. While the difference between the two experimental groups was not statistically significant, the experimental groups outperformed the control group significantly.

Keywords
listening comprehension, viewing techniques, silent viewing, freeze-frame viewing, video material

Introduction
Learning a second/foreign language is of utmost importance for the learners in the current era, and being able to communicate with native speakers is the ultimate goal of it. To be able to communicate means to express thoughts, feelings, and information effectively through the four language skills. Listening is a basic skill in first and second language acquisition, and it plays a crucial role in ESL/EFL (English as a second language/English as a foreign language) context. In a language classroom, listening ability plays an important role in the development of other language skills. Therefore, language instructors and students should pay due attention to the listening skill. Nunan (2002) believes that views toward listening skill have changed and today the significant role of listening skill in the development of second language learning is confirmed.

One way to help learners improve their listening is using videos and movies in language classes. Because video materials can be used to serve the purpose of providing comprehensible input, they should be included in language learning programs. Videos can be considered to have the characteristics of comprehensible input based on Krashen’s idea. According to Krashen (2009), we understand language not by using linguistic competence only, but we can also understand language by using our knowledge of the world and extra-linguistic information. When learners watch videos, they can comprehend the message using their background knowledge and also they can use extra-linguistic factors in movies.

Video material is a learning tool which can provide learners with visual, contextual, and non-verbal features and these features can help EFL learners compensate any lack of comprehension. If the students can mix the two ways of processing information, that is, bottom-up and top-down in the listening comprehension in watching the video materials, they can make learning a foreign language more effective and successfully comprehend the message which is the ultimate goal of language learning. Therefore, watching videos with special techniques should be taken into consideration as an important criterion in improving learners’ listening comprehension skill to enhance learning outcomes.

Several researchers revealed that videos can be a learning choice as they provide learners with contextualized and meaningful input (Herron, 1994; Hsu, Hwang, Chang, & Chang, 2013; Potosi et al., 2009).

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Listening as a crucial skill in learning a second language can be best practiced by using videos for second language learners. Learners of English in Iran have numerous listening problems as Iran is not a bilingual country and language learners have no access to native speakers and samples of real language. In addition, the process of listening is not stated and listening is mostly tested rather than being taught, although there is a wide access to listening materials such as CDs or DVDs of English videos (Bozorgian & Pillay, 2013).

The present study, therefore, could pave the way for English language teachers to practice the effect of videos on listening skill of intermediate EFL learners. This study examined the effect of two viewing technique, namely, silent and freeze-frame techniques. In silent viewing, the teacher plays a film extract at normal speed but without the sound and the students have to guess what the characters are saying. The teacher can also play the extract with sound again to check the answers. In freeze-frame viewing, the teacher can stop or freeze any scene of the film and ask the students to guess what will happen next.

This study sought to see whether these techniques of video viewing have any effect on the listening comprehension of the EFL learners or not.

**Literature Review**

*A Historical Overview of the Listening Instruction*

Although listening skill is highly essential for language learners and according to Kurita (2012) it is the heart of language learning, it has been a neglected skill for years and it took many years for the educators to realize the importance of this skill in second and foreign language learning and consider it as an important skill. Improvements in the theories of language learning and teaching had a significant role in changing the face of listening skill and its teaching and learning (Chastain, 1988; Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2006; Morley, 2001; Nunan, 2002; Rivers, 1981; Rost, 2001; White, 2006).

The noticeable event which had significant effects on every facet of language learning and brought listening into consideration was a conference of the second AILA (International Association of Applied Linguistics) in 1969. Morley (2001) stated that the four themes which dominated the conference set out the dramatic changes in listening skill and the four issues announced at the conference were as follows:

(a) individual learners and the individuality of learning, (b) listening and reading as non-passive and very complex receptive processes, (c) listening comprehension’s being recognized as a fundamental skill, and (d) real language used for real communication as a viable classroom model. (p. 69)

Then more changes slowly but steadily emerged in considering listening as an important skill.

During the 1960s, listening was considered as a passive skill playing no significant role in language learning and teaching because behaviorism considered language learning as a mechanical process of stimulus and response.

By the late 1960s, Chomsky stated that human being had a capacity to comprehend the novel sentences that had not been heard before. In that case, special attention was given to the role of mind as an active processor in comprehending a message. Consequently, comprehension was considered as a necessary step in language learning and the learner was considered to be active in using mental strategies to comprehend the language. Therefore, listening in this way was not viewed to be a passive skill. In the same way, according to Field (2002), from the late 1960s, practitioners recognized the importance of listening and began to devote time to listening practice in the language classes. During the 1960s, the idea of Total Physical Response by Asher was also proposed to reinforce the idea of comprehensible input. Listening in the early years of the 1970s was seen as a supporter of language learning and in the following years, the factors such as context and listening for meaning were considered too.

By the late 1970s, the idea of interaction emerged and based on this idea, the aspects of society and context played an important role in listening (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2006; Osada, 2004).

During the 1980s, new instructional frameworks such as communicative approaches to listening were incorporated in language teaching. During these years, listening as a complex skill attracted the attention of many scholars who sought to explore the intricacies of this skill and develop numerous theories and approaches in language learning such as communicative approach and task-based approach (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). In 1980, Rumelhart introduced the idea of schema theory (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2006; Nunan, 1998).

During the 1980s and 1990s, another aspect was considered to have a key role in listening comprehension and it was culture (Carrier, 1999; cited in Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2006; Rost, 2001).

Through the 1990s, listening skill received dramatic attention and aural comprehension in second or foreign language learning received increasing attention. Today an appropriate aural comprehension program requires learners to listen to instructions at all levels, which builds their second language competence.

Consequently, much work has to be done in the area of teaching listening so that teachers and educators would pay due attention to it.

**Major Contributions to Listening Skill**

Listening as a basic skill in EFL/ESL setting has been the main concern of scholars for many years. Despite the importance of this skill, less time has been allocated in teaching it and foreign language learners of English have difficulty in
learning this skill. They have difficulty in learning listening skill as they are not exposed to authentic language. Basaran and Kose (2012) explained the reason of having difficulty in learning listening in a foreign language as learners have limited opportunity of being exposed to target language beyond the classroom time. They stated that the input that the learners gather from their teachers and course books might not be enough to compensate for the lack of exposure to real language. Iranian learners of English have limited chance of being exposed to the target language beyond the classroom and they have difficulty in comprehending natural English of native speakers. Basaran and Kose (2012) think that the solution is to provide learners with authentic communicative input. Radio/TV programs, songs, newspapers, magazines, films, and so on, can be examples of authentic input for foreign language learners. So providing learners with audiovisual materials can be an effective way to improve the listening skill of EFL/ESL learners.

Studies on Using Video Materials in Language Classes

With the emergence of videos as pedagogical tools, teaching English has become more challenging in recent years. The goal of teachers has changed to help learners master all language skills, understand the target language, and communicate effectively. Consequently, the language teachers provide learners with more up-to-date language materials that require learners to be more actively involved in language learning. In this regard, Canning-Wilson (2000), who investigated the effect of video in language learning, thinks that EFL learners’ language achievement can be improved by using video material.

Berk (2009) believes that video materials can draw on the learners’ multiple intelligences and learning styles to maximize their understanding. He stated that when videos and multimedia learning are combined, an empirical basis is provided for the use of videos in teaching languages. He also mentioned that such courses enhance the students’ comprehension and understanding and would be more beneficial for novice learners in their early stages.

Weyers (1999) also strongly believes that when learners were exposed to video programs, their listening comprehension improves and so does their communicative competence. Authentic video is a kind of video program he insisted on using in the language classroom. In his study, Weyers examined the effect of Spanish authentic video, televendo, on learners. The results of the study showed a significant increase of listening comprehension of the experimental group as well as an increase in the number of words. As a result, Weyers insisted on using authentic video to promote language learning.

Potosi et al. (2009) considered video material as a teaching strategy to improve listening comprehension. In their research, an improvement in listening skill, vocabulary, and pronunciation was observed. They claimed that as learners were gradually exposed to video materials, the English language sounds would be familiar to them, which itself led to an improvement in their listening comprehension. Potosi et al. believed that when learners were exposed to video programs, not only did their comprehension improve but also they noticed the features of the English language such as stress, intonation, and pronunciation.

Mousavi and Iravani (2012) investigated the impact of authentic versus non-authentic video materials on listening comprehension among Iranian EFL learners. In their study, they observed that authentic video materials had significant effects on gaining higher scores in both listening comprehension and proficiency test. The results of their study highlighted the use of authentic listening materials in an EFL setting which could enhance listening comprehension. They also emphasized that to prepare learners with the real spoken language outside the classroom; it would be a good idea to use more authentic listening materials.

There are also numerous studies considering the impact of different techniques of applying video in language classrooms and the effect of them on listening or other skills. Two common ways of applying video, as a beneficial pedagogical tool, are using captions, subtitles, and advance organizers that are argued to enhance listening comprehension. In the following section, some of the studies in this area have been mentioned.

Studies on Using Captions and Subtitles

Several researchers have investigated the effect of videos on EFL language learners’ listening skill. Due to the impact of videos as powerful language learning tools and resources, numerous studies have been carried out on the impact of captions and subtitles on facilitating the comprehension of videos in language learning which date back to silent movies in the 1900s (Markham & Peter, 2003).

Several scholars believe that captioning and subtitling can enhance the attention of learners, lower their anxiety, give them confirmation of their comprehension, and maximize their motivation (Winke, Gass, & Sydorenko, 2010). Danan (2004) stated that second language learners’ listening comprehension skill could be improved by audiovisual material enhanced with subtitles or captions as a pedagogical tool.

With the increasing popularity and availability of target language films to facilitate language learning, using captioned videos is widely used to enhance language learners’ listening comprehension of the films and in some cases to improve their vocabularies and reading comprehension as well. Consequently, numerous studies are conducted to investigate the effects of captioning on language learning. A number of studies have demonstrated some beneficial effects of captions on listening comprehension of EFL/ESL learners (Baltova, 1999; Danan, 2004; Ghasemboland & Nafissi, 2012; Guillory, 1998; Hayati & Mohmedi, 2011; Hsu et al.,
present study: Two different instruments were used to collect the data in the study. The control group (C) received the material in written forms and they did not receive any video materials. The experimental group (A) received video materials using silent viewing mode and experimental group (B) received freeze-frame viewing mode as the treatments in this study. The three groups included one control and two experimental groups. Experimental group (A) received video materials using silent viewing mode and experimental group (B) received freeze-frame viewing mode as the treatments in this study. The control group (C) received the material in written forms and they did not receive any video materials.

Research Question

This study aimed at investigating the effect of silent and freeze-frame viewing techniques of video materials on the intermediate EFL learners’ listening comprehension. As such, there is a major research question to be answered in this study:

**Research Question 1:** Is there any statistically significant difference between silent viewing and freeze-frame viewing techniques in terms of their effect on intermediate EFL learners’ listening comprehension?

Method

Participants

The study was conducted with 45 Iranian EFL learners studying in a high school in Masjed-e-Suleiman, Khuzestan province, Iran. The participants were chosen and homogenized from among 150 female students of the third and fourth grades after administering an Oxford Placement test (OPT) and the scores around one unit of $SD (X \pm 1SD)$ were taken into account as a homogeneous group. The participants were in the age range of 16 to 18 years with the mean of 17.02 years of age. Prior to the experiment, the participants of the study were asked to take a listening test based on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam that was first piloted on 10 students of the same age to make sure the test was appropriate. From among the participants who took the test, three groups of 15 intermediate learners were selected to investigate the impact of video materials, especially two viewing techniques of silent and freeze-frame mode in listening comprehension ability. These three groups were selected randomly based on the proficiency level assumed in the present study (intermediate), and they participated in all phases of experimental procedures during the study. The three groups included one control and two experimental groups. Experimental group (A) received video materials using silent viewing mode and experimental group (B) received freeze-frame viewing mode as the treatments in this study. The control group (C) received the material in written forms and they did not receive any video materials.

Instruments

Two different instruments were used to collect the data in the present study:

1. OPT which is a standardized test of Oxford University to determine EFL learners’ proficiency level and homogenize the participants;

OPT provides teachers with a reliable and efficient means of placing students at the start of a course. The test was used to determine the proficiency level of participants to choose 45 homogenous participants from among 150 learners. The test is divided into two main sections of listening and grammar, each having 100 items. The listening section is primarily a test of reading and listening skills, and of vocabulary size, in which the learners’ performance is dependent on applying knowledge of the sound and writing system of English. The second section is a test of grammar, vocabulary, and reading skills, tested as far as possible in context. It involves a carefully selected range of items with facility values and discrimination indices designed to provide meaningful discrimination at each of the levels identified by the Common European Framework of Reference. The test is also accompanied by a written key to help marking the tests.

2. IELTS listening test which was two different identical twenty-item as pre- and post-tests;

Two IELTS listening tests which were identical and had 20-item tests based on IELTS listening test practice were utilized in this study as pre- and post-tests. The researcher prepared the test items based on Cambridge IELTS test (2011). Being identical, one of the tests was piloted first on 10 representative participants at the same level to identify any possible difficulties or ambiguities; then the reliability of the test was estimated to ensure it is reliable enough. The test consists of two sections. In section one, a conversation between two speakers in a social context takes place which is based on factual and gap fill information and it contains 10 questions. In section two, there is a talk by a single speaker based on a non-academic situation including 10 questions. The participants were asked to read through the tasks for each section and make sure they knew what sort of answer they had to write. After the recording, the participants were asked to transfer their answers onto the answer sheet carefully. The researcher asked them to put the right answer in the right place. At the end of the test, the answer sheets were collected by the researchers. The 20 questions of the overall test aimed to test the listening skill of the participants as pre- and post-tests.

Video Material

Family Album USA is a 1991 book by George Lefferts that later became a television course teaching English on an example of American everyday life. It was published by Maxwell Macmillan International Publishing Group. The television series was directed by Jo Anne Sedwick and Merrill M. Mazuer and produced by Alvin Cooperman. Family Album USA was created to inspire English learning around the world. It has 26 episodes which let learners to experience English in action and learn more about American culture. Each episode has a story about the cast of the series
who is the Stewart family, a typical American family living in New York. Each episode contains three sections; first, there is a review which consists of a story preview that sets the scene and introduces important vocabulary that aids comprehension. In drama section, learners watch the story of the Stewart family about an important event like a celebration or an interview and so on. The language level of dramas follows a sequence in which grammar and vocabulary are simpler in the early episodes and in the later episodes, the language is more advanced. A section of “Focus In” is the last section in which the attention of learners is called to idioms, grammar, pronunciation, and so on. This section is entertained by music, animation, and humor.

In this study, the researcher used five episodes of this television course. The two experimental groups received the video materials in silent and freeze-frame mode and the control group did not receive the video section of this course and they practiced the written materials orally by role-playing and other learning activities.

**Procedures**

Shahed high school in Masjed-e-Suleiman was selected based on convenience sampling as the present researchers had easier access to the participants and could offer the instruction as planned. Forty-five participants were chosen from among 150 learners in third and fourth grades. To choose the participants and make them homogeneous, a placement test (OPT) was first administered to the whole population of the students. The final participants of the study were then randomly assigned into three groups that included two experimental and one control group. Prior to the study, a pre-test of listening skill based on IELTS listening test was administered to determine a starting point from which the participants’ performance on the post-test could be discovered with certainty and also to test their listening comprehension to ensure their homogeneity prior to the experiment. The results of the pre-tests showed that there was no significant difference in learners’ performance on the pre-test across the control and treatment groups. All three groups were then trained by the present researchers. The participants of the two experimental groups received the treatment which was a video course based on *Family Album USA* for 10 sessions. As there were two experimental groups, one of them received the video material in silent viewing technique and the other one in freeze-frame mode viewing technique. They received five episodes from among 26 episodes of *Family Album USA*. The control group received the material in writing forms and they did not receive any video materials. After 10 sessions, a post-test, identical to the pre-test, but not the same to prevent the potential effect of memory factor, was administered to the participants.

**Findings**

The results of the skewness analysis obtained by dividing the statistic of skewness by the standard error disclosed that the main assumption of normality was observed in the distribution of the scores. As a guideline, the normal distribution was symmetric and had a skewness value of 0 and skewness value more than twice the standard error indicates a deviation from symmetry and uniformity.

To examine the effect of silent and freeze-frame control mode of viewing videos on listening comprehension, one-way ANOVA was run to investigate whether the observed difference between the three groups was statistically significant (Table 1).

| Sum of squares | df | Mean square | F   | Significant |
|---------------|----|-------------|-----|-------------|
| Between groups | 27.511 | 2 | 13.756 | 8.160 | .001 |
| Within groups | 70.800 | 42 | 1.686 | | |
| Total | 98.311 | 44 | | | |

The value of 001 is bold because this value shows that silent and freeze-frame control mode of viewing had significant effect on listening comprehension.

When the reference was made to the mean difference of the three groups on a listening comprehension test, it could be seen that the positive influence of silent mode of viewing made the largest difference between the mean scores of the silent group and the control group (mean difference = −1.80000). Therefore, the considerable effect of silent mode of viewing on EFL learners’ listening comprehension scores was shown. To find out the location of the differences among the three groups, a Scheffe test was run. The following table made multiple comparisons among the three groups based on the results of Scheffe test.

As it was shown in Table 2, the mean difference between the freeze-frame viewing group and the control group was 1.46667 and \( p(.013) > .05 \) indicating that there was a significant effect of using the freeze-frame viewing technique of
In other words, using the freeze-frame viewing technique of video materials had a statistically significant effect on EFL learners’ listening comprehension ability.

The results of one-way ANOVA and Scheffe test showed that although there was a significant difference among the three groups in terms of their listening score \( (p = .01) \), the significant difference was only between the silent viewing group and the control group \( (p = .002) \) and the freeze-frame group and the control group \( (p = .013) \). The findings indicated that the listening scores of the silent viewing group and the freeze-frame viewing group were not statistically different \( (p = .782) \). In other words, there was not a significant difference between listening comprehension scores of the two experimental groups. Table 2 showed that the mean difference between the two experimental groups is .33 and \( p(.782) \geq (.05). \)

### Discussion

In recent years, technology has been integrated within the curriculum to maximize communicative language teaching because, according to Berk (2009), learners have become native speakers of the language of computer, video games and the internet. Video, an audiovisual educational tool, is an important aid to stimulate and facilitate foreign language learning. Therefore, teaching English in countries like Iran has become more interesting and challenging for both teachers and learners with the emergence of videos. Video provides learners with content, context, and language.

The findings of this study can provide insights about enhancing listening skill of intermediate EFL learners via video and increasing students’ as well as teachers’ awareness about English language features learned through videos. In addition, the findings may suggest information about the requirements of implementing video through different viewing techniques as a teaching strategy in EFL classrooms.

The results of the post-test showed that the silent viewing group performed generally better than the freeze-frame viewing group, as well as the control group. Of course, the difference between the experimental groups was not statistically significant. The results consequently revealed that introducing silent and freeze-frame control mode of viewing videos influenced the listening comprehension of the three groups differently. In fact, learners’ performance in experimental groups outweighed that of control group on post-test.

Numerous studies have investigated the effect of video or authentic material on production or other skills. It seems that there is a lack in deciding how to implement video or visual material in language classrooms or what specific viewing technique is more beneficial for learners. Generally speaking, according to Mayer (2002) and Berk (2009) video as multimedia learning tool which combines pictures with verbal forms is highly useful for learning outcomes. In addition, Weyers (1999) stated that listening comprehension of participants increase as the result of being exposed to video. Berk (2009) also concluded that when learners are exposed to a learning condition in which materials are presented using both video and audio, it would be superior to learning through audio mode. In Weyers’ study, he examined the oral ability of the participating students to produce language communicatively with the exposure to authentic television programming but the focus of the present study was on listening comprehension. The findings of this study can also be compared with those of Potosi et al. (2009), Mousavi and Iravani (2012), and Berk (2009) who concluded that using video material in the EFL setting can be more useful than traditional ways of using audio, as video promotes listening comprehension. Canning-Wilson (2000) also argued that researchers should utilize actual videos of foreign or second language and not make use of only visual aids in longitudinal studies. This study used Family Album USA, an actual video of the English language which contained the features of real and authentic language which had been the main concern of numerous scholars such as Rost (2006) in teaching listening comprehension via videos.

### Table 2. Multiple Comparisons (Scheffe Test) for Three Groups on Post-Test.

| (l) Group     | (j) Group     | MD (l-j) | SE   | Significant | Lower bound | Upper bound |
|---------------|---------------|----------|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Control       | Silent        | -1.80000 | .47409 | .002        | -3.0031     | -0.5969     |
| Freeze-frame  | Silent        | -1.46667 | .47409 | .013        | -2.6698     | -0.2636     |
| Silent        | Control       | 1.80000  | .47409 | .002        | 0.5969      | 3.0031      |
| Freeze-frame  | Control       | 0.33333  | .47409 | .782        | -0.8698     | 1.5364      |
| Freeze-frame  | Silent        | -0.33333 | .47409 | .782        | -1.5364     | 0.8698      |

Note. MD = mean difference, CI = confidence interval.

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The value of .0782 is bold because this value shows that there was not a significant difference between listening comprehension scores of the two experimental groups.
Conclusion and Implications

As the results indicated, there were significant differences between the silent viewing and freeze-frame viewing group and the control group in terms of their listening comprehension, while all the groups were similar regarding the materials, teacher, and amount of instruction except in the video training that was specifically offered to the experimental groups. According to the results, practicing silent and freeze-frame viewing techniques had significant effects on high school EFL learners’ listening comprehension.

There are sound reasons to implement video in ELT (English language teaching) classrooms. The video combines audiovisual stimuli which are usually interesting and provide a real language with cultural information. Video can be controlled by pausing, stopping, or reviewing. It also provides different aspects of speech like stress, tone, and/or even facial expressions or body language. The story plot of videos is compelling which enhances comprehension of language.

A number of pedagogical implications can be suggested with regard to the findings of this study, which might be useful to researchers, teachers, students, and course book designers. The first implication of the study highlights that teaching and practicing video material through different viewing techniques can improve EFL learners’ listening ability significantly. Therefore, based on the findings of this study, teachers can bring about new insights into teaching listening more effectively and move some steps forward rather than just playing some material for learners and asking them to do some oral drill or written tasks to fulfill the aim of listening comprehension. Instead of finding a remedy for the so-called listening problem, which is a very common one among the Iranian EFL learners, they can overcome the problems by giving learners more awareness on the changing face of video material and the way of dealing with it in the classroom.

On the other hand, the findings of this research can guide syllabus designers. They can include more components dealing with listening skill in the course books which are followed by video materials. It may be claimed that there are some course books with some listening materials in video format, but the amount is not sufficient and also teachers might not be completely aware of the importance of these sections in their guidebooks; in addition, they might not be provided with suitable and good equipment to play the video material.

Another important issue is that while teaching prospective teachers for their career, teacher trainers need to teach them how to succeed in assisting their learners to deal with listening problems. In training prospective teachers, they can be taught to put more time and energy into teaching listening skill via using videos in EFL classrooms. In addition, students can use video outside the classroom and there should be some videos which guide self-study and provide extra practice for EFL learners.

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