

Military Trainees' Learning English through Multimedia

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Abstract

Multimedia technology has played an important role in learning English, especially, in the non-English speaking countries. In Taiwan, however, few studies have been carried out to investigate multimedia learning from the perspectives of military context. The purpose of the study is to explore what language skills military trainees would like to improve through multimedia learning and what websites they prefer to choose for enhancing their English proficiency. A group of 28 military trainees were recruited from the department of Foreign Language Promotion at Air Force Institute of Technology. The participants were asked to fill out a two-part questionnaire consisting of 5 questions, which focused on 4 English skills. Moreover, an oral interview was conducted to explore trainees' experiences in learning English through multimedia. Two major findings were found in this research. First, most of the trainees reported that they would like to improve their English skills through multimedia. In particular, the Top 3 English skills they wanted to enhance were the listening skill, English proficiency, and speaking skill. Second, the participants thought that using multimedia learning (YouTube) is the best choice to enhance their learning motive and promote their learning achievement.

Keywords: Multimedia learning, technology, trainees

軍中學員採多媒體學習英語之探討

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摘要

在非英語系國家，運用多媒體技術學習英語已扮演著相當重要的一環。然而在台灣此類的教學模式，應用於國軍英語教學目前並不廣泛，且對於多媒體技術運用顯著提升學習成效之研究，並不多見。因此，本研究的主要目的是針對軍中的學員，憑藉多媒體學習方式來增進哪些語言技能進行評估。研究對象為 28 位空軍航空技術學院英儲班學員。期間，參加者需填寫兩大部分的問卷，總共分為五個問題，內容涵蓋四項英語技能。除了紙本問卷外，更經由口頭訪談，探討學員對多媒體學習英語的看法。本研究得出兩個主要發現。首先，大多數參與者明確表示希望透過影片，提高三種主要的英語技能。分別是：聽力技巧，英語能力，和口說技巧，其次是運用多媒體平台(YouTube)，可大幅提升學員之學習動機，有效達成英語學習之目標。

關鍵字：多媒體學習，科技，軍中學員

1. Introduction

Multimedia learning is “a form of computer-aided instruction” that uses two formats, learning through pictures and words at the same time Mayer [1]. The use of visual learning (pictures, written text, animations, and videos) and verbal learning (spoken words) are the main channel for delivering content to learners. In other words, multimedia could foster learners to be able to learn more deeply from pictures and words than from traditional approach. This is because students learn better from a multimedia message when they know the names and characteristics of the main concepts, and they learn better from a multimedia message when the words are spoken rather than written. In another explanation of Alkan et al. [2], multimedia sources created by using audio, video, visual, graph, or animation to explain a subject is expressed as the use of different types to deliver knowledge to learners. Generally speaking, adding pictures to words does not always improve learning; thus, our goal is to determine whether the multimedia could foster military trainees’ deep learning.

Motivation

For the Taiwanese military personnel, the use of English is relatively important. According to the Air Force Institute of Technology (2020), military English training is part of the stipulation of On-The-Job-Training of the Taiwanese Armed Forces (<https://arf.afats.khc.edu.tw/Page.aspx?PN=47&PClass=0006>). Lee [3] mentioned that all the officers and non-commissioned officers must advance their English ability in order to maintain and operate weapons and equipment because most advanced weapon systems are purchased from the U.S. The documents used in operating manuals and Technical

Orders, are all in English version Fong [4]. Therefore, English is especially important for military personnel dealing with technology. However, there are two major reasons that might have accounted for their low achievement on English learning. To start with, the majority of military trainees did not know how to integrate multimedia learning into course to enhance their learning achievement. Second, the textbooks or teaching materials were in a format that was generally uninteresting. Accordingly, these trainees failed to find ways to inquire effectively and successfully in learning English.

As above-mentioned reasons, it has led the researcher to become greatly interested in further facilitating trainees in English learning. Using media engages trainees, aids their retention of knowledge, motivates interest in the subject matter, and illustrates the relevance of many concepts. The current study aims to examine two questions.

1. What language skills do trainees think they would like to improve through multimedia learning?
2. What multimedia websites do trainees think they would prefer to choose?

2. The Advantages of Using Multimedia for Language Learning

There are numerous videos that can be deployed as English learning media Berk [5]. As commonly known, the use of video in English Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms can facilitate the students to get more interested in learning and also enhance their communicative competences because they can get rich learning experiences. According to Wang’s study [6], there are four major advantages of applying video to improving learning.

First of all, it can facilitate the development of EFL learners' language skill. It means that the video can provide a lot of information for the learners, get their attention to focus on the material in the video, and improve their comprehensive linguistic competence. Second of all, it can develop the learners' communicative competence because the contextual knowledge in video allows language learners to pick up new words, phrases, and idioms more effectively. Third of all, video helps learners better remember what they have learned in the classroom. Marshall [7] discovered that learners remember only 5% of what they read, 5% of what they hear, 30% of what they see and 60% of what they hear and see.

Last but not least, Mohammed [8] found another effective way of using video. He implemented the use of subtitled video to teach students' communication skill. He concluded that the use of video in English Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms could facilitate the students to get more interested in learning and also enhance their communicative competences because they could get rich learning experiences.

3. Methodology

This study uses a questionnaire as a means of collecting and analyzing the outcome. In the following sections, the design of the questionnaire and interview are discussed in detail.

Design of the Questionnaire. Based on the two research questions, the questionnaire was divided into two major parts. The first part of the questionnaire was to find out what English skills military trainees would like to improve through multimedia learning. The second part was to examine what websites military trainees would prefer to use to enhance their English skills (Table 3.1-3.2).

Table 3.1: *First Part of the Questionnaire*

The First Part of the Questionnaire: Improving English Skills	
1	I want to improve my English Proficiency by multimedia learning.
2	I want to improve my listening skill by multimedia learning.
3	I want to improve my speaking skill by multimedia learning.
4	I want to improve my reading skill by multimedia learning.
5	I want to improve my writing skill by multimedia learning.

Table 3.2: *Second Part of the Questionnaire:*

Participants' Favorite Multimedia Websites	
1	YouTube
2	TED
3	VOA
4	Voice Tube
5	CNN

As noted, this research would like to examine the effect of multimedia learning from the perspective of trainees. It was carried out on January 10th and Twenty-eight military trainees from the English Preparatory course participated at the Air Force Institute of Technology, including 17 officers and 11 non-commissioned officers. In addition, the researcher explained the purpose of the study briefly to all of the trainees. Then the consent form and the questionnaire were administered to the entire class.

Design of the Interview. After the survey was completed, the researcher randomly selected 5 trainees for the oral interview. The interview took each participant about 5 to 10 minutes to finish. To ensure that the interviewees could freely express

their opinions and views, the interview was carried out in mandarin Chinese.

4. Results and Discussions

The first part of the questionnaire revealed important findings. They helped the researcher understand the participating trainees’ opinions about improving language skills.

Results

The analysis involved 4 different language skills. The first item was related to the overall English proficiency and others were related to the basic four skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To be specific, the trainees were asked to tell which three English skills they would like to improve most through multimedia leaning. 85.7% of the trainees agreed with the statement that “I want to improve my English proficiency by multimedia learning”(Item 1). As for the listening skill, 89.2% strongly agreed that “I want to improve my listening skill by multimedia learning” (Item 2). As for the speaking skill, 53.5% agreed with the statement that “I want to improve my speaking skill by multimedia learning” (Item 3). As for the reading skill, 46.4% agreed with the idea that “I want to improve my reading skill by multimedia learning” (Item 4). About the writing skill, only 25.0% agreed with the idea that “I want to improve my writing skill by multimedia learning” (Item 5). The statistical results of the first part of the questionnaire were summarized in Table 4.1.

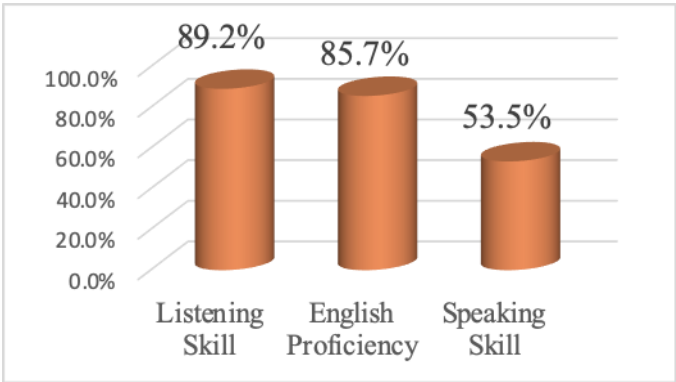
Table 4.1 Trainees’ Opinions in Improving English through multimedia learning

Item	Topic	F	Percentage%
1	I want to improve my English Proficiency.	24	85.7%
2	I want to improve my listening skill.	25	89.2%
3	I want to improve my	15	53.5%

	speaking skill.		
4	I want to improve my reading skill.	13	46.4%
5	I want to improve my writing skill.	7	25.0%

Based on the above statistical analysis, the researcher further identified the Top 3 English skills that the trainees would like to improve. Specifically, the Top 1 English skill was the listening skill. The majority of the trainees (89.2%) agreed that they would like to improve their listening comprehension the most. The Top 2 skill included overall English proficiency. As many as 85.7% of the participants agreed that they would like to enhance their English ability through multimedia learning. The Top 3 skill was the speaking skill. 53.5% trainees agreed that they would like to improve their speaking skill. The statistical results regarding the Top 3 skills were shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 The Top of Three Skills



In addition to the above information, the trainees were also asked to provide three of their favorite video websites for learning English. According to the statistics, as many as 85.7% of the trainees reported that their favorite video website is ‘YouTube’; 85.7% ‘Voice Tube’; 64.2% ‘TED’;

60.7% ‘VOA’; 53.5% and 50.0% ‘CNN’. This particular finding revealed that most of the trainees enjoyed using ‘YouTube’, ‘Voice Tube’ and ‘TED’ to improve their English language skills. The statistical analysis of the participants’ favorite websites were shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 *Trainees’ Favorite Websites*

Item	Frequency	Percentage
YouTube	20	85.7%
Voice Tube	18	64.2%
TED	17	60.7%
VOA	15	53.5%
CNN	14	50.0%

Number of Trainees: 28

Discussions

In order to examine the trainees’ views, the researcher chose 5 trainees for the oral interview. According to the interview notes, most trainees had a positive attitude toward multimedia learning. The researcher also discovered several reasons that might explain why the trainees thought that multimedia learning could improve their listening skills (Top 1); overall English proficiency (Top 2); and the speaking skill (Top 3).

“Most people in Taiwan speak Mandarin Chinese or Taiwanese, so I am struggling to understand native speakers’ English, so I want to watch English video to improve my listening skill”. (Trainee 20).

“My priority in learning English is to enhance my speaking skill, so I usually watch YouTube 1-2 hours daily to improve it.” (Trainee 5).

“If I improve my English proficiency, I will prove to myself that I’m good at English.” (Trainee 12).

The finding of the research is consistent with the study of Healey et. al [9], suggesting that multimedia learning has been a great help to integrate teaching and learning and provides the students with greater incentives, boosting students’ future competitive strength in the workplace.

As Sad [10] proposed, the utilization of multimedia technology "breaks the monotony of traditional class teaching and is enjoyable and stimulating". It creates a positive environment for the classroom activities such as group discussion, subject discussion and debates, which can offer more opportunities for communication among students and between teachers and students. Therefore, multimedia learning encourages students’ positive thinking and communication skills in learning the language.

5. Conclusion

Multimedia instruction creates the opportunity for military trainees to improve their English effectively. Multimedia learning will help the trainee perceive his or her own personal strengths and weaknesses and learn from the weaknesses. It is very important to understand each individual’s learning situation through multimedia. Analyzing one’s own particular multimedia learning situation can be very helpful and beneficial to the trainees, which ultimately will increase their success rate for learning English. All in all, the purpose of using multimedia tools is to find the best ways for trainees to learn effectively.

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