



PERSPECTIVES ON ENGLISH READING-WHILE-LISTENING STRATEGY AMONG NON-ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS AT NAM CAN THO UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM

Luu Huu Thoⁱ

Nam Can Tho University,
Vietnam

Abstract:

Quantitatively, the present study was carried out in a Vietnamese university to investigate perspectives on reading-while-listening strategy (RWL) among 680 non-English-majored students. A questionnaire adapted from Billy (2010) was delivered to the selected samples for 2 weeks. SPSS (version 20) was run for descriptive statistics (mean score, standard deviation) to examine their perspectives on RWL. Findings showed that reading tapescript while listening is of great importance to help students enhance their reading skills. Furthermore, reading the tapescript before the day of the classroom is really an accurate measure of students' reading rate in English. Recommendations, limitations, and conclusions for further research are discussed.

Keywords: reading-while-listening, reading-while-listening strategy for EFL learners, reading-while-listening strategy in EFL classroom

1. Introduction

As EFL learners, they may have trouble getting over a foreign or second language. According to Gobel and Kano (2014), Many elements have contributed to input-poor language learning, especially in EFL contexts. Chang (2009) argued that native language learners may be dominated by one significant element as input in their efforts to contact the target language. Renandya and Jacobs (2016) examined the fact that input is primarily considered to be the process of language acquisition, with a plethora of research underscoring the significant impact of language input on increasing learners' engagement with the target language. For instance, regular interaction with language input allows EFL students to improve their vocabulary recognition, promoting vocabulary growth and enhancing their overall proficiency in the language. EFL learners can significantly improve their language input by immersing themselves in a supportive

ⁱ Correspondence: email luuhuutho2027@gmail.com, luuhuutho2026@gmail.com

learning environment that provides numerous opportunities for interaction in the target language.

According to Day and Bamford (1998), extensive reading serves as a powerful strategy for augmenting language exposure. This method promotes a pleasurable reading experience, enabling learners to choose texts that resonate with their interests, thereby alleviating the stress associated with thorough comprehension. Nuttal (1982) reported that extensive reading plays a significant role in vocabulary development and the improvement of overall reading abilities. It has also been shown to enhance reading speed and fluency (Day and Bamford, 2002; Samuels, 2006; Blevins, 2005). Moreover, extensive reading contributes to the advancement of linguistic and grammatical skills (Rodrigo *et al.*, 2004; Yang, 2001), as well as writing proficiency (Hafiz and Tudor, 1989; Mason and Krashen, 1997; Robb and Susser, 1989; Smith, 2007), thereby fostering comprehensive language competence. In addition, the RWL initiative has been developed by researchers in second language acquisition to aid learners in mastering a new language while concurrently enhancing their reading and listening comprehension skills.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Reading-while-listening (RWL)

Brown *et al.* (2008) argued that RWL has been paid attention in extensive reading, especially among researchers and language educators in EFL settings. Despite the fact that research in this field is still limited, findings showed that RWL benefits L2 learners, especially in improving vocabulary acquisition and listening comprehension (Chang, 2008; Vandergift, 2007; Brown *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, Milliner's (2019) research showed that EFL beginners' reading and listening fluency has been improved. Chang and Millet (2015) found that EFL learners' reading speed has been enhanced thanks to the RWL strategy. RWL is a method to develop listening fluency through reading integration (Askildson, 2011). Not only do the audio recordings improve L2 learners' listening skills, but they also make a great contribution to enhancing listening test scores (Chang and Millet, 2015).

Gobel and Kano (2014) argued that RWL is not an innovative strategy. It has been employed in first-language literacy programs and has demonstrated notable benefits for students facing reading challenges. Friedland *et al.* (2017) indicated that those who show a lack of enthusiasm for reading skills, especially those with limited fluency, can greatly enhance their skills by listening to audio recordings while simultaneously following the text. This combined approach facilitates the acquisition of correct pronunciations, which in turn aids in word recognition and helps students develop suitable reading pace and intonation. Additionally, Senechal and Cornell (1993) emphasized that engaging in shared or enjoyable reading activities leads to more significant advancements in both reading and listening competencies. Second language (L2) learners employ various comprehension strategies while engaging in reading and listening tasks, as evidenced by

a comparative study that examined two distinct groups: one group that read a short passage in L2 German and another that listened to the same material (Lund, 1991). The reading group demonstrated superior comprehension scores in general; however, the listening group outperformed in their ability to recall main themes, while the reading group showed greater proficiency in retaining specific details. Lund's findings are consistent with previous research that distinguishes between the cognitive processes involved in reading and listening among older, literate learners, as evidenced by the works of Rubin, Hafer, and Arata (2000) and Sticht and James (1984). The results of his research provide evidence for the idea that, although reading and listening comprehension share similarities, they necessitate distinct methodologies. Nevertheless, there exist strong theoretical and educational justifications for the incorporation of both activities into a cohesive learning framework. The significant importance of phonological processing in the swift decoding of words and the recognition of sight words has been emphasized (Ehri, 1992 and Perfetti, 1992). Research indicates that reading comprehension, similar to listening comprehension, is influenced in part by phonological components.

2.2. Reading-while-listening strategy for EFL learners

Research in the area of simultaneous reading and listening is still limited; nonetheless, experts in language studies and education argue that this method can greatly support second language (L2) learners in their pursuit of mastering the target language and improving their receptive abilities. Engaging in concurrent reading and listening exercises in EFL classrooms can enhance the understanding of both reading and listening tasks for L2 learners. Students who exhibit lower levels of proficiency frequently encounter difficulties in sentence processing, which results in a reduced capacity for understanding. Brown *et al.* (2008) examined the technique of RWL to effectively mitigate this challenge by encouraging the assimilation of larger semantic units, thus maintaining the coherence of sentences and enhancing overall comprehension. According to Woodall (2010), looking from a sociocultural perspective, the combination of audio recordings with written texts acts as an informative resource, which offers assistance that enhances readers' ability to interpret text more proficiently and attain greater reading fluency than when they engage in solitary reading efforts.

Askildson (2011) explained that the integration of written materials with audio recordings significantly improves learners' understanding by aiding their capacity to identify the connections between letters and sounds. Furthermore, Osada (2001) wrote that the process of aural-written verification is essential for fostering students' grasp of the relationships between form and meaning. L2 learners are provided with an opportunity to engage with the inherent rhythm, pace, and continuity of the target language (Chang, 2009).

A variety of studies have illustrated the positive effects of RWL in EFL educational settings. To illustrate, research by Brown *et al.* (2008) examined vocabulary development in a cohort of thirty-five L2 learners who were exposed to three distinct modes of input: reading only (RO), RWL, and listening only (LO). A subsequent investigation conducted by Chang (2008) delved deeper into the effects of RWL on students' listening comprehension abilities. The findings suggest that RWL not only improves listening comprehension but also contributes positively to the development of various language skills. Participants engaged in RWL interventions exhibited a notable improvement in their grasp of spoken narrative English, as well as an expansion of their vocabulary.

2.3. Reading-while-listening strategy in EFL classroom

Chang (2009) reported that several studies investigating the different forms of language input within EFL classrooms reveal that these various modalities have unique impacts on second language (L2) acquisition. Furthermore, Chang suggests that the effectiveness of these input types may differ according to the proficiency levels of the learners and the particular activities they engage in. Reading has emerged as the most impactful input type for second language (L2) learners, while listening plays a crucial role in improving comprehension and fostering growth in both reading and listening abilities. While certain research indicates that the effects on learners may be moderate, a considerable proportion of students demonstrate a clear preference for engaging in both reading and listening activities simultaneously rather than in isolation. The combination of reading and listening acts as a valuable tool for language learning, especially for those at lower proficiency levels, as it offers written material that aligns with the auditory information presented. This integrated method enhances learners' feelings of safety and increases their confidence in understanding the content, while simultaneously contributing to the growth of their spoken vocabulary and facilitating the retention of the meanings of words they hear Chang and Millet (2015).

The integration of reading and listening activities may not yield substantial improvements in language proficiency; however, it does offer notable psychological advantages for second language (L2) learners. To successfully implement this approach within the EFL classroom aimed at improving students' listening skills, instructors must exercise careful consideration. Chang (2009) explained that this caution is essential, as there is a risk that students might become excessively dependent on written materials, thereby overlooking the critical auditory aspects of language acquisition. According to Osada (2001), when students are provided with the script before they listen to the audio, they might simply translate the spoken content, resulting in a suboptimal listening strategy. Therefore, in the application of RWL strategy, it is crucial for instructors to emphasize the enhancement of listening abilities prior to directing attention towards reading competencies.

Mason and Krashen (1997) demonstrated that the necessity for dual language competencies in RWL is paramount; students lacking proficiency in both domains are unlikely to meet the intended educational objectives. Given that the program involves

significant engagement with both reading and listening, it is essential for educators to engage in meticulous planning and demonstrate effective time management when implementing RWL within the EFL framework. The advantages of extensive listening and reading are not instantly observable; instead, they develop gradually over time, which underscores the program's overall effectiveness. Additionally, consistent participation in concurrent listening and reading exercises not only bolsters reading comprehension but also aids in the improvement of various other language competencies. Nevertheless, the gradual onset of the benefits associated with RWL can result in a decline in student motivation, potentially obstructing the program's effectiveness and the achievement of its desired outcomes. Renandya and Jacobs (2016) argued that specific guiding principles can support educators in the effective implementation of the RWL program in the EFL classroom.

3. Material and Methods

The present study attempted to address the research question, “What are the perspectives of reading-while-listening among non-English-majored students?”. The selected samples were non-English-majored students from different disciplines to get involved in the questionnaire surveys. More than half of them were male students, accounting for 59.26%, while the number of female students was 40.74%. They were all aged from 18-25. Nearly half of them (45.88%) were freshmen, and the remaining were sophomores.

Tailored from Billy, W. (2010), the questionnaire consisted of 16 Likert-scale items (from “*Strongly disagree*” to “*Strongly agree*”) covering student attitudes in reading-while-listening experience. In other words, the students were asked to show their level of agreement with a statement concerning their experience with or attitude toward the tapescript reading-while-listening activities.

Questionnaires were delivered to 680 participants. They were non-English-majored students at a Vietnamese university, where they attended Basic English classes. The table below shows the research findings using SPSS to run descriptive statistics.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Findings

Items	N	Mean	SD
10. The tapescript that I did in the English class helped me improve my reading skills.	680	4.1735	0.79905
5. I read the tapescript before the day of the classroom.	680	4.1529	0.79957
3. Tapescript were an accurate measure of my reading rate in English.	680	4.1485	0.80864
9. I had enough time to read the tapescript assigned to the classroom.	680	4.1441	0.82476
13. Reading and listening to the tapescript at the same time helped me understand the text better.	680	4.1338	0.80024
16. Reading and listening to the book at the same time helped me to read faster in English.)	680	4.1206	0.79032
6. I enjoyed reading tapescript in the course book.	680	4.1088	0.81223

12. While I read the tapescript in the classroom, I marked words that I did not understand or recognize.	680	4.0897	0.81907
2. Tapescript helped me to see changes in my reading rate.	680	4.0779	0.82743
11. While I read the tapescript, I marked the most important parts.	680	4.0706	0.78518
1. I have a full understanding of reading tapescript while listening to the audio.	680	4.0603	0.8073
7. I found the language in tapescript to be very easy.	680	4.0529	0.80508
4. During the 5 minutes that I read for the tapescript, I was reading it, not scanning it.	680	4.0485	0.83498
15. I can read faster without the CD.	680	4.0353	0.80238
8. I learned something important from the tapescript.	680	4.0265	0.81727

Table 1 shows that the most important thing about reading tapescript while listening is to help students enhance their reading skills. Furthermore, reading the tapescript before the day of the classroom is really an accurate measure of students' reading rate in English.

5. Recommendations

Further studies should take into account several limitations of the present research. First, limited samples and research context should be expanded to generalize the further research findings. Second, the questionnaire should contain more items to gain more information about respondents' attitudes on RWL. If possible, there should be a comparative survey to investigate perspectives of RWL among non-English-majored and English-majored students in future research.

6. Conclusion

The present research investigated the perspectives of RWL strategy among 680 non-English-majored students. The questionnaire was delivered to the selected samples, and SPSS was used to analyze the data. Results showed that reading tapescript while listening is of paramount importance to help students enhance their reading skills, which is in line with Chang and Millet's (2015) finding. Furthermore, reading the tapescript before the day of the classroom is really an accurate measure of students' reading rate in English.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Luu Huu Tho's MA degree is in Principles and Methods in English Language Education at Can Tho University. His research interests are EFL, ELF, and Multilingualism.

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