

Research Article

Enhancing Senior High School Students' Listening Skills Through the Implementation of the VoA (Voice of America) Learning English Application

Naomi Dalila Malau^{1*}, Agus Widyantoro² Sunusi Dauda³

¹⁻² Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

³ Bayero University Kano, Nigeria

* Corresponding Author: naomidalilaa@gmail.com

Abstract: This study aims to enhance high school students' listening skills through the application of Voice of America (VoA) Learning English. Employing a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, the study was conducted in two cycles involving 36 students from a high school in Yogyakarta. The research focused on assessing students' listening abilities before and after the implementation of the VoA Learning English application. Data were collected through pre-tests, post-tests, classroom observations, and interviews, then analyzed using an interactive model and SPSS software to ensure reliability and validity. The findings reveal that the integration of VoA Learning English significantly improves students' listening comprehension, learning motivation, and classroom engagement. Moreover, it demonstrates the effectiveness of technology-assisted learning that utilizes authentic English audio materials to expose students to real-life language use. The study concludes by recommending the incorporation of digital media and online platforms in English language teaching to foster a more interactive, engaging, and effective learning environment for developing students' listening proficiency.

Keywords: Listening Skills; VoA Learning English; Classroom Action Research; Technology-Assisted Learning; Student Motivation

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1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, English language proficiency has become a key requirement in education, employment, and international communication. Among the four language skills, listening skills play an important role in language acquisition and effective communication. However, this skill often receives less attention than speaking, reading, and writing skills (Vandergrift, 2007; Richards, 2008). In fact, according to Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), listening activities account for about 45% of human communication activities, thus greatly influencing a person's language skills.

Conditions in the field show that listening comprehension learning in many schools still uses conventional methods, such as relying on Student Worksheets (LKS), without the support of engaging digital media. This causes students to be less motivated and have difficulty understanding spoken English effectively. However, the integration of technology in language learning can increase engagement, motivation, and the effectiveness of the learning process (Zhang, 2022; Haleem et al., 2022).

One innovative alternative learning medium is the Voice of America (VoA) Learning English app, which provides a variety of authentic audio and video materials from native English speakers. Through this app, students can practice listening in real contexts, understand pronunciation and intonation, and enrich their vocabulary. According to Makiabadi and Square (2019), using VoA Learning English can increase students' motivation

and English comprehension skills. Therefore, this study was conducted to improve the listening skills of high school students in Yogyakarta through the application of VoA Learning English as an interactive and authentic technology-based learning medium.

In the ever-evolving landscape of global communication, proficiency in the English language has become an indispensable asset, particularly in countries where English is taught as a foreign language. Among the core competencies in English language acquisition, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, listening remains one of the most challenging skills to master. This is due in part to the transient nature of spoken language and the complexity of auditory processing, which requires learners to simultaneously decode linguistic elements, interpret intonation and stress patterns, and derive meaning in real time. For senior high school students, who are at a pivotal stage in their educational journey, the development of effective listening skills is critical not only for academic success but also for participation in a globally interconnected society.

Traditional methods of teaching listening comprehension in the classroom, often reliant on outdated audio materials or scripted dialogues, frequently fail to simulate authentic language use. These limitations can result in disengagement and reduced motivation among learners, who may struggle to see the relevance of such exercises to real-world communication. Moreover, limited classroom time and large student-to-teacher ratios further constrain opportunities for meaningful listening practice. Consequently, there is a pressing need to incorporate more dynamic, authentic, and technologically mediated approaches to language instruction, approaches that both captivate students' interest and align with their digital fluency.

In response to these pedagogical challenges, the integration of educational technology into language learning has gained considerable momentum. Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) platforms have emerged as viable tools for enhancing language exposure and practice beyond the confines of the classroom. Among these platforms, the Voice of America (VoA) Learning English application has garnered attention for its unique design, which caters specifically to English language learners. Featuring a wide range of thematically diverse audio materials delivered at controlled speaking speeds, VoA offers learners repeated exposure to authentic English in contexts that are both accessible and engaging.

The VoA Learning English application not only provides learners with extensive listening materials but also incorporates supporting features such as transcripts, glossaries, and comprehension quizzes, which scaffold learning and reinforce understanding. Its alignment with American English standards and integration of current global topics further enrich the learning experience, allowing students to acquire language in context while staying informed about the world around them. Such features make VoA particularly well-suited for senior high school students who require both linguistic development and critical thinking skills.

2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

This section critically reviews research and theories related to language acquisition, listening skills, and the use of technology in learning. This review aims to place the research in a scientific context, identify gaps in previous studies, and emphasize the relevance of this research in the development of English language learning.

Definition of Listening

Listening is a cognitive process of receiving, understanding, and interpreting auditory information conveyed through sound (Newton & Nation, 2009). This skill is active and complex, as it involves attention, meaning-making, and the use of prior knowledge (Brown, 2004; Hamouda, 2013). According to Zhang (2019) and Wah (2019), listening is a conscious process of capturing the message intended by the speaker through audio and visual cues.

Communicatively, listening is a key element in effective communication and plays an important role in second language acquisition. Karimova et al. (2020) and Rustamov (2022) emphasize that listening skills provide important input for improving speaking skills and foreign language proficiency. Thus, listening is not merely hearing, but an active process that underlies successful communication and language learning.

Sub-skills in Listening

Listening consists of several sub-skills that foreign language learners must master in order to effectively understand the meaning of speech. Field (1998) states that these sub-skills come naturally to native speakers, but need to be learned consciously by learners. According to

Spoden et al. (2020), effective listening requires the simultaneous engagement of various abilities.

Important sub-skills include active listening, which is the ability to identify main ideas, understand meaning from the speaker's perspective, and capture detailed information (Friston et al., 2021). In addition, discourse analysis helps recognize language patterns such as intonation and rhythm, while scan listening allows listeners to select specific information (Zhao & Lee, 2022). All of these skills work together and are interdependent (Buck, 2001). Thus, mastery of listening sub-skills is key to enabling students to process auditory information effectively and communicate well in various situations.

Cognitive Processes in Listening

Listening is a complex language skill that requires high cognitive capacity (Rahimi & Sayyadi, 2019). This process involves two main mechanisms, namely bottom-up and top-down (Newton & Nation, 2009).

Bottom-up focuses on processing sounds and words sequentially to form a complete meaning (Rost, 2011), while top-down utilizes prior knowledge and context to understand the message (Newton & Nation, 2009). Difficulties often arise when learners find it hard to recognize sounds or words, so repeated listening practice is essential (Jeremy, 2014). These two processes work complementarily in building effective understanding (Rahimi & Sayyadi, 2019).

The Process of Learning Listening

Listening is a multistage and complex process that transforms auditory input into meaningful understanding (Rost, 2011). It involves several interrelated stages listening, comprehending, remembering, evaluating, and responding each playing a crucial role in effective communication (Latupono & Nikijuluw, 2022).

The listening stage is physiological, where sound waves are received by the ear's sensory receptors (Rowan et al., 2021). The comprehension stage requires interpreting auditory signals to extract meaning (Rahimi & Sayyadi, 2019). Remembering integrates attention and memory to store and retrieve information (Bourdeaud'hui et al., 2018), while evaluation involves critically analyzing and distinguishing facts from opinions (Teravainen-Goff, 2022). Finally, responding—through verbal or nonverbal feedback confirms message understanding and completes the communication loop (Cross, 2010).

The Role of Technology in Learning Listening

Technology significantly enhances listening skill development by providing flexible, self-paced, and repeated exposure to authentic materials (Mohamed et al., 2019). It supports both teachers and learners through interactive and accessible learning environments (Yanti et al., 2023).

According to Smaldino et al. (2012), technology facilitates thematic learning, portfolio creation, and distance education, overcoming spatial and temporal barriers. It also accommodates learner- and teacher-directed approaches, enriching classroom instruction.

The Principle of Teaching Listening Effectively

Teaching listening requires structured planning, active engagement, and authentic materials (Brown, 2006; Newton & Nation, 2009). Within the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework, activities should emphasize real communication (Brown, 2004).

The Dictogloss method effectively integrates listening and writing to build comprehension and collaboration (Widiastuti & Padilah, 2022; Vasiljevic, 2010). Early EFL instruction should focus on listening as a foundation for other skills using authentic contexts (Gholami & Azarmi, 2012).

Using varied and real-life audio materials such as VoA Learning English enhances motivation and proficiency (Li et al., 2022). Thus, effective listening teaching combines clear stages, authentic input, and technology integration to improve learners' listening ability.

VoA (Voice of America) Application: Features and Functionality

Voice of America (VoA) is an international multimedia broadcaster funded by the U.S. government, delivering news and educational content in more than 40 languages to over 278 million global users (Salang et al., 2022; Syamsia, 2023). The VoA Learning English platform, accessible via website and mobile app, provides authentic listening materials such as news, podcasts, and videos across topics like education, business, science, and culture (Rahmaningtyas & Al Mardhiyyah, 2021).

The application integrates audio, video, and transcripts, allowing learners to read while listening and control playback speed for better comprehension (Salang et al., 2022). Key features include auto-scrolling transcripts, offline access, playback speed adjustment, and

vocabulary lookup. Users can also sync lessons, personalize displays, and translate or save content for continued learning.

The Implementation of VoA Learning English Application

The VoA Learning English application has become an effective medium for enhancing students' listening skills by providing authentic, engaging, and easily accessible materials (Khofifah, 2022; Rahimi & Sayyadi, 2019). Through this app, teachers can guide learners to access audio, video, and transcript-based lessons that encourage active participation and self-directed learning (Zhang, 2019).

Students benefit from more than 10,000 audio stories and 3,000 videos, complete with transcripts, translation tools, and playback controls, allowing them to listen repeatedly, translate new words, and save materials for independent practice (Sofia, 2019; Salang et al., 2022). During classroom implementation, teachers apply structured pre, while, and post listening stages to help students focus on comprehension and vocabulary acquisition (Rahmaningtyas & Al Mardhiyyah, 2021)

3. Materials and Method

Research Design

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design to examine the use of the VoA Learning English application in improving students' listening skills. CAR is a reflective and cyclical process consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). It enables teachers to identify problems, implement solutions, and evaluate outcomes within their own classrooms (Burns, 2010; Mertler, 2017).

Through this approach, the researcher sought to overcome learning difficulties and enhance students' listening competence by applying targeted strategies. CAR promotes both improvement of teaching practices and professional growth through continuous reflection and action.:

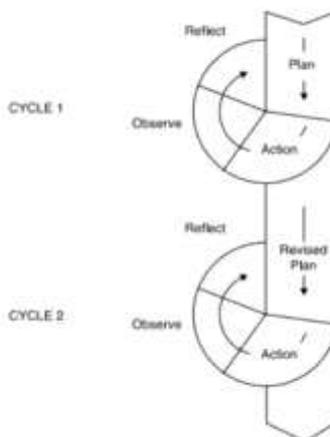


Figure 1. Action Research Cycle Flow Scheme by Kemmis & McTaggart (1988).

Subject of the Research

The subjects of this study were 36 students of class X.E6 (Phase E) at a senior high school in Yogyakarta, consisting of 12 male and 24 female students. The English teacher also participated as a collaborator, assisting in material development, observation, and evaluation of the VoA Learning English application during the lessons.

Scenario of the Action Research

This study followed the Classroom Action Research (CAR) model by Kemmis & McTaggart (1988), consisting of two cycles with four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection.

Reconnaissance

A preliminary study was conducted in class X.E6 to identify problems in learning English listening. The findings showed that students had low motivation, limited exposure to authentic audio, and found materials monotonous. Teachers also faced difficulties adapting methods to students' varied levels. Interviews with teachers and students confirmed these issues. The researcher then focused on improving students' motivation and listening

performance through the VoA Learning English application. A pre-test was administered to measure initial listening ability before the intervention.

Cycle 1

Planning

The first cycle consisted of four meetings. Based on pre-test results showing low listening skills, the researcher and teacher prepared lesson plans, materials, and instruments, integrating the VoA Learning English app. The selected materials were “Ask a Teacher” and “English in a Minute”, aligned with the syllabus.

Action

The researcher and teacher implemented the plan, using VoA audio materials in class. The process was observed using field notes and checklists, while feedback and discussions were conducted to evaluate teaching strategies and students’ responses.

Observation

Student engagement and responses were observed to assess the effectiveness of the activities and identify aspects needing improvement.

Reflection

The researcher and collaborator analyzed the results to determine the success of the first cycle. If outcomes were unsatisfactory, improvements and alternative strategies were planned for the next cycle to enhance listening performance.

Techniques of Data Collection

This study used two types of data: qualitative and quantitative.

Qualitative Data were obtained through observations and interviews with students and the English teacher to describe classroom activities and responses

Quantitative Data were gathered from listening tests (pre-test and post-test) to measure students’ improvement after using the VoA Learning English application.

Observation

Observations were conducted during the reconnaissance and action phases to understand classroom conditions before and during the use of the VoA Learning English app. Following McKechnie (2008) and Smit & Onwuegbuzie (2018), observation was used to gather authentic data on teaching activities, media use, student participation, and teacher techniques through checklists, photos, and field notes

Interview

Semi-structured interviews were held with the English teacher and 8–10 students during the reconnaissance and reflection stages to explore experiences, challenges, and engagement in listening activities (Brinkmann, 2013). Each session lasted 10–15 minutes, and all interviews were audio-recorded for analysis.

Instrument of Data Collection

This study used three instruments:

Observation Checklist

Used during all stages to record teaching activities, student participation, and classroom conditions using checklists, field notes, and photos (McKechnie, 2008).

Interview Guidelines

Contained open-ended questions for teachers and students to explore experiences, motivation, and challenges in using the VoA Learning English app (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Rost, 2011).

Listening Tests

Included pre-test and post-test with fill-in-the-blank questions to measure students’ listening improvement. Assessment followed Brown’s (2006) rubric covering comprehension, understanding, detail recognition, and response accuracy.

4. Results and Discussion

The action was executed in two cycles. A series of conclusions can be drawn from the reflection results of each cycle: on important findings.

The implementation of the VoA Learning English application in cycles I and II has been demonstrated to enhance students’ listening abilities

The efficacy of the VoA Learning English application in addressing the challenges faced by students, particularly the tendency to feel bored and the lack of exposure to engaging English audio material has been well-documented

The efficacy of the VoA Learning English application is maximized when utilized in conjunction with the five stages of the listening process. Furthermore, it facilitates the storage, retrieval, and utilization of information in a meticulous manner

The implementation of pre-listening and post-listening activities has been demonstrated to effectively address the issue of monotonous techniques in the pedagogy of listening. This pedagogical approach has been shown to enhance student engagement and enjoyment in the learning process

VoA Learning English application is an intriguing and appealing media and material resource that has the potential to enhance students' knowledge and motivation

The subsequent section delineates the extent of student improvement both prior to and following the implementation of the action.

Table 1. Students' Enhancement Before and After the Implementation of the Actions.

No	Before the actions were conducted	After the actions were conducted	
		Cycle I	Cycle II
1	The students were passive and not responsive at all through the learning process	Some students were enthusiastic in the lesson. However, some of the still did not pay attention to the researcher while explain the materials	Most of the students were fully pay attention and enthusiastic in the classroom. They became active did the exercise and the class were more conducive while doing the listening section.
2	The students had limited vocabulary and made the misspelled the words	It has been observed that some students have demonstrated proficiency in recognizing and being familiar with the vocabulary presented in the audio, while others continue to experience challenges in comprehending the auditory vocabulary	The majority of students reported a high level of comfort in engaging with the audio material in English. However, no significant enhancement in their vocabulary retention was observed when completing the question.
3	The teacher applied monotonous technique which used the audio only from book	The teacher used several materials using the application, not only from the book	The teacher used various teaching techniques and most of the students were high motivated in the classroom
4	The materials which were suitable for the students' proficiency were limited	The materials were suitable for some students, the other still felt uncomfortable to use the application and listened the native speaker	Most of the students found the application and the contents interesting, and know how to choose the right level for the students to listen in their practice
5	Students had low motivation in learning listening in the classroom	Some students had high motivation in learning listening by asking the researcher and also the teacher to use the media	Most of the students were excited and motivated to learn listening
6	There were lacks of interesting topics	The contents used were interesting and varieties. However, some of the students could not choose which contents that they wanted to listen for practice, so the just followed the same topic as their friends had	The students already understood well the native speakers' utterances in the contents

The researcher collected evaluation data from each cycle, with pre- and post-tests used to measure students' listening improvement. The pre-test was conducted on January 6, 2025, and the final post-test on February 10, 2025. Using the VoA Learning English application as a listening medium, the results showed clear enhancement in students' listening abilities. SPSS

descriptive analysis further confirmed progressive improvement from the pre-test to post-test in Cycles I and II.

Table 2. The Mean Scores.

	Item Statistics		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-Test	42.7778	20.22885	36
Post-Test1	77.2222	20.78614	36
Post-Test2	94.1667	9.06327	36

Before using the VoA Learning English Application, students' average listening score was 42.78, indicating low proficiency. After the first cycle, the mean rose to 77.22, and in the second cycle to 94.17, showing continuous improvement. The standard deviation decreased from 20.23 to 9.06, reflecting more consistent performance. These results confirm that repeated use of the VoA Learning English Application significantly enhanced students' listening skills over time.

The study confirmed that using the VoA Learning English application effectively improved students' listening comprehension, vocabulary, and motivation. This supports Krashen's (2009) theory of *comprehensible input* and shows that VoA's clear, structured materials help learners understand authentic English. Using Classroom Action Research (CAR) also allowed continuous reflection and improvement in teaching (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

These findings align with Tasya & Priajana (2018), Hayati et al. (2022), and Astuti et al. (2019), who also reported that VoA materials enhanced listening ability and confidence. Differences lie in this study's focus on audio-based VoA materials in a real high school setting, rather than experimental or video-based contexts.

The implementation of the Voice of America (VoA) Learning English application over two cycles yielded a measurable and significant improvement in students' listening skills. During Cycle I, students began to show increased responsiveness and engagement compared to the pre-intervention stage, while Cycle II marked a turning point in which the majority of students became active participants in the classroom. The transformation from passive learners into engaged listeners underscores the efficacy of the VoA application as an authentic and interactive medium for auditory language input. The structured, leveled content, combined with the clarity of native speaker delivery, enabled learners to gradually adjust to natural spoken English without being overwhelmed by complexity.

The data also highlighted that students initially struggled with limited vocabulary and spelling errors. However, after repeated exposure to vocabulary in context through the VoA application, students began to demonstrate improved lexical recognition. While vocabulary retention remained a challenge for some learners, particularly in transferring knowledge to written exercises, the auditory familiarity fostered through the application contributed to a greater degree of comfort and comprehension. These findings align with Krashen's Input Hypothesis (2009), which emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input in acquiring language naturally. The progressive increase in post-test scores, from a mean of 42.78 to 94.17, further validates the pedagogical value of repeated, scaffolded listening practice.

Moreover, the integration of the five stages of the listening process, pre-listening, while-listening, post-listening, reflection, and response, proved essential in maximizing the application's impact. By embedding these stages into classroom instruction, the learning experience shifted from a passive reception of information to a more interactive, metacognitive process. Pre-listening activities helped activate prior knowledge, while post-listening tasks reinforced comprehension and promoted critical reflection. This comprehensive approach not only improved students' listening performance but also addressed the monotony of traditional audio-based instruction, which had previously relied solely on textbook recordings with limited contextual appeal.

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Finally, the quantitative data collected through SPSS analysis reinforces the qualitative observations recorded throughout the two cycles. The increase in mean test scores, from 42.78 (pre-test) to 77.22 (Cycle I) and 94.17 (Cycle II), was accompanied by a decrease in standard deviation, indicating not only overall improvement but also greater consistency among students' performance. These outcomes resonate with the findings of prior studies (Tasya & Priajana, 2018; Hayati et al., 2022; Astuti et al., 2019), affirming the value of VoA materials in real classroom settings. However, this study contributes uniquely by applying VoA audio resources in a cyclic, reflective teaching model rooted in Classroom Action Research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988), thereby offering a replicable and contextually relevant framework for educators seeking to enhance listening instruction in Indonesian senior high schools.

5. Conclusion

The study found that using the VoA Learning English application significantly improved students' listening skills. Results from the pre-test and post-test showed notable progress in comprehension, vocabulary, and focus. Students became more motivated and engaged, supported by the app's slow-paced audio, clear pronunciation, and varied content.

In summary, the integration of technology-based learning proved effective in enhancing listening proficiency and creating a more interactive, student-centered environment. Future research is encouraged to explore other digital tools to further support EFL listening development.

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