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**IMPLEMENTATION OF RANDALL'S ESL CYBER LISTENING LAB MATERIALS FOR IMPROVING HIGH STUDENTS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION**

**Abstract.** Listening comprehension is considered to be one of the most important and challenging skills for both EFL instructors and university students. The lack of experimental research on applying digital resources for developing listening comprehension skills with university students makes the issue relevant. In this paper, the researchers reviewed the latest publications on the approaches to teaching listening comprehension to first-year university students. The review of the literature indicated that teaching listening comprehension can significantly benefit from utilizing digital technology. The present paper considers a three-phase renewed approach to listening comprehension. A study was carried out with Randall's ESL cyber listening lab materials that the authors used to develop listening comprehension skills. The content and principles of Internet resources contribute to reaching learning outcomes defines in the EFL curriculum. The article attempts to summarize the practical experience in conducting EFL classes based on Internet listening lab materials and to develop guidelines for using listening comprehension resources in EFL classrooms. Based on the findings of the study, we can conclude that most participants (75%) have a positive attitude towards using Internet resources in EFL classrooms. The majority of students consider that Randall's ESL cyber listening lab materials can assist in improving listening skills and acquiring new vocabulary. Several recommendations have emerged from the study based on the findings. We recommend when planning the lesson part "listening comprehension" in an EFL university classroom use one of the effective techniques – Internet sites for improving listening comprehension skills with carefully designed listening activities, vocabulary games and Internet-based investigations.

**Keywords:** listening comprehension; skills; Randall's ESL cyber listening lab; university students; EFL classes

**Introduction.** Listening comprehension is considered to be the most difficult of the four foreign language skills. Some researchers determine listening comprehension as the least explicit and most difficult language skill to handle (Rahimi and Abedi, 2014, p.) and provide input for learners (Toni et al., 2021, p.130). Language instructors and researchers mention a wide range of factors that can cause difficulties in acquiring listening comprehension skills. They consider listening comprehension to be a big challenge for many students to understand spoken messages, comprehension (Gestanti, 2017). Listening comprehension is crucial for the development not only of the first but also the second language because with listening, the learner obtains information on the phonology, lexis, syntax, semantics, and discourse structure of the target language and establishes the foundation of speaking in a foreign language (Deregözü, 2021, p. 62). One of the reasons the listeners often do not effectively handle listening tasks is the lack of background knowledge and psychological peculiarities of students (Nguyen, 2022).

Difficulty in mastering listening comprehension is also connected with so-called "subjective factors" that comprise a level of anxiety, working memory capacities, prior experience with the content and format, metacognitive skills (for managing attention), and of course language proficiency. There are also external factors that influence the listener's performance in listening comprehension. The length of the passages, information density and redundancy, idioms and culturally specific vocabulary, relevant information, speaker accents and speech rate belong to external factors. Some researchers state that students have critical difficulties in listening comprehension because universities and schools pay more attention to writing, reading, and vocabulary (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). That is why teachers should

enhance their positive attitude toward listening comprehension and utilize suitable strategies to develop students' listening skills. A three-phase approach to teaching listening skills was predominantly applied in foreign language instruction. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, foreign language teachers started to use the potential of technology in EFL learning. According to some researchers, digital technologies may success students' level of foreign language listening proficiency (Kostikova et al., 2021).

**Literature review.** Listening comprehension is challenging for students, however, it can be used to improve other skills such as reading or speaking (Dongkyoo, 2015; Foorman et al., 2015). Typically teachers organize their foreign language instruction into three phases: before (pre-), during, and after (post-) listening, emphasizing different cognitive and metacognitive processes (Read et al., 2021). The reviewed literature reflects the need to utilize different techniques in listening comprehension such as videos with subtitles (Hayati & Mohmedi, 2011), movies (Dongkyoo, 2015), educational programs (Duolingo, Quizlet, LinguaLeo, LearningEnglishwithNewYorkTimes, Polihlot 16, EnglishPod – LearnEnglish, Bussu), (Yeremenko et al., 2020; Chaikovska et al., 2020). Researchers state that authentic materials and digital tools are closely interrelated since technology operates authentic materials Thus, Ted talks (Humeniuk, 2021), MALL and CALL technology (Morales and Beltrán, 2006), podcasting (Chaikovska, 2020; Hasan & Hoon, 2013) are argued to provide support for the development of listening comprehension, since it extends the practice out of the language classroom into everyday life, providing the students with the opportunity to diversify and contextualise their learning activities (Read et al., 2021; Rahimi & Katal, 2012; Huang & Sun, 2010).

In research from T. Read, A. Kukulska-Hulme and E. Barcena (2021) listening comprehension is the way to support this learning process and scaffold its third phase. The overall results of their work "suggest that social network-based interaction improves the usage of the app by students in different ways, leading to more exposure to the target language and more guided practice in the development and application of the relevant strategies" (Read et al., 2021, p. 307). The authors created a news-based MALL Trainer app (ANT) based on different sources of audio news recordings to develop students' aural English comprehension listening strategies. Classroom activities in the experiment also included post-listening social network-based interaction.

Having analyzed world-famous online resources for improving listening comprehension and examining students' preferences the Ukrainian authors created an online course and it was called "English Fastpass". The online course includes learning materials for self-study (online video lessons, exercises, tests and Quizlet cards, YouTube channel), as well as Live Classes, webinars, speaking intensives and telegram chat. According to Kostikova et. al, texts from internet resources for listening comprehension contain authentic texts and educational and methodological materials for teachers to use and exercise understanding of the content. However, the experiment has confirmed, that skills in listening have not developed well due to other linguistic skills (Kostikova et al., 2021).

The influence of different technologies on listening comprehension proficiency has been examined. However, the authors gave the general characteristic of internet resources for listening comprehension such as English Central, Ted.com, Randall's ESL Cyber Listening, BBC World Service, and ABC News. However, to implement online resource-based activities into practice experimental studies should be carried out to provide detailed guidance on the use of each online resource.

Teaching strategies should correspond to the era we live in. A three-phase approach to teaching listening comprehension should be equipped with modern tools and techniques. Up-to-date online resources can help EFL teachers to develop students' listening comprehension skills. Having examined the available resources we concluded that DailyESL.com online

resource from Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab meets the requirements of the EFL curriculum for engineering students. Furthermore, we compared DailyESL.com online platform and Breakingnewsenglish.com with the help of the Similarweb ranking machine (Fig.1).



Fig.1. ESL-Lab. Com (DailyESL.com) vs Breakingnewsenglish.com

The data obtained showed that the global ranking of DailyESL.com is higher than Breakingnewsenglish.com. Audience demographic comparison analysis revealed that male students use DailyESL.com more than female ones. 30, 21% of young people aged 18-24 prefer to use DailyESL.com in comparison to 26,06% of Breakingnewsenglish.com enthusiasts.

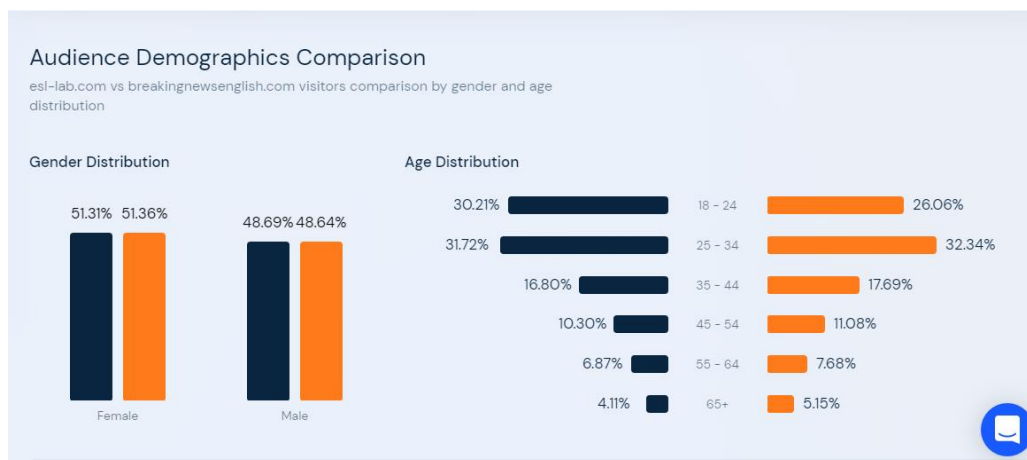


Fig.2. Gender and Age distribution of platform visitors

The present study was undertaken with 25 first-year bachelor male students of the Higher Educational Institution "Podillia State University" who were offered to develop listening comprehension skills with online resources. They have a 12-credit mandatory EFL course with 3 credits per year. During the first year at university (2021-2022), the students mastered the General English course. The English level of the students ranged from A1 to A2. At the end of the semester, the students took a poll to examine their attitude towards online resources used during the experiment. All students' responses were anonymous.

The theoretical research methods such as analysis and synthesis of literature sources to identify challenges in EFL listening comprehension and the approaches to teaching listening comprehension were used in the study. An empirical method such as a questionnaire was designed to examine students' attitudes towards using an online listening comprehension site. The research study examined the following questions:

1. Can DailyESL.com online resource from Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab be used to improve students' listening comprehension skills during EFL classes?
2. What were university students' attitudes towards technologies used during the experiment?

**Results of the research.** DailyESL.com Web site consists of recordings of everyday life accompanied by several comprehension questions, quizzes and social media buttons that allow learners to share their results and the quiz with others online.

During the first semester, we covered the following DailyESL.com topics: around the house, family relationships, education and work, in the community and vacations. Basic listening activities on the main text, for example, "English" classes included four parts: listening to the recording, answering the questions, reading the tape script of the recording with a strong focus on underlined words (part 1), discussion (part 2), on-line investigation (part 3), listening practice from ESL-lab com. However, the lesson outcomes showed that one-time listening to the recording was not enough for a clear understanding of a text. So we listened to the recording several times, especially during the first lessons. Part 4 (listening practice from ESL-lab com.) included, to our mind, thoroughly-designed three-stage listening activities. Let's take, for example, the general listening quiz "Day at school". First of all, we get general information about the recording: level, topic, speakers (man-boy, woman-girl), and length. Second of all, the students are given pre-listening exercises, idioms and collocations as shown in Fig. 3.

Fig.3. Printscreens of Part 4 (listening practice from ESL-lab com.)

Then the students listen to the interview and take multiple-choice tests. To practice the vocabulary from the conversation the students solve gap-filling. Post-listening stage of listening comprehension includes discussing. If we learn about university life, the students can discuss the length of the school year, a typical day at university, teacher and student interaction, and extra activities after university. The post-listening activities the students liked most dealt with Internet-based investigations:

1. How do students get to university?
2. Do students meet inside a building or outside?
3. What subjects do students learn each day?

4. What do students eat for lunch? Is it something they bring with them, or does the university have a cafeteria?
5. How many students are in a class?

To enhance students' self-study we used language games that were connected to the listening activity that can be completely done on their own. The print screens of the games are shown in Fig.2.

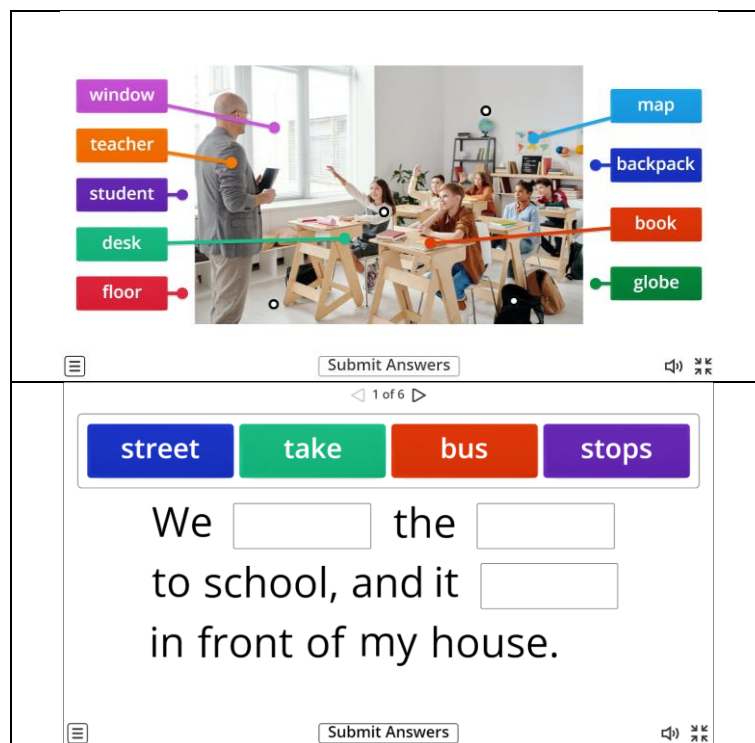


Fig. 2. Print screens vocabulary games based on ESL-lab com. recordings

To determine students' attitudes towards utilizing the DailyESL.com Web site in developing listening comprehension skills we designed the questionnaire to determine students' attitudes towards the DailyESL.com site.

Table 1  
Students' attitudes towards technologies used during the experiment

Statement	Highly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Highly disagree
Using online ESP learning sites in EFL classrooms is very engaging	31%	44%	16%	9%	0%
The DailyESL.com-based listening activities are effective	12%	53%	17%	10%	8%
DailyESL.com can improve my listening skills	14%	62%	15%	6%	3%
DailyESL.com can improve my vocabulary	11%	64%	17%	5%	3%
I would like to use other online resources to improve my listening skills	24%	32%	14%	19%	11%

The students who participated in the experiment unanimously voted for DailyESL.com. As can be seen from the table the majority of students (75%) consider online foreign language learning sites engaging, and 65% of respondents believe that DailyESL.com-based listening activities are effective. After using DailyESL.com during EFL classes the students concluded that DailyESL.com-based activities can improve their listening skills and vocabulary acquisition. The student's answers to the last question show that during the semester they developed a welcoming attitude towards using online resources for improving EFL skills, listening in particular. 56% of students have the desire to improve their listening skills through engaging in different online foreign language resources.

**Conclusions.** The study sought to analyze the available literature resources on utilizing digital platforms, and Internet sites for mastering listening comprehension skills. Overall, the literature review showed listening comprehension is one of the biggest challenges for students according to a wide range of factors it depends on and the complexity of its components. As a rule, language instructors structure their teaching of listening comprehension into pre-, during and post-listening activities. However, the contemporary approach to EFL learning involves using digital resources for developing listening comprehension skills. The present study is in line with previous research from Hayati and Mohmedi (2011), Dongkyoo (2015), Yeremenko (2020) and Chaikovska (2020). We also consider that utilizing online tools can benefit developing students' foreign language listening skills.

DailyESL.com online resources from Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab have been examined for compliance with the engineering curriculum. For a more detailed analysis, we compared DailyESL.com online platform and Breakingnewsenglish.com with the help of the Similarweb ranking machine according to the global ranking, age and gender criteria. We concluded that DailyESL.com online resources meet the requirements of EFL teaching with first-year bachelor students.

During the experiment, we used thoroughly designed DailyESL.com site listening materials and activities. The present paper describes the stages of working with online materials. After a semester of engaging with DailyESL.com online resources, the students were given the questionnaire. Responses to the questionnaire indicate that the participants have a positive attitude to using Internet site materials during foreign language classes. The students concluded that DailyESL.com-based materials are effective and their using can improve listening comprehension skills and benefit vocabulary acquisition.

**Prospects for further research development.** The present paper doesn't cover all possible aspects of utilizing Internet resources in EFL classrooms. The further study will engage more participants and extend the evaluation method of students' progress in listening comprehension.

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### **ВИКОРИСТАННЯ МАТЕРІАЛІВ RANDALL'S ESL CYBER LISTENING LAB ДЛЯ ПОКРАЩЕННЯ НАВИЧОК АУДІОВАННЯ У ЗВО**

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**Анотація.** Аудіювання вважається однією з найважливіших і найскладніших навичок як для викладачів EFL, так і для студентів університетів. Відсутність експериментальних досліджень щодо застосування цифрових ресурсів для розвитку навичок аудіювання у студентів університету робить проблему актуальною. У цій роботі дослідники розглянули останні публікації, присвячені підходам до навчання аудіюванню студентів першого курсу університету. Огляд літературних джерел вказує на те, що навчання аудіюванню може значно виграти від використання цифрових технологій. У цій роботі розглядається оновлений підхід до аудіювання. Дослідження було проведено з використанням Randall's ESL cyber listening lab. Зміст і принципи Інтернет ресурсів сприяють досягненню результатів навчання, визначених у навчальній програмі з іноземної мови.

У статті робиться спроба узагальнити практичний досвід проведення занять з іноземної мови на основі Randall's ESL cyber listening lab та розробити рекомендації щодо використання ресурсів для аудіювання на заняттях з іноземної мови. Виходячи з результатів дослідження можна зробити висновок, що більшість учасників (75%) позитивно ставляться до використання Інтернет ресурсів під час занять з іноземної мови. Більшість студентів вважають, що матеріали від Randall's ESL cyber listening lab можуть допомогти покращити навички аудіювання та поповнити словниковий запас. На основі отриманих результатів з'явилося кілька рекомендацій. На основі отриманих результатів здійснено спробу надати кілька рекомендацій. Ми рекомендуємо при плануванні уроку у частині «розуміння на слух» під час занять з іноземної мови в ЗВО використовувати один з ефективних прийомів – інтернет-сайти для вдосконалення навичок аудіювання за допомогою ретельно розроблених вправ з аудіювання, словникових ігор та Інтернет проектів.

**Ключові слова:** аудіювання; навички; студенти; заклади вищої освіти; Інтернет, сайт