

## EXTENSIVE LISTENING PRACTICE OF EFL LEARNERS WITH AUTHENTIC ENGLISH VIDEOS

by **Rastislav Metruk**

University of Žilina

Univerzitná 8215/1, 010 26 Žilina

rastislav.metruk@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

The present study investigates the self-reported frequency of watching authentic English videos by university EFL students with the intent of practicing listening comprehension skills. The subjects, 37 Slovak university students, were divided into two groups: 17 first-year B.A. students and 20 first-year M.A. students with the same major Teaching Training: English Language and Literature. Both groups filled in a questionnaire regarding their watching of authentic English videos. The findings suggest that both groups of subjects reported viewing English videos either every day or every other day, which could be considered extensive listening practice. The subjects seem to watch videos on video sharing websites and social networking websites fairly frequently as the majority of B.A. and M.A. students chose *every day* or *every other day* options in the questionnaire. Moreover, the participants considered practicing listening outside classroom through viewing English videos as beneficial to the development of their listening skills. This indicates that watching authentic English videos should have a place in EFL learning.

**Keywords:** authenticity; listening skills; video sharing sites; EFL learner; English videos

### **1. Introduction**

Listening is a basic language skill which should be given a major priority among the four language skills (Hamouda, 2013). It occupies an instrumental role within the process of L2 (second language, foreign language) learning; it is the first and most significant prerequisite for the skill of speaking (Barani, 2011). “A person’s ability to listen and understand spoken language is critical to oral communication in any language” (Atasheneh & Izadi, 2012). Furthermore, Alam & Sinha (2009) maintain that the significance of listening has been long recognized within the history of EFL teaching. Thus, developing listening comprehension plays a vital role in enhancing general communication skills and language competence (Hwaider, 2017).

Listening skills, however, have been long neglected in L2 acquisition, teaching, assessment, and research (Bakhtiarvand & Adinevand, 2011). In fact, teaching the skill of listening has not still received proper attention within the ELT process (Gilakjani & Ahmadi,

2011). Osada (2004) also indicates that the research into listening comprehension does not abound in literature as much as, for example, the research on reading comprehension. EFL teachers have to, therefore, remember that such neglect may severely impede the process of learning a foreign language since EFL learners might not be able to successfully establish and maintain communication. Listening skills are, without doubt, of vital importance in English language teaching and learning.

The current digital era has altered not only lifestyles of people, but also teaching and learning strategies (Tananuraksakul, 2016). Similarly, Sándorová (2013) states that the boom of technology in the last 20 years has made an impact on the world of education, including teaching foreign languages. In this day and age, technology is widely used for educational purposes at all levels (Solano, Cabrera, Ulehlova & Espinoza, 2017). Kruk (2017) explains that applying modern technologies in teaching and learning L2 is nowadays the norm in a substantial number of schools, universities, and different educational institutions since, according to Šimonová (2016), the ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) have penetrated every phase of the educational process. The 21<sup>st</sup> century EFL (English as a foreign language) learners are incessantly exposed to ICT technologies (Cinganotto & Cuccurullo, 2016), which offer great opportunities for both teachers and learners to experience EFL teaching and learning beyond the traditional classroom (Mulyono, 2016). As far as the development of listening skills is concerned, there is undoubtedly ample opportunity for practicing listening with the assistance of technological advancements.

Watching authentic English videos represents one of the ways how L2 learners can practice their listening skills outside the classroom. Movies, TV shows, soap operas, and a wide variety of video clips can be regarded as both attractive and useful source of authentic language for EFL learners.

The primary objective of this article is to investigate how frequently Slovak university EFL learners (upper-intermediate and advanced students) watch authentic English videos for the purposes of enhancing their listening skills, and how often they view the videos on video sharing websites and social networking websites. In order to address this issue, the following research questions regarding watching English videos outside classroom have been formulated:

1. How frequently do EFL university students at the CEFR B2 and C1 levels watch authentic English videos with the goal of increasing listening practice?
2. How often do they watch videos on video sharing websites?
3. How frequently do they watch videos on social networking services websites?

4. Do the EFL university students at the CEFR B2 and C1 levels agree that extensive listening practice provided through watching authentic English videos improves their listening skills?

## **2. Extensive listening and extensive viewing**

Extensive listening can be regarded as “listening for pleasure and without obligating the listener to keep demonstrating a satisfactory level of understanding” (Field, 2008, p. 54). According to Mishan & Timmis (2015), when L2 learners perform extensive listening, they listen to longer stretches of audio (-visual) material, and, at the same time, they do not have to worry about comprehension checks, memory tests, or anxiety, which can be created by these. Furthermore, they are exposed to substantial amounts of comprehensible input and take part in listening for pleasure outside the classroom (Siegel, 2013). L2 learners are not expected to fully understand everything, but they should rather have a general understanding and find pleasure in doing such listening (Graham & Santos, 2015).

The importance of extensive listening is apparent in L2 learning (Onoda, 2012). This type of listening may also (as well as intensive listening) have a pronounced effect on language learning of an individual. It should be noted that the motivational power increases considerably when learners themselves make choices about what they will listen to (Harmer, 2007). L2 learners ought to listen to various language phenomena and gain knowledge through TV programs, radio, the Internet and as many types of exposure as they possibly can find (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011).

Renandya & Jacobs (2016) note that extensive viewing, which can be regarded as a related concept to extensive listening, has recently come into being. It refers to EFL learners watching television, movies, and videos for the purposes of L2 learning. However, it should be noted that research on extensive listening is still in its infancy.

Videos do not only represent an inseparable part of people’s everyday lives, but they are also deemed to be a practical, powerful, and effective method when it comes to learning a language. There are numerous sound reasons why an English learner ought to spend time watching English videos.

Harmer (2007) explains that while the learners listen, they can also see language in use, which enables them to see a great deal of paralinguistic behaviour. For instance, they are able to recognize how facial expressions match intonation, and which phrases are accompanied by concrete gestures (such as shrugging shoulders when someone says *I don’t know*). Moreover, the viewers can see how various people stand while they talk to each other

(proximity), or what types of food they eat. It seems reasonable to assume that unspoken rules of behaviour within particular social instances are easier to be noticed in videos rather than to be described in a book or merely heard by EFL learners. Muslem, Mustafa, Usman & Rahman (2017, p. 29) also commented on the usefulness of videos by claiming that “[f]inally yet importantly, videos also provide real models since they include all the characteristics of naturally spoken English in realistic situations and they allow students to experience and feel a certain situation without going there. Therefore, students do not have to visit England just to know how they order food at a restaurant there”. Another advantage is that videos arouse curiosity and attract interest of L2 learners (İlin, Kutlu & Kutluay, 2012). Therefore, the learners’ motivation for watching authentic English videos is increased, and the learners actually spend a great deal of time being exposed to the L2. Bajrami and Ismaili (2016, p. 503) highlight yet another benefit by stating that “[a] great advantage of the video materials is that they provide original and authentic input as they are produced originally for native speakers such as films, different TV programs, songs”. Furthermore, authentic videos can be considered as helpful tools when it comes to learning the features of L2 in real contexts (Saeedi & Biri, 2016). Thus, the viewers are exposed to an L2 language in authentic settings and real contexts, which brings them somewhat closer to the native speakers of the foreign language.

### **3. Online videos and networking sites in enhancing listening skills**

Several studies support the notion of using videos in order to enhance EFL learners’ listening skills both inside and outside the classroom.

According to King (2002, p. 520), “[w]hen students are provided with well-structured tasks and activities designed to promote active viewing and stimulate involvement for making the most of learning opportunities of movies, there is no doubt that feature films are the most stimulating and enjoyable learning materials for the E-generation.” Khan (2015) highlights the implications of using films in order to improve language proficiency of non-native speakers, suggesting that greater exposure to movies can result in significant second language acquisition increase within non-native English language learning environments. Dehaki (2017) investigated the method of using videos as a way of teaching. The results demonstrate that the listening comprehension of the participants involved improved, and that they displayed a positive attitude to learning by watching videos. Similarly, the study of Mekheimer (2011) suggests that teaching with authentic video is a valuable approach to the whole language learning.

Advocates of extensive listening for developing L2 listening state that this type of listening is likely to enhance learners' performance and attitudes (Gramahm & Santos, 2015). Chang (2016) indicates that while practicing listening inside the classroom is valuable, the learners ought to be encouraged to proceed independently with working on their listening skills outside the classroom as well. Rodger's research (2013) demonstrates that watching L2 television results in improving listening comprehension. The study of Rodgers & Webb (2011) suggests that watching a TV series in sequence, starting with the first episode, helps the viewers develop background knowledge which ought to help them understand episodes which follow.

However, research is scarce as to the effects of extensive listening (Renandya & Jacobs, 2016). "Due to the fact that EL is a comparatively new idea, its theoretical framework is underdeveloped; there has been little hard evidence supporting the effect of EL on improving L2 listening competence" (Chang & Millett, 2014, p. 31). Therefore, further research has to be conducted to cast more light on listening for pleasure taking place outside the classroom.

One of the ways how EFL learners can practice their listening skills extensively is watching videos, TV programs, and movies on YouTube. YouTube is an online service, officially launched in late 2005, which allows registered users to upload video clips for viewing by the general population of Internet users (Benson, 2015, p. 90). Halloran & Hearn (2017, p. 80) explain the power and enormous influence YouTube has gained by claiming that "YouTube is now the top video website globally (with 13 billion videos), is the third most visited website in the world, and attracts over 15 billion visitors a month (roughly twice the population of the world)". Therefore, YouTube is the leading video website in the world today (Silviyanti, 2014).

Kelsen (2009) performed a study on students from Taiwan regarding their opinions of using YouTube. The results suggest that both teachers and learners may be involved to implement YouTube in a number of classroom activities in a creative manner to improve the outcomes of learning and generate a positive classroom environment. However, using YouTube inside the classroom in order to motivate the learners to use the service outside the classroom is not exactly clear. Students have to be allowed to freely explore and take first steps on a journey of learning English via YouTube.

Another study on the use of a YouTube channel, performed by Balbay & Kilis (2017, p. 246), reveals that most of the participants benefited to a large degree from the playlist videos of a specially-designed supplementary material YouTube channel. Furthermore, the

“students actively utilize this particular technology for learning outside the classroom too, which may change the teachers’ role in language and skills classroom”.

In his study, Styati (2016) explored the effects of YouTube tutoring on the development of learners’ writing skills, discovering that there exists a significant difference between the learners taught with the use of YouTube videos and the students taught by using pictures. Interestingly, the students who were taught by videos achieved a lower writing performance.

Kuo’s experiment (2009) illustrates that the experimental groups which were taught using YouTube video segments did better on test measuring listening comprehension in comparison to the control group taught by traditional teacher-centred teaching methods.

Researchers have recently studied some social networking websites in order to investigate the relationship between social networking and educational outcomes (Bista, 2014; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010).

As far as using social networking sites for the purposes of learning English is concerned, the study conducted by Kabilan, Ahmad & Abidin (2010) suggests that it is possible to learn English through Facebook since technologies and features of this social media website enable the learners to engage in meaningful language-based activities despite the fact that they primarily intended to join Facebook to socialize. Jin’s study (2015) indicates that “the adoption of Facebook is a new, innovative, and practical way to facilitate effective intercultural interactions as well as promote IC in the EFL classroom” (2015, p. 38). Bista (2015) performed a study on using Twitter as a pedagogical tool for 15 weeks as an activity which was required in the classroom. On the whole, the participants reported positive experiences, and they regarded Twitter as a valuable tool which can be used inside the class, and also recommended it to be used in future classes, while having clear instructions and expectations. Finally, according to a study conducted by Mompean & Fouz-González (2016), Twitter can be beneficial for both teaching and learning pronunciation, encouraging teachers to incorporate this social networking website within online or on-campus learning programs.

Social networking websites have become an inseparable part of young peoples’ lives and have an influence also on L2 learning process. However, it seems that little research has been conducted up to this day regarding social websites and language learning (Mohammed, 2016), and further investigation is necessary.

## 4. The study

### 4.1. The objective of the study

The main goal of this article is to examine how frequently Slovak university EFL learners (both upper-intermediate and advanced students) watch authentic English videos in order to improve their listening skills, and how often they view the videos on video sharing websites and social networking websites. In order to address this issue, the following research questions need to be addressed:

1. How frequently do EFL university students at the B2 and C1 levels watch authentic English videos with the goal of increasing listening practice?
2. How often do they watch videos on video sharing websites?
3. How frequently do they watch videos on social networking services websites?
4. Do the EFL university students at the B2 and C1 levels agree that extensive listening practice in terms of watching authentic English videos improves their listening skills?

### 4.2. Subjects and data collection

The participants were altogether 37 full-time Slovak university students of the study program Teaching Training: English Language and Literature at a Slovak university. They were divided into two groups: first-year B.A. students and first-year M.A. students. The B.A. group comprised altogether 17 students, 12 female and 5 male students. They were 20.4 years old on average, and their English was at the B2 level (Council of Europe, 2001). The M.A. group consisted of 20 students, 17 females and 5 males. They were 22.6 years of age on average, and they were at the C1 level. The Slovak language was the native tongue of all the subjects.

The subjects were asked to anonymously fill in a questionnaire so as to gather data on the exposure of subjects to authentic English videos. It was formed by four multiple-choice statements, and was administered in English.

## 5. Results and discussion

Questionnaire item no. 1: *I watch English videos (TV series, movies, reality TV, video clips, etc.) in order to improve my English listening skills (circle one option; please, specify how many hours, if you circle "every day" option).*

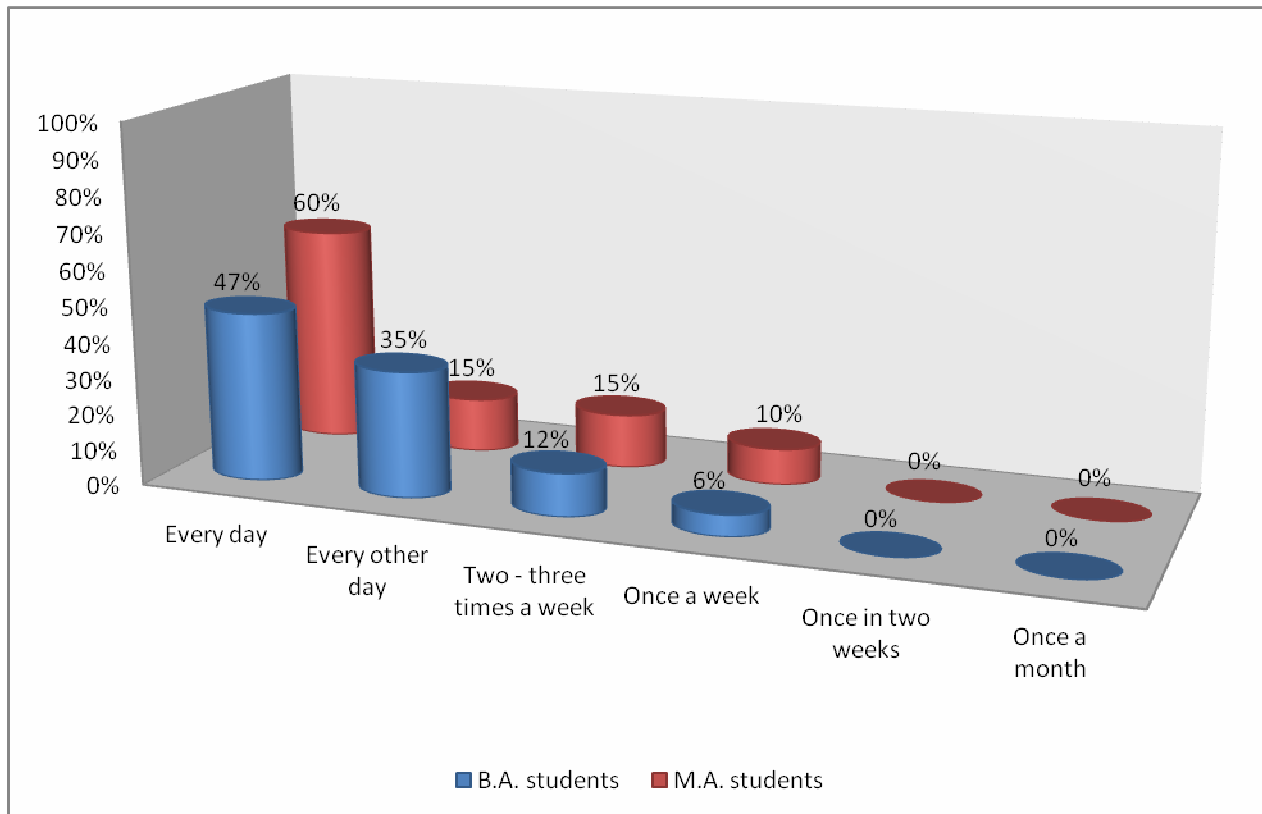


Figure 1. Amount of exposure to authentic English videos

8 of the total amount of 17 B.A. students, which accounts for 47%, watch English videos on a daily basis. On average, they are exposed to authentic English videos 2.2 hours a day. 6 B.A. subjects (35%) view the videos every other day, followed by 2 students (12%) who watch the videos two to three times a week, and 1 subject (6%) who watches the videos once a week.

12 M.A. subjects (out of the 20 M.A. students), which constitutes 60% of the total, watch English videos every day. On average, they spend 2.4 hours a day by viewing the videos. 3 subjects (15%) watch English videos every other day, and the same amount of subjects performs this activity two to three times a week, followed by 2 subjects (10%) who are exposed to English videos once a week.

It should be noted that the number of M.A. students (60%) watching video on a daily basis is higher in comparison to the number of B.A. students (47%), but a higher amount of B.A. students (35%) view the videos every other day when compared to the M.A. students (15%).

However, the difference between the two groups of subjects (B.A. group and M.A. group) does not seem to be substantial when it comes to the comparison of remaining 4



options. It should be also highlighted that the majority of both B.A. and M.A. subjects opted either for the first or second option in the questionnaire.

Questionnaire item no. 2: *I watch English videos on video sharing websites, such as YouTube, Vimeo, Dailymotion, etc. (circle one option; please, specify how many hours, if you circle “every day” option).*

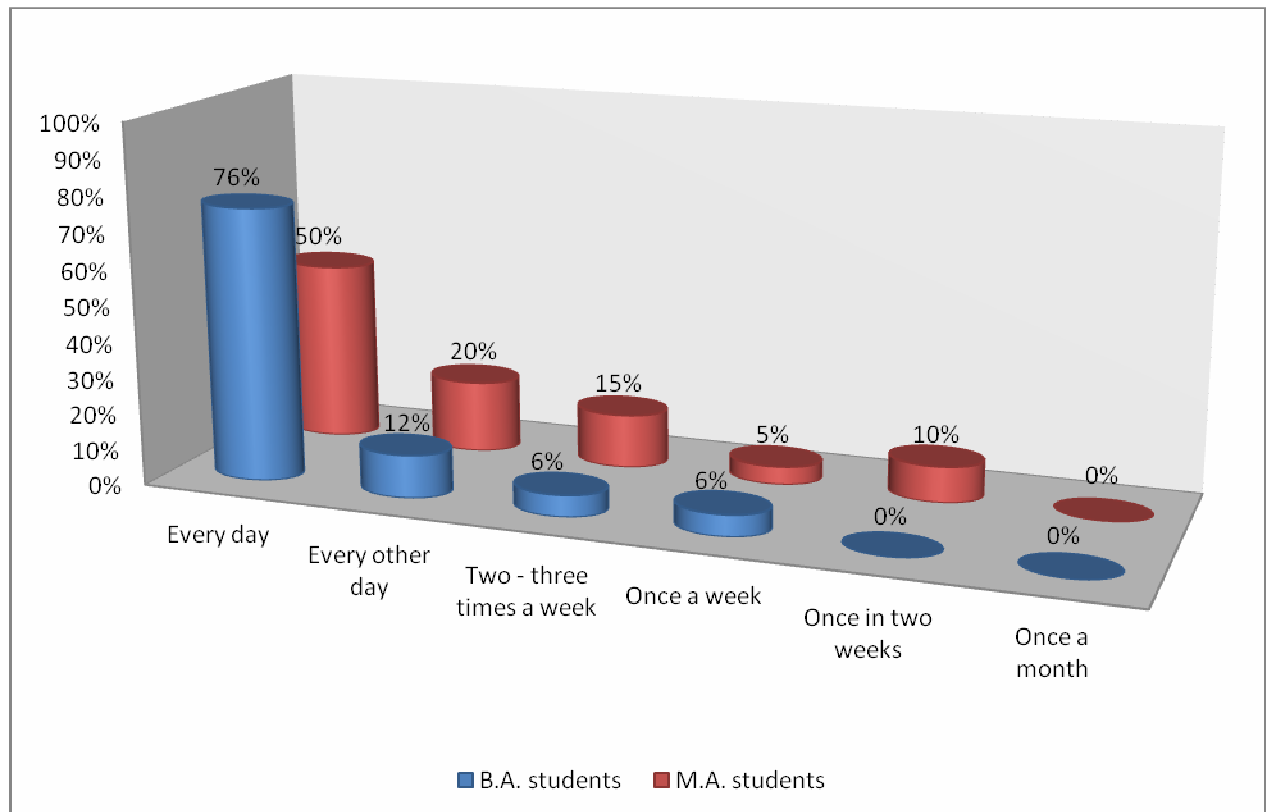


Figure 2. Using video sharing websites to watch authentic English videos

13 out of 17 B.A. subjects (76%) watch English videos on video sharing websites on a daily basis. On average, they view the videos 1.6 hours a day. 2 B.A. subjects (12%) watch the videos every other day, followed by 1 student (6%) who watches the videos two to three times a week, and 1 subject (6%) who is exposed to English videos once a week.

10 M.A. subjects (out of the total of 20 M.A. students), which accounts for 50% of the total, use video sharing websites for watching English videos every day. On average, they do this activity for 1.8 hours a day. 4 subjects (20%) watch English videos every other day, followed by 3 subjects (15%) – two to three times a week, 1 subject (5%) – once a week, and 2 subjects (10%) – once every two weeks.

Similarly to Figure 1, the majority of subjects opted either for the first or second option in the questionnaire. The largest difference (26%) can be recognized between the B.A. and M.A. students in *every day* option in favour of the B.A. students. However, the differences between the two groups within other options of questionnaire item no. 2 do not appear to be substantial.

Questionnaire item no. 3: *I watch English videos on social networking services websites such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. (circle one option; please, specify how many hours, if you circle "every day" option).*

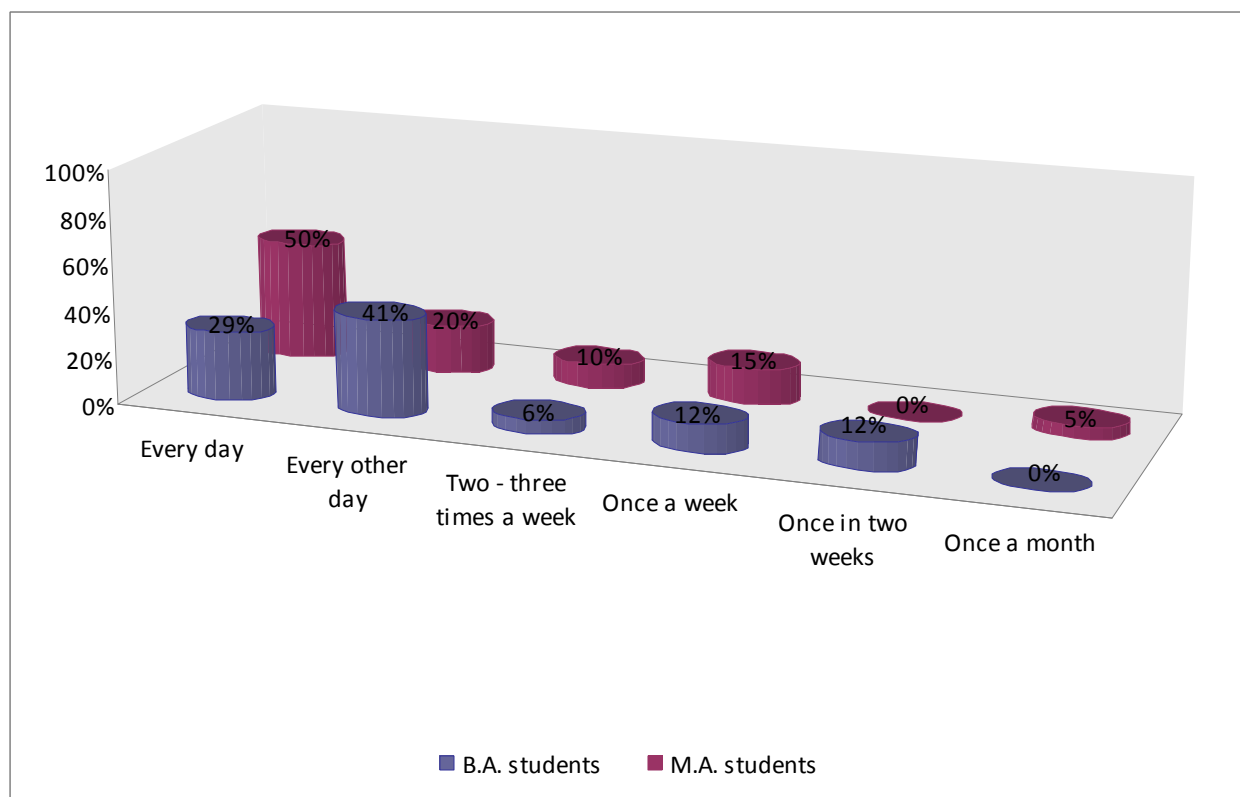


Figure 3. Using social networking websites to watch authentic English videos

5 B.A. subjects (29%) view English videos on social networking websites every day. On average, they watch the videos 1.6 hours a day. 7 B.A. subjects (41%) perform this activity every other day, 1 subject (6%) two to three times a week, 2 subjects (12%) once a week, and 2 subjects (12%) once every two weeks.

10 M.A. subjects (out of the total of 20 M.A. students), which accounts for 50% of the total, use video sharing websites for watching English videos on a daily basis. On average,

they do this activity for 1.2 hours a day. 4 subjects (20%) watch English videos every other day, 2 subjects (10%) two to three times a week, 3 subjects (15%) once a week, and 1 subject (5%) once a month.

Similarly to items no. 1 and 2, most of the subjects selected the options *every day* and *every other day*. It should be noted that the number of M.A. students (50%) watching video on a daily basis is higher in comparison to the number of B.A. students (29%), but a higher amount of B.A. students (41%) view the videos every other day when compared to the M.A. students (20%). However, the difference between the two groups of subjects does not seem to be dramatic when it comes to the comparison of the remaining 4 options.

Questionnaire item no. 4: *Extensive listening practice outside school in terms of watching movies, TV series, soap operas, video clips, etc. improves my listening skills (circle one option).*

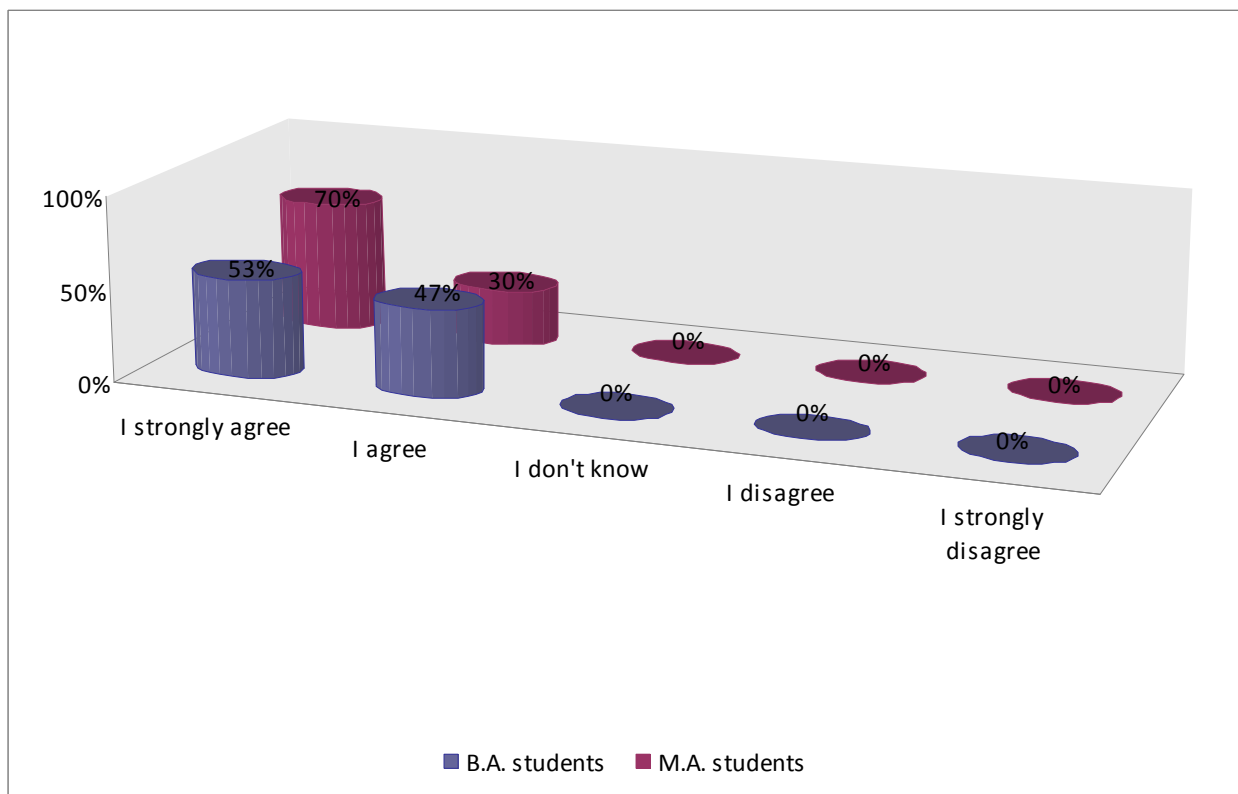


Figure 4. Subjects' attitudes to extensive listening practice

9 B.A. subjects (53%) chose the option *I strongly agree*, while 8 subjects (47%) opted

for the second choice *I agree*. 14 M.A. students (70%) strongly agree with statement in questionnaire item no. 4, while 6 subjects (30%) chose the option *I agree*.

The number of M.A. students (70%) who strongly agree is higher in comparison to the number of B.A. students (53%), and a higher amount of B.A. students (47%) opted for the option *I agree* when compared to the M.A. students (30%). On the whole, however, it can be concluded that all the subjects agree that watching English videos enhances their listening skills.

The study findings demonstrate that both B.A. and M.A. subjects are exposed to watching English videos to a relatively high degree as the majority of them opted for the *every day* or *every other day* options within questionnaire items nos. 1, 2, 3. Therefore, their frequency of watching authentic English videos regarding extensive listening practice can be considered as fairly high.

The B.A. students' everyday exposure (76% of B.A. subjects) to watching English videos is considerably higher on video sharing websites in comparison to the amount of B.A. subjects (29%) in terms of social networking websites. The B.A. subjects spend on watching the videos 1.6 hours a day in both instances.

The numbers are equal (50% video sharing websites and 50% social networking websites) when it comes to the everyday exposure of the M.A. students to English videos. However, the M.A. students watch the videos 1.8 hours a day on video sharing websites, but 0.6 hour less (1.2 hours) on social networking websites.

As far as the questionnaire item no. 4 is concerned, all the students agree with the statement *Extensive listening practice outside school in terms of watching movies, TV series, soap operas, video clips, etc. improves my listening skills*. Thus, it can be concluded that EFL learners attach extensive listening practice considerable importance.

## **6. Conclusions, recommendations, and limitations**

This small-scale study explored how frequently university EFL students watch authentic English videos in regard to extensive listening practice. Furthermore, video sharing and social networking websites used for watching the videos were also examined from the standpoint of frequency, along with the opinions of students on watching authentic English videos in relation to the improvement of their listening comprehension skills.

It can be concluded that most of the subjects (both B.A. and M.A.) are exposed to watching English videos either every day or every other day, which could be described as relatively satisfactory from the point of view of exposure to the target language since

extensive listening (extensive viewing) occupies a useful and important role within L2 learning.

It appears that the B.A. subjects use video sharing websites for watching English videos very frequently, while the M.A. students use them fairly frequently. As far as watching videos on social networking websites is concerned, both groups (B.A. and M.A.) of subjects seem to watch English videos fairly frequently.

Finally, as already mentioned, the subjects agree with the statement *Extensive listening practice outside school in terms of watching movies, TV series, soap operas, video clips, etc. improves my listening skills*, which can also be regarded as a positive sign of attitude towards extensive listening (extensive viewing).

The outcomes of this study are not to be generalized due to the limited number of subjects involved in the study. Employing a larger sample of subjects would definitely yield more reliable data. Moreover, other research methods such as observation, interview, or testing may be employed.

Taking pedagogical implications into account, the following recommendation, based on the study findings, can be offered. Watching authentic English videos seems to represent an attractive and useful way of practicing and developing listening skills. Thus, EFL learners should be encouraged to perform as much extensive listening practice in terms of watching English videos as possible. Furthermore, EFL teachers ought to bear in mind that extensive listening (extensive viewing) seems to hold an important place in EFL learning when it comes to the development of listening skills, and this type of research merits further attention of educators, academics, scholars, and researchers. It is, therefore, vital that further research into this area of EFL teaching and learning is performed, also due to the fact that exploring extensive listening and extensive viewing is still in its infancy.

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