Chapter 35
Design of the While Listening Activities in Interactive Multimedia Listening Software

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on the design of the while-listening activities while designing and developing interactive multimedia listening software (MLS) that aims to enhance language learners' listening skills as a part of learning English as a second. The language learners' perceptions towards the type (priority) as well as the number of the while listening activities (questions) on screen at one time were investigated. In total, 56 (N = 56) language learners participated in this study. The study was mostly quantitative and partly qualitative in nature. The quantitative results were analysed with SPSS. The qualitative data were analysed by examining the participants' responses gathered from the open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews, and by focusing on the shared themes among the responses. The results reveal that the language learners think that the priority as well as the number of the while listening activities on screen at one time can help as well as hinder their focus and comprehension at the while-listening stage in terms of different aspects.

BACKGROUND

The objective of interactive multimedia listening software (MLS) is to develop and practice language learners' listening skills and to improve their listening development as a part of second/foreign language learning (SLL/FLL). Although this can be achieved in a wide range of ways such as through instructions (Turel & McKenna, 2015a), feedback (Türel, 2012), captions (Perez, Peters & Desmet, 2014; Yang & Chang, 2014; Leveridge & Yang, 2013; Lwo & Lin, 2012; Trinder, 2002), tasks (Turel, 2014; Turel & Kiliç, 2014; Turel, 2015), annotations (Jones, 2015), glossaries (Turel & McKenna, 2015b), and other

ways, this can also be achieved with a wide variety of activities which can give language learners the opportunities to practice and develop their acoustic and visual channels, and receptive and productive skills. Since the focus of this chapter is the priority and the number of the while-listening activities/ questions (i.e. 'Clickable', 'Drag & Drop', 'Typing a letter', 'Typing a word') on screen at one time while designing and developing interactive MLS, we firstly focus on the pedagogical aspects of the while-listening activities in SLL/FLL and later look at the design of the while-listening activities in interactive MLS as a part of SLL/FLL.

Pedagogical Aspects of the While-Listening Activities

It is a well-known that the activities at the while-listening stage play a vital role in SLL/FLL. The assumptions underlying this are that at the while-listening stage (a) language learners are required to respond directly to questions, (b) the while-listening activities both function as a vehicle for as well as require language learners to understand the listening texts they attend to, and (c) the while-listening activities can prepare language learners for real life situations. Therefore, the while-listening activities need to be selected carefully.

The while-listening activities should not be too difficult. Instead, they should be the ones that can be practiced most by most language learners, as learners can become discouraged as soon as they feel that they cannot answer correctly. This is also a requirement of social learning theory, which posits that language learners' view of their potential ability to "perform well or to cope with in a situation actually affects their efforts to try a task, and their subsequent actual success or failure at the task" (Robinson, 1991, p. 156). Snow and Perkins (1979, p. 52) state that "… listening activities … must be neither too easy or too difficult, but set at an appropriate level in order to challenge the student to actively understand, form hypotheses, and try to clear up ambiguities". Ur (1992, p. 27) also says "tasks should be success oriented. This not only improves motivation … but also ensures the effectiveness of the listening practice given".

On the other hand, the while-listening activities should get progressively more difficult, as well. They should be interesting and train language learners, (which can be done in a variety of ways; Field, 1998, p. 114), not test them, as Ur (1992, p. 27) states: "Listening exercises are meant to train not to test; and the best practice is obtained by having learners do the activity more or less successfully, not by having them fail".

While-listening activities should be the ones that can give language learners the opportunity to use the affective strategies, which are used at the while-listening stage by effective language learners as well as by native speakers (NSs) in 'real life' (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper & Russo, 1985, pp. 582-3; Bacon, 1992, p. 403).

While-listening activities might sometimes feature a problem-solution aspect, as (a) this requires active involvement and full interaction, and (b) most language learners enjoy solving problems that require active participation (Mangiafico, 1996, p. 109). We, however, need to bear in mind that 'problem-solution' questions are complex, as Urbain (1981, p. 129) states: "The type of exercise is more complex, since it involves not only listening comprehension of a recording, but also drawing conclusions from it to allow the student to solve a problem".

The level of difficulty or ease of while-listening activities can be adjusted by diminishing or increasing the support level, processing load (i.e. cognitive load), processing time or tailoring the questions. With respect to the last issue, Beile (1978, p. 149) says: "According to the nature and relative difficulty

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