Educalingua
International Conference
FPBS UPGRIS

A Case Study on Children Listening Ability through Cartoon Videos in Batahan Village

Laila Saqila Putri
Department of English Language Education, State College of Islamic Studies Mandailing Natal, Indonesia, lailasaqila38@gmail.com

Aida Parista
Department of English Language Education, State College of Islamic Studies Mandailing Natal, Indonesia, aidaparista@gmail.com

Sartika Dewi Harahap
Department of English Language Education, State College of Islamic Studies Mandailing Natal, Indonesia, sartikahrp12@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Listening is a fundamental language skill that plays an essential role in children's language development. However, children in rural areas often have limited exposure to English, making engaging learning media necessary. This study aimed to explore the listening ability of children aged 4–5 years through the use of cartoon videos in Batahan Village. This research employed a qualitative case study design involving three children aged 4–5 years. Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews with parents, and documentation. The data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña qualitative analysis model, while data credibility was ensured through triangulation.The findings revealed that cartoon videos positively contributed to children's listening development by increasing their attention, engagement, and learning motivation. The children were able to recognize characters, identify activities, understand simple instructions, and respond verbally and non-verbally to English input. However, differences in listening performance were influenced by individual characteristics, attention span, confidence, and learning preferences. The study also found that parental involvement enhanced children's comprehension, participation, and confidence during learning activities.In conclusion, cartoon videos are an effective instructional medium for improving young children's English listening ability by providing meaningful audiovisual input in an enjoyable learning environment. Their effectiveness is further strengthened through active guidance from teachers and parents.

Keywords: attention, cartoon videos, early childhood, listening ability, rural education

Introduction

Listening is widely recognized as the first language skill acquired by children and serves as the foundation for the development of speaking, reading, and writing skills. Through listening, children receive linguistic input that enables them to recognize sounds, understand vocabulary, and construct meaning from spoken language. Brown (2001) states that listening is an active process in which learners interpret auditory information by combining linguistic knowledge with contextual understanding. Consequently, developing listening ability during early childhood is essential because it supports children's overall language acquisition and communication skills.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), listening presents particular challenges for young learners due to their limited exposure to English outside the classroom. This situation is especially evident in rural communities, where English is rarely used in daily communication and learning resources remain limited. In Batahan Village, Mandailing Natal Regency, children generally encounter English only during classroom activities, while opportunities to hear authentic English in their surrounding environment are minimal. As a result, conventional teaching practices that rely primarily on vocabulary memorization and picture cards often fail to provide sufficient auditory input for developing listening comprehension.

One instructional medium that has attracted considerable attention is the use of cartoon videos. Cartoon videos combine visual images, spoken language, sound effects, music, and contextual actions, enabling children to associate spoken words with meaningful situations. According to Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis, language acquisition occurs when learners receive comprehensible input that is slightly beyond their current level of proficiency but remains understandable through contextual support. Cartoon videos naturally provide this type of input because children can infer meaning through visual cues while simultaneously listening to spoken English. In addition, Mayer's (2009) Multimedia Learning Theory suggests that learning becomes more effective when verbal information is presented together with relevant visual representations, allowing learners to process information through both auditory and visual channels.

Several previous studies have demonstrated the positive contribution of cartoon videos to language learning. Putri (2021) found that cartoon videos improved kindergarten students' listening comprehension by increasing their attention and participation during classroom activities. Rahman (2020) reported that animated stories enhanced learners' listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition more effectively than conventional teaching methods. Similarly, Nurlaila (2022) concluded that audiovisual media supported children's listening and speaking development by providing meaningful visual contexts that facilitated comprehension. Although these studies consistently reported positive findings, most were conducted in urban educational settings where technological facilities and English exposure were relatively adequate.

Despite these encouraging findings, research investigating the implementation of cartoon videos in rural learning environments remains limited. Children living in rural areas often experience different educational conditions, including limited access to digital

learning media and fewer opportunities to interact with English. Furthermore, previous studies have mainly emphasized measurable learning outcomes through quantitative approaches, while relatively few have explored children's listening development qualitatively by examining their attention, engagement, and responses during learning activities.

This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the listening ability of children aged 4-5 years through the use of cartoon videos in Batahan Village using a qualitative case study approach. Rather than focusing solely on learning outcomes, this research explores how children respond to audiovisual learning media and how cartoon videos influence their listening development, attention, and motivation during English learning activities. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on multimedia-assisted language learning and provide practical recommendations for teachers and parents in implementing engaging listening activities for young learners, particularly in rural educational settings.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the listening ability of children aged 4-5 years through the use of cartoon videos in Batahan Village, Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to investigate children's learning behaviors, responses, and experiences in a natural setting. The case study design allowed the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding of how cartoon videos influenced children's listening development during English learning activities. The research was conducted from October to November 2025. Three children aged 4-5 years were purposively selected as the participants because they met the criteria of participating in English learning activities using cartoon videos. In addition, parents were involved as supporting informants to provide complementary information regarding children's listening habits, learning motivation, and responses during the learning process. Data were collected through three techniques: observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was carried out to examine children's listening behavior, attention, participation, and responses while watching English cartoon videos. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents to obtain information about children's language development, learning experiences, and parental assistance during the activities. Documentation, including photographs and field notes, was used to support and verify the observation and interview findings. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, triangulation was employed by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Consistency among these data sources strengthened the credibility of the research findings. The collected data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and organized relevant information concerning children's listening ability. The data were then displayed descriptively to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified throughout the analysis process to ensure that the findings accurately represented children's listening development through cartoon video-based learning.

Findings and Discussion

This study explored the listening ability of children aged 4–5 years through the implementation of cartoon videos in English learning activities. The analysis was based on classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with parents, and supporting documentation. Three research indicators were used to analyze the findings: children's listening ability, attention during learning activities, and learning motivation. The findings revealed that cartoon videos positively influenced children's English listening development. The combination of colorful visual illustrations, attractive characters, repetitive dialogues, songs, and contextual actions encouraged children to pay attention and actively participate in the learning process. Although all participants showed positive responses, the level of listening development varied according to their individual characteristics.

Children's Listening Ability

The observation results indicated that the participants were able to understand basic information presented in the cartoon videos. They recognized characters, identified simple activities, understood basic instructions, and interpreted the emotional expressions shown by the cartoon characters. Furthermore, the children attempted to repeat several English words and short expressions after listening to the videos, although the level of pronunciation accuracy differed among individuals. Among the three participants, Fais demonstrated the highest listening achievement. He consistently maintained attention throughout the activity and successfully answered most comprehension questions. Fais was able to recognize the main character, describe simple activities, follow verbal instructions accurately, and identify emotional expressions presented in the story. He also imitated English expressions enthusiastically and expressed his willingness to watch the cartoon again.Taki demonstrated satisfactory listening development. He understood the general storyline and identified several important activities shown in the videos. However, his concentration occasionally decreased during the observation sessions, requiring repeated questions and additional encouragement before responding. Despite these limitations, Taki remained actively involved in the learning activities and demonstrated positive emotional responses throughout the sessions.Rayyan displayed different learning characteristics. Although he showed enthusiasm while watching the cartoon videos, his attention was easily distracted. He recognized several concrete visual elements and correctly identified simple actions performed by the cartoon characters. However, he experienced greater difficulty following verbal instructions and repeating English expressions. His responses suggested a stronger preference for movement-based learning activities rather than prolonged observation.The differences among the participants indicate that listening ability develops differently according to children's individual characteristics, confidence, attention span, and learning preferences. Therefore, instructional media alone cannot guarantee equal learning outcomes for every child.These findings support Brown (2001), who explains that listening is an active process involving the interpretation of spoken language through contextual understanding. In this study, children combined auditory input with visual information, enabling them to understand English expressions despite their limited vocabulary.Similarly, Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis explains that language acquisition occurs when learners receive comprehensible input. Cartoon videos

provided meaningful audiovisual contexts that enabled children to infer the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary without direct translation. Repeated exposure to familiar dialogues also contributed to children's gradual listening development.These findings are consistent with those reported by Ghasemi and Hashemi (2011), who found that animated cartoons facilitate children's English learning by providing contextualized language input in an enjoyable learning environment.

Children's Attention During Learning Activities

Attention is one of the most important factors influencing successful listening instruction. Throughout the observation sessions, all participants demonstrated high interest when cartoon videos were introduced. Bright colors, attractive animations, songs, and sound effects immediately attracted children's attention and encouraged them to remain engaged during the activities.However, differences were observed in children's ability to maintain attention. Fais remained focused throughout the entire learning session and rarely showed signs of distraction. Taki occasionally shifted his attention but was able to regain concentration after receiving simple guidance from the researcher. Meanwhile, Rayyan demonstrated the shortest attention span and frequently shifted his focus toward surrounding objects or preferred engaging in physical movement. These findings suggest that while cartoon videos effectively capture children's initial attention, sustained attention depends on each child's developmental characteristics. Teachers should therefore adjust the duration of video-based learning according to children's cognitive readiness and developmental needs.The findings support Mayer's (2009) Multimedia Learning Theory, which argues that meaningful combinations of visual and auditory information facilitate learning and maintain learners' attention. Cartoon videos provide simultaneous verbal and visual input, enabling children to process information through multiple cognitive channels.

Children's Motivation Toward English Learning

The findings also revealed that cartoon videos increased children's motivation to participate in English listening activities. All participants demonstrated positive emotional responses during the learning sessions, including smiling, laughing, imitating cartoon characters, and answering simple questions enthusiastically.Fais expressed strong motivation by requesting to watch the cartoon again after the activity. Taki also showed enjoyment and willingly participated in classroom interactions despite occasionally lacking confidence. Rayyan demonstrated positive emotions throughout the activity, although he preferred combining learning with physical movement rather than watching videos continuously.Interview results further revealed that parental assistance strengthened children's motivation. Parents who accompanied their children during the viewing sessions frequently repeated vocabulary, explained simple meanings, and encouraged verbal imitation. Such interactions increased children's confidence and helped them understand the cartoon content more effectively.This finding supports Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes that children's cognitive development occurs through interaction with more knowledgeable individuals. In this study, parents and teachers acted as facilitators who provided scaffolding while children learned through cartoon videos. Moreover, Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis explains that children acquire language more successfully when learning occurs in a

relaxed and enjoyable environment. Cartoon videos reduced anxiety and encouraged children to participate naturally in English listening activities.

Overall Discussion

Overall, the findings indicate that cartoon videos are an effective instructional medium for improving English listening ability among children aged 4–5 years. The videos provide comprehensible audiovisual input that supports listening comprehension while simultaneously increasing children's attention and learning motivation. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of cartoon videos is influenced by individual differences, including attention span, confidence, and learning preferences.Another important finding is that the success of cartoon-based learning depends not only on the instructional media but also on meaningful interaction with teachers and parents. Active guidance, vocabulary repetition, questioning, and encouragement significantly enhanced children's understanding and participation during the learning process.Compared with previous studies, this research offers additional insights by examining children's listening development in a rural educational context using a qualitative case study approach. Rather than measuring achievement scores quantitatively, this study explored children's behaviors, emotional responses, and interactions throughout the learning process. Therefore, the findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how multimedia-assisted instruction supports early childhood English learning in authentic classroom settings.

Table 1. Summary of Children's Listening Development

Participant	Listening Ability	Attention	Motivation	Overall Category
Fais	Excellent	Excellent	Very High	Highly Developed
Taki	Good	Good	High	Well Developed
Rayyan	Fair	Moderate	Good	Developing

Table 1 summarizes the overall performance of the three participants. Fais demonstrated the strongest performance across all research indicators, while Taki showed good progress with occasional difficulties in maintaining attention. Rayyan displayed positive motivation but required additional support to improve listening comprehension and sustained attention.



Figure 1. observation1

Conclusion

This study investigated the listening ability of children aged 4-5 years through the use of cartoon videos in Batahan Village. The findings demonstrate that cartoon videos provide meaningful audiovisual input that supports children's English listening development. Through repeated exposure to animated stories, songs, and contextual dialogues, the participants were able to recognize characters, identify activities, understand simple instructions, and respond verbally and non-verbally during English learning activities.These findings indicate that cartoon videos create an enjoyable learning environment that facilitates children's listening comprehension in a natural way.The study also found that cartoon videos positively influenced children's attention and learning motivation. Attractive visual elements, repetitive language, and engaging storylines successfully maintained children's interest throughout the learning process. However, differences in listening performance were observed among the participants due to variations in attention span, confidence, and individual learning preferences. Therefore, listening development should be understood as an individual process influenced by both cognitive and affective factors.Furthermore, the findings emphasize that the effectiveness of cartoon videos depends not only on the quality of the instructional media but also on meaningful interaction with adults. Active guidance from teachers and parents through questioning, vocabulary repetition, explanations, and encouragement strengthened children's comprehension and confidence during learning activities. These interactions enabled children to process English input more effectively and participate actively throughout the learning process.Overall, this study concludes that cartoon videos are an effective instructional medium for improving English listening ability among young learners, particularly in rural educational settings where exposure to English is relatively limited. The integration of engaging audiovisual materials with appropriate teacher and parental support can provide meaningful learning experiences and contribute to children's early English language development.

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