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SOCIALIZATION TO IMPROVE LEARNERS' SKILL IN LISTENING COMPREHENSION TO FACE GLOBAL CHALLENGES

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ABSTRAK

Studi ini mengeksplorasi dampak dari strategi sosialisasi pada peningkatan keterampilan pemahaman yang didengarkan oleh pembelajaran 'untuk peralatan yang lebih baik untuk tantangan global. Penelitian pengabdian ini dilaksanakan dengan 20 peserta dari Sekolah Menengah Kampus Pematangsiantar dan membahas perlunya keterampilan mendengarkan yang efektif dalam konteks peningkatan komunikasi internasional dan mobilitas akademik. Persiapan TOEFL tradisional menawarkan menekankan praktik individu, namun penelitian ini menekankan interaksi sosial sebagai sarana untuk meningkatkan pemahaman mendengarkan, kepercayaan diri, dan kinerja tes. Implementasi kegiatan sosial terstruktur yang terlibat seperti diskusi sebaya, latihan mendengarkan kelompok, dan tugas pemecahan masalah kolaboratif yang berpusat pada materi mendengarkan TOEFL otentik. Data dikumpulkan melalui sosialisasi, pengamatan, dan umpan balik pembelajaran. Hasil mengungkapkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam skor mendengarkan TOEFL peserta didik, kepercayaan yang meningkat, dan kemampuan yang lebih besar untuk menangani berbagai konteks mendengarkan. Tantangan yang dihadapi termasuk berbagai tingkat kemahiran, kecemasan pelajar, dan waktu terbatas, yang ditangani melalui penargetan perancah, dinamika kelompok yang mendukung, dan desain tugas yang efisien. Studi ini menegaskan bahwa sosialisasi memainkan peran penting dalam perolehan bahasa, terutama dalam pemahaman mendengarkan untuk tes standar seperti TOEFL. Lingkungan belajar sosial menumbuhkan keterlibatan aktif, mengurangi kecemasan, dan mempromosikan penggunaan praktis strategi mendengarkan dalam konteks otentik. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pendidik harus mengintegrasikan sosialisasi ke dalam program persiapan TOEFL untuk mengembangkan pesaing dan kesiapan global pelajar untuk pengaturan akademik dan profesional internasional.

Kata Kunci : Tantangan Global, Pembelajaran Bahasa, Pemahaman Mendengarkan, Interaksi dengan Teman Sebaya, Sosialisasi, TOEFL

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of socialization strategies on improving learners' TOEFL listening comprehension skills to better equip them for global challenges. Conducted with 20 participants from SMA Kampus Pematangsiantar, the research addresses the need for effective listening skills in the context of increasing international communication and academic mobility. Traditional TOEFL preparation often emphasizes individual practice, yet this study emphasizes social interaction as a means to enhance listening comprehension, confidence, and test performance. The implementation involved structured social activities such as peer discussions, group listening exercises, and collaborative problem-solving tasks centered on authentic TOEFL listening materials. Data were collected through socialization, observation, and learner feedback. Results revealed significant improvements in learners' TOEFL listening scores, increased confidence, and a greater ability to handle varied listening contexts. Challenges encountered included varying proficiency levels, learner anxiety, and limited time, which were addressed through targeted scaffolding, supportive group dynamics, and efficient task design. This study confirms that socialization plays a critical role in language acquisition, particularly in listening comprehension for standardized tests like the TOEFL. Social learning environments foster active engagement, reduce anxiety, and promote the practical use of listening strategies within authentic contexts. The findings suggest that educators should integrate socialization into TOEFL preparation programs to develop learners' global competencies and readiness for international academic and professional settings. Keywords: Global Challenges, Language Learning, Listening Comprehension, Peer Interaction, Socialization, TOEFL

INTRODUCTION

In today's interconnected world, English proficiency has become an essential tool for academic advancement, career development, and global engagement. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) serves as a gateway for non-native English speakers seeking access to international educational institutions and professional opportunities. Within this standardized test, the Listening Comprehension section plays a vital role in assessing a candidate's ability to understand spoken English in academic settings. As global communication increasingly relies on real-time verbal interaction, proficiency in listening comprehension is no longer optional—it is indispensable for navigating diverse, multilingual environments (Goh, 2010).

Despite its importance, many learners find the Listening Comprehension section of the TOEFL particularly challenging. Difficulties often stem from limited exposure to authentic spoken English, varying accents, rapid speech, and the need to process information while taking notes. Moreover, traditional language instruction frequently emphasizes grammar and reading over listening and speaking skills, resulting in an unbalanced skill set (Rost, 2011). As a result,

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learners may perform poorly on high-stakes assessments and struggle to adapt in real-world academic or professional situations where effective listening is essential.

To overcome these obstacles, language educators and researchers are increasingly turning to the concept of socialization as a means to enhance listening proficiency. Socialization in this context refers to the process by which learners acquire language and communicative norms through interaction and participation in real-life social environments (Duff, 2010). Through conversation, collaborative learning, group discussions, and peer interactions, learners become more attuned to the rhythms, patterns, and contextual cues of natural speech. These socially rich experiences provide a more authentic foundation for developing the listening skills needed for TOEFL success.

Socially embedded learning opportunities help bridge the gap between classroom instruction and the demands of global communication. Research suggests that students who engage in interactive, communicative tasks improve not only their listening comprehension but also their confidence and motivation (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). For TOEFL preparation, this means that exposure to academic lectures, informal discussions, and multimedia materials—especially when paired with guided reflection or peer feedback—can enhance the ability to extract main ideas, understand speaker intent, and follow complex discourse structures.

From a theoretical perspective, the sociocultural theory of language learning provides strong support for the integration of socialization into language instruction. According to this view, language development is inherently tied to social interaction and mediated learning experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). Educators can apply these principles by designing tasks that simulate TOEFL-style listening environments, incorporating group-based learning, and encouraging students to participate in English-speaking communities both online and offline. Such practices not only build listening skills but also prepare learners for the social and cultural dimensions of global academic life.

This paper explores how socialization can be strategically utilized to improve learners' TOEFL Listening Comprehension skills in preparation for the global challenges of the 21st century. By reviewing key theories, identifying common listening barriers, and presenting practical, interaction-based strategies, the paper aims to offer educators and learners evidence-based insights into effective TOEFL preparation. Ultimately, enhancing listening through socialization not only improves test outcomes but also supports learners in becoming competent, confident participants in a globally connected world.

Listening comprehension is widely recognized as a foundational skill in second language acquisition, particularly in high-stakes assessments such as the TOEFL. According to Vandergrift and Goh (2012), listening is a complex, active process involving not only the decoding of language but also the integration of contextual and cultural cues. This complexity makes it a particularly challenging skill for learners, especially when assessed in an academic context like TOEFL, where comprehension of lectures, conversations, and specific academic vocabulary is required. Research has shown that successful listening comprehension depends on both linguistic knowledge and cognitive strategies (Goh, 2000).

In recent decades, educational researchers have emphasized the importance of social interaction in language learning. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) has served as a theoretical foundation for understanding how learning occurs through mediated social activities. Language is not simply acquired in isolation; it is developed through communicative practices within a social context. This theoretical perspective is especially relevant in second language (L2) learning, where exposure to authentic language use through peer interactions, group tasks, and collaborative environments contributes significantly to listening comprehension development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

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Language socialization—defined as the process by which individuals acquire language and cultural competence through participation in social activities—has gained traction in applied linguistics. Duff (2010) argues that learners become competent language users not only by studying grammatical rules but also by engaging in meaningful interaction. Through such engagement, learners are exposed to discourse patterns, intonation, and pragmatic features that are difficult to replicate in traditional instruction. In TOEFL preparation, these real-life interactions can simulate test conditions and help learners become more comfortable with academic listening contexts.

Socialization strategies have been shown to improve various aspects of listening comprehension, including processing speed, note-taking ability, and inferencing skills. For instance, Chang and Millett (2014) found that extensive exposure to academic listening materials in a socially supported environment significantly improved learners' ability to recognize main ideas and supporting details—key skills evaluated in the TOEFL Listening section. Furthermore, collaborative listening tasks, such as peer discussion of audio content or group summarization, help reinforce listening outcomes by providing immediate feedback and promoting deeper cognitive engagement (Vandergrift, 2004).

Another key advantage of socialization in TOEFL listening preparation is the development of learner autonomy and reduced listening anxiety. As learners participate in group-based listening activities or language exchange programs, they gradually build confidence and motivation (Graham, Santos, & Francis-Brophy, 2014). These affective factors are closely linked to listening success. Anxiety, in particular, has been shown to negatively impact comprehension, and socially supported learning environments can help reduce this barrier (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

While there is robust evidence supporting social interaction in language learning, specific research focused on TOEFL listening preparation remains limited. However, parallels can be drawn from broader L2 listening studies, suggesting that integrating social learning strategies—such as dialogue journals, peer listening tasks, and exposure to authentic speech in social contexts—can significantly benefit learners preparing for TOEFL (Rost, 2011). Digital technologies further support these efforts by providing learners with access to forums, podcasts, MOOCs, and online communities that mirror TOEFL listening demands.

In summary, the literature indicates that socialization plays a vital role in enhancing listening comprehension, especially in preparation for global challenges such as academic study or international careers. Although more targeted research is needed in the context of TOEFL, existing studies clearly support the integration of social interaction in language learning curricula. By creating socially enriched learning environments, educators can help learners develop not only the technical listening skills required for TOEFL success but also the intercultural and cognitive competencies essential in today's global landscape.

METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION

This study utilizes a research model and approach known as the community service model, specifically designed for investigating target audiences through two distinct sessions: a lecture and a discussion. During the lecture session, researchers deliver content about TOEFL, covering its definition, various types, advantages and applications, ways to access free TOEFL practice, costs and locations for taking the TOEFL test, and strategies for efficiently tackling TOEFL questions using PowerPoint presentations. The discussion session involves a question-and-answer exchange between students and researchers regarding the material shared during the socialization event. Data for this research were systematically gathered by researchers through fieldwork and observation throughout the extension process. Hence, this socialization was

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carried out at Kampus Nommensen High School Pematansiantar. The participants in this socialization activity were 20 students from Kampus Nommensen High School Pematangsiantar.

To effectively enhance learners' TOEFL Listening Comprehension skills through socialization, a structured and interactive instructional approach must be adopted. The method of implementation proposed in this paper combines task-based learning, peer collaboration, authentic listening materials, and technology integration, all grounded in the principles of sociocultural theory. The approach is designed to simulate real-life listening scenarios and foster active engagement, thereby preparing learners to face both TOEFL-specific tasks and broader global communication challenges.

1. Diagnostic Assessment and Group Formation

The first step involves assessing learners' current TOEFL listening proficiency through a diagnostic test modeled after official TOEFL questions. Based on the results, learners are grouped into mixed-ability teams to encourage peer support and collaborative learning. This structure ensures that advanced learners can model effective listening strategies, while less proficient learners benefit from observation and guided practice—mirroring Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development.

2. Integration of Authentic Listening Materials

Authentic listening resources such as TED Talks, university lectures, academic podcasts, and campus conversations are integrated into weekly lessons. These materials provide exposure to various accents, academic vocabulary, and natural speech patterns that reflect real TOEFL listening scenarios. Each session includes pre-listening tasks (e.g., predicting content, identifying keywords), while-listening tasks (e.g., note-taking, identifying main ideas), and post-listening tasks (e.g., peer discussion and summary writing).

3. Social Interaction Through Collaborative Activities

Socialization is emphasized through group-based listening activities. After listening to an audio passage, learners engage in peer discussions to clarify understanding, identify key details, and debate speaker intent. Role-play exercises and group presentations based on listening content further enhance language use and reinforce comprehension. These tasks mirror academic settings where learners must process spoken information and respond critically, thus preparing them for global communication contexts.

4. Language Exchange and Cross-Cultural Interaction

To foster global awareness and authentic communication, learners are encouraged to participate in virtual language exchanges or discussion forums with English speakers or fellow learners from different cultural backgrounds. These interactions offer real-time exposure to spontaneous conversation, varied accents, and diverse perspectives—developing not just listening skills but also cultural sensitivity and adaptability, which are essential in global contexts.

5. Feedback and Reflective Learning

A key aspect of the implementation is continuous feedback. Instructors provide targeted feedback on listening strategies, note-taking, and comprehension accuracy. Learners also complete self-reflection logs after each session, identifying challenges, progress, and strategies that helped them improve. This metacognitive practice supports deeper learning and promotes learner autonomy, aligning with the findings of Vandergrift and Goh (2012) on metacognitive instruction in listening.

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6. Mock TOEFL Practice and Progress Monitoring

Finally, regular mock TOEFL listening tests are administered to monitor progress and adapt instruction. Results are analyzed in group settings to identify common difficulties and reinforce strategies collaboratively. Progress data also inform instructors on how to refine lesson plans, ensuring that socialization remains targeted and effective for TOEFL success.

By implementing these steps, language educators can create a socially enriched, communicative learning environment that not only improves TOEFL listening scores but also equips learners with the listening skills and global competencies necessary to thrive in academic and professional international settings.

RESULTS

The results of this study affirm the significant role of socialization in enhancing learners' TOEFL listening comprehension skills. By incorporating interactive social learning methods such as peer discussions, group activities, and exposure to authentic listening materials, learners showed measurable improvements not only in test scores but also in confidence and overall listening ability. These findings resonate with existing research that highlights the sociocultural dimensions of language learning, particularly the importance of collaborative interaction in developing receptive skills.



Figure 1. Socialization and simulations conducted in the classroom

A key insight from the study is that socialization helps bridge the gap between passive listening and active engagement. Traditional TOEFL preparation often focuses on individual practice with isolated exercises, which can limit learners' ability to handle real-world, dynamic listening situations. In contrast, socially interactive learning encourages learners to negotiate

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meaning, ask questions, and clarify doubts in real time, thus fostering deeper cognitive processing and retention of auditory input. This interactive process also allows learners to internalize effective listening strategies shared among peers, consistent with the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development.

Another important aspect observed was the reduction of listening anxiety through socialized learning environments. Learners reported feeling less intimidated when practicing listening comprehension within supportive peer groups. This emotional benefit is critical since anxiety has been shown to negatively impact listening performance by reducing working memory capacity and focus. Creating a safe, collaborative space for language practice thus facilitates more effective learning outcomes.

However, the study also identified challenges in implementing socialization-based methods, particularly in managing learner diversity. Variations in proficiency and confidence levels sometimes led to uneven participation, requiring instructors to employ scaffolding techniques and targeted support to ensure inclusivity. Time constraints were also a limiting factor in allowing thorough feedback and reflection after social activities. Addressing these challenges necessitates adaptive teaching strategies and careful planning to optimize socialization benefits.

The use of authentic materials, such as TED Talks and academic lectures, was crucial in preparing learners for the TOEFL listening section and broader global communication demands. Authentic input provides exposure to different accents, speech rates, and real-life contexts, which enhances learners' adaptability and listening flexibility (Rost, 2011). This practical exposure prepares learners not only for standardized tests but also for academic and professional situations they are likely to encounter in global environments.

Overall, this study underscores the importance of integrating socialization into TOEFL listening instruction as a multifaceted tool that advances linguistic, cognitive, and affective domains. The positive outcomes suggest that educators should prioritize collaborative and interactive methods alongside traditional test preparation to build comprehensive listening skills. By doing so, learners are better equipped to meet both the immediate demands of the TOEFL exam and the broader challenges of global communication in the 21st century.

Referring to the results presented in the previous section, the researchers would like to discuss some Challenges Faced and Solutions Offered in the socialization

DISCUSSION

The ability to comprehend spoken English is increasingly essential in a globally connected world, particularly as English continues to dominate international communication, education, and employment contexts. This socialization activity, conducted at Kampus Nommensen High School Pematangsiantar with 20 student participants, was designed to improve learners' skills in TOEFL Listening Comprehension—a key component for academic and professional success. Addressing listening comprehension through a structured approach aligns with the broader educational goals of preparing students to face global challenges with confidence and competence.

A central feature of the program was its grounding in sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in the development of cognitive skills. In this case, socialization was not merely about conveying information; it was a participatory and collaborative learning experience. The approach emphasized the importance of scaffolding and the zone of proximal development (ZPD), where students, through interaction with peers and instructors, could perform tasks they might not have been able to

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complete independently. This theory-informed framework ensured that listening comprehension was not developed in isolation but through meaningful and interactive contexts.

Task-based learning served as a core instructional strategy, offering students practical listening exercises that mimicked real-world scenarios such as conversations, lectures, and news reports. These tasks encouraged active engagement and required students to extract key information, make inferences, and respond appropriately. Task-based learning supports the notion that language comprehension is best cultivated through purposeful activity rather than passive reception. Through tasks like filling in charts, answering comprehension questions, and summarizing content, learners developed critical listening and thinking skills.

Peer collaboration was another key element of the socialization method. Students worked in pairs or small groups to discuss and solve listening-related tasks, promoting shared responsibility and mutual support. Peer learning not only encouraged participation from less confident students but also cultivated a supportive environment that reflected real-life communication scenarios. This strategy aligns with Vygotsky's view that learning is inherently social and is enhanced when learners co-construct knowledge through dialogue and cooperation.

The inclusion of authentic listening materials—such as TED Talks, news segments, and academic lectures—further contributed to the program's relevance and effectiveness. Exposure to various accents, speech speeds, and vocabulary enriched students' listening experiences and better prepared them for real-life communication and standardized English proficiency tests like the TOEFL. Moreover, the integration of technology, including online listening platforms and interactive quizzes, enabled learners to practice autonomously and receive immediate feedback, reinforcing their learning outside the classroom.

In conclusion, the structured and interactive socialization approach adopted in this study significantly contributed to enhancing students' listening comprehension skills. By combining sociocultural principles with innovative teaching methods—task-based learning, peer collaboration, authentic materials, and technology integration—students were provided with a holistic and practical learning experience. Such initiatives are crucial in preparing learners not only for academic assessments but also for the broader demands of global communication.

CONCLUSION

In the face of increasingly globalized academic and professional environments, the ability to comprehend spoken English is essential for non-native speakers, particularly in high-stakes testing situations such as the TOEFL. This paper has explored the role of socialization in improving learners' listening comprehension skills as a key strategy not only for achieving better TOEFL results but also for preparing for real-world intercultural communication challenges.

The findings from both the literature and the practical implementation of socializationbased learning methods indicate that interactive, collaborative learning significantly enhances listening comprehension. Social activities such as peer discussions, group listening tasks, and authentic language exposure help learners process spoken English more effectively. These approaches not only reinforce the linguistic and cognitive aspects of listening but also address affective factors such as anxiety and confidence—elements that are often overlooked in traditional test preparation.

In conclusion, socialization is not merely an optional supplement to language learning it is a powerful, research-supported method for cultivating listening comprehension in a meaningful, lasting way. As learners prepare for global challenges, educators must continue to move beyond isolated drills and foster dynamic, interactive environments that reflect the realities of international communication and academic success.

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