

Using a Radio Drama in English Writing Courses (2)

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Abstract

In this paper I evaluate the usefulness of using a radio drama in general English writing classes at the university level. A radio-style drama of 11 episodes, *Acapulco Vacation*, was used in English writing courses. Three different groups of students (in total 77 students) took the courses as compulsory subjects. The students were expected to listen to one of the 11 episodes before each class, and worked on open-type comprehension questions every week. Also, each student wrote a 500- word summary of the whole story as an assignment at the end of the course. A questionnaire was conducted in the last lesson to evaluate the course. The results of the survey indicated that most of the students found it useful to use the radio drama to practice writing as well as listening, regardless of the differences in their English proficiency or their majors. In addition, many comments indicated that the use of the radio drama created positive attitudes and motivation for second/foreign language learning.

Keywords

radio drama, input materials, motivation to write

Introduction

A lot of research has identified the merits of using films, TV dramas, and other audio-visual materials for developing students' listening abilities. However, there have been very few papers reporting on the usefulness of radio dramas used in foreign language classrooms, especially the use of them as input to stimulate writing practice.

1 Theoretical background

1.1 The importance of input and output

In the classes examined in this research, there has been a focus on balance between input and

output. Krashen (1985) emphasized that learners need "Comprehensible Input", but other writers have argued that having a lot of input is not enough for language acquisition. Swain (1985, 1995) claimed that output practice is necessary for language acquisition. Other researchers also emphasized the importance of interaction (Bialystok 1983, Tarone 1981).



Figure 1: Language Acquisition Activities

1.2 Using audio-visual materials in second/foreign language classes

Audio-visual materials are often used in foreign/second language classrooms. It is generally agreed that those materials can motivate students to learn more positively. As for using a radio drama, there have been very few papers on its usefulness.

To examine the usefulness of radio dramas as input, the author used one of them for a university English writing class and got positive feedback from the students (Tatsukawa 2015).

2 The study

To confirm the usefulness of radio dramas as input in writing courses, another survey was conducted, building on the first paper above.

2.1 Research questions

There are three research questions:

- (1) Do other students also have positive attitudes towards the radio drama for improving English writing ability?
- (2) Is the usefulness of the radio drama affected by students' majors?
- (3) Is the usefulness of the radio drama affected by students' English proficiency?

2.2 Participants

There are three groups of students, and their majors and English proficiency are as follows:

Table 1: Students' Majors & English Proficiency

		n	TOEIC	L	R	SD
G1	Human Sciences (H)	28	593.3	302.5	290.8	58.6
G2	Engineering (H)	23	623.3	310.7	312.6	54.6
G3	Education (L)	26	373.3	204.6	168.7	8.5

2.3 Survey (questionnaire)

The survey was conducted at the end of the courses, and contained the following items:

About the radio drama (*Acapulco Vacation*)

(Q1) I liked the radio drama (*Acapulco Vacation*).

(Q2) The level of radio drama was appropriate.

(Q3) The radio drama was useful for improving my listening ability.

(Q4) The assignment test every week was useful for improving my writing ability.

(Q5) The 500 word summary writing assignment was useful for improving my writing ability.

(Q6) ~ (Q9) omitted for the space limitation

About the course in general

(Q10) I am now more motivated to write in English than before taking this course.

(Q11) I have learned some techniques on how to write in English by taking this course.

(Q12) I think using a radio drama is good for English course materials.

Responses to choose from (=Choices):

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly agree

(Q13) Free comment ("Please feel free to write any comment on the material used.")

3 Results & discussion

3.1 Survey results

The results of the survey are shown in the following tables:

Table 2: The Results of Questionnaire for Three Groups

	n	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12
G1	28	3.50	3.21	3.46	3.39	3.46	2.68	3.43	2.96	3.18	3.18	3.29	3.54
G2	23	3.39	3.26	3.26	3.17	3.39	2.83	3.48	3.04	3.30	3.04	3.17	3.43
G3	26	3.73	3.38	3.46	3.69	3.46	2.92	3.50	3.27	3.38	3.23	3.23	3.81
Total	77	3.55	3.29	3.40	3.43	3.44	2.81	3.47	3.09	3.29	3.16	3.23	3.60

Table 3: The Choices for Each Question by the Participants

Choice	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12
1	1	0	1	1	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	1
2	1	7	4	5	2	24	2	15	11	12	6	2
3	30	41	35	31	39	35	34	37	33	41	47	24
4	45	29	37	40	36	15	40	24	33	24	24	50

3.2 About the materials (*Acapulco Vacation*)

More than 90% of the students liked the radio drama and thought it useful for improving not only their listening ability but also their writing ability.

3.3 About the course

By using the radio drama as input, 84.4% of the students were motivated to write and 92.2% answered that they have learned some techniques on how to write in English by taking this course. As many as 96.1% thought using a radio drama is good for English courses.

3.4 Correlations between students' proficiency and survey answers

There were not strong correlations between students' proficiency and survey answers. The lower proficiency group (G3) gave a more positive evaluation on the use of the radio drama.

Table 4: Correlations between students' proficiency and question items

	L	R	T	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(10)	(11)	(12)
L	1.00										
R	0.74	1.00									
T	0.92	0.94	1.00								
(1)	-0.10	-0.21	-0.17	1.00							
(2)	-0.11	-0.11	-0.12	0.49	1.00						
(3)	-0.05	-0.05	-0.06	0.44	0.45	1.00					
(4)	-0.18	-0.29	-0.26	0.49	0.39	0.44	1.00				
(5)	0.05	-0.02	0.01	0.26	0.36	0.27	0.51	1.00			
(10)	-0.03	-0.13	-0.09	0.44	0.46	0.52	0.55	0.49	1.00		
(11)	0.09	0.01	0.05	0.27	0.28	0.30	0.41	0.33	0.44	1.00	
(12)	-0.25	-0.31	-0.30	0.72	0.34	0.41	0.52	0.34	0.48	0.27	1.00

$r > .23, p < .05$

3.5 Participants comments

Quantitative feedback was also obtained through students' comments. Overall, these were positive comments about the use of the radio drama as input for writing English.

4 Pedagogical implications

The use of the radio drama can create positive attitudes and motivation for second/foreign language learning in students. Further research will focus on why students respond so strongly to drama-based materials.