THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL AUDIO LISTENING ON SAUDI ARABIAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS’ SPEAKING AND COMPREHENSION

Nawal Alotaibi

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

May 2014

Committee:

Dr. Tracy Huziak-Clark, Advisor

Dr. Savilla Banister
This study examined the impact of digital audio listening on English language learning and comprehension skills. The research aim of this study was to examine the impact of listening to authentic educational radio programs for English learners. The major points of this examination were to determine the educational topics that students prefer, the amount of time that students feel comfortable to listen to such educational radio programs, the radio program format which students prefer, the English skills that radio programs strengthen, and the impact of web-radio on learners. This qualitative study asked three major questions: How does listening to educational radio programs impact English learners’ language skills, How does listening to educational radio programs impact English language learners’ comprehension skills, and What kind of educational radio topics do English language learners prefer and why?

In order to answer the research questions, a listening practice session with comprehension questions and interviews was designed to ask six international students’ preferences in using educational radio programs on the NPR station as a listening tool. The data was collected during the listening practice session, comprehensive question, and interview. The interviews responses were analyzed using coding methods described by Erickson (1986).

The findings demonstrate that listening to educational radio programs positively impacts English learners’ language skills. It influences participants’ listening to English words and sentences; learners can train their ears to listen to and understand fast speakers. One of the major findings of this study is that participants feel that there is no gap between the English they listen
to on the radio and the actual English they encounter in their daily lives as they communicate with native English speakers or listen to lectures and different forms of mass media.

The study results suggest that the radio can be an educational tool that promotes second language learning, regardless of the native language or the language one wants to learn. Also, people who want to improve their second language skills without attending formal classes can benefit from listening to language programs on the radio in the target language.
Dedicated to:

To my parents, Nahar Alotaibi and Rabha Alharban

Especially to my father, whose encouragement and support helped me to see this degree as a possibility and reality.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Tracy L. Huziak-Clark, for her support, patience, availability, and encouragement throughout my studies. I believe that she is a perfect advisor that guided me with a lot of wisdom and patience during my studies here in Bowling Green State University. She taught me many things alongside the academic work, and this research could not be done without her support and advice.

Many thanks also go to Dr. Savilla Banister, who enriched my thesis in many ideas and guided my thesis more toward the use of technology, which shifted my focus to an important and new direction in the use of radio in learning.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my husband, Tareq Almsaud, who supported me with great love, encouragement, thoughts, and many sacrifices.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Context</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Radio to Promote Language Skills</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Chapters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Public Radio-NPR</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive Radio Instruction-IRI</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of the Air</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Audio- Web Radio</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language learners</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants...................................................................................................... 17

Procedures....................................................................................................... 18

Instruments...................................................................................................... 19

Comprehension questions.............................................................................. 19

Interview protocol .......................................................................................... 20

Data Collection and Analysis........................................................................ 21

Limitations....................................................................................................... 22

Summary.......................................................................................................... 22

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS ........................................................................... 23

Researcher Observation.................................................................................. 23

Analyzing Comprehension Questions......................................................... 24

Amelie.............................................................................................................. 24

Sam.................................................................................................................. 26

Dana................................................................................................................ 28

Fatti.................................................................................................................. 30

Debi................................................................................................................. 32

Mohammed ................................................................................................... 34
Summary of Findings .................................................................................................................. 35

Summary .................................................................................................................................. 37

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION ..................................................................... 38

Discussion ................................................................................................................................. 38

Research question one: How does listening to educational radio programs impact English learners’ language skills? ........................................................................................................... 38

Research question two: How does listening to educational radio programs impact English language learners’ comprehension skills? .......................................................................................................................... 39

Research question three: What kind of educational radio topics do English language learners prefer and why? .......................................................................................................................... 39

Recommendations ................................................................................................................... 41

REFERENCES .......................................................................................................................... 43

APPENDIX A. CONSENT LETTER .......................................................................................... 48

APPENDIX B. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS ...................................................................... 52

APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .................................................................................. 58
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Learning a second language requires different strategies for the learner to gain new language skills. Students who come to the United States to learn English chose to integrate their life in a new culture to gain knowledge. Teaching a second language has different strategies, but one easy and affordable way that can help students master the language proficiently is listening to the radio. The world has become increasingly global due to the influence of television, radio, and the Internet. These mediums are effective for English listening comprehension skills which are important as a first language communication (Rautrao, 2012). Learning a new language depends heavily on listening because the learner can identify the proper pronunciation and read the words as they listen to them.

Learning English as a second language has been an important major in many colleges, such as Education, Linguistics, Anthropology, and Media (Chuang & Yang, 2012; Rautrao, 2012). Many articles and other scholarly materials have proposed strategies on how to acquire strong English-language skills. Balcilcanli (2012) states, “Web 2.0 technologies appear to bring about an enormous transformation in language learning. This transformation is mostly based upon communicative interaction between language learners and native speakers, which is highly desired but rarely achieved in EFL contexts” (p 143). One aspect of these strategies is to focus on “listening” in the learning process. Most articles identify “listening material” as materials designed to be used for new English learners and used in labs. These materials may include the teacher’s voice (Nomass, 2013). The prepared materials such as tapes, CD’s, digital audio files, and audio segments tend to be characterized by slow rhythm and have many pauses between each sentence to allow learners to think about what they have just heard. Nomass (2013) described several helpful technical tools to develop the listening and understanding ability of
second language learners. These tools include tape-recorder, CD-players, television and radio broadcasts, and computers. Although listening to materials designed for language learners is a good strategy for new learners, it is essential to move to a higher level of listening that connects learners to the actual English they experience in daily life. Learners can recognize the gap between the slow-paced English, which they listen to in the lab, and the actual English they encounter in daily life as they interact with other native speakers, lectures, and different forms of mass media.

**Personal Context**

As a second language speaker of English, I have practiced English in the United States for 18 months in two English institutes. Besides listening to the slow-paced English in classes from the prepared materials that disconnected me from actual English, I was also confused at times when teachers seemed to speak English in different dialects and accents that were based on their origins in the U.S. or other parts of the world. During my radio listening practice, I could not understand the meaning of many words nor determine their spelling either. My only solution was to visit the radio web site and read the audio file transcript, identify and translate the unknown words, and analyze the relationship between listening to the radio and learning English. This process captured my interest for many reasons. First, it is a personal experience that addressed an important inquiry into the right pronunciation of everyday English. Second, it provides an ongoing learning strategy beyond the formal classroom hours. Third, it can be done while doing other things in daily life because it does not require special attention nor extreme focus. Fourth, it introduces learners to a wide range of useful knowledge while simultaneously allowing them to practice English. Finally, educational radio programs are provided in many digital forms, thereby enabling users to access programs quickly and easily.
Using Radio to Promote Language Skills

Educational radio programs promote useful information for non-specialized people, or regular listeners, in simple and understandable language. Radio stations include these kinds of programs to educate listeners in many areas of general knowledge. One of the well-known radio stations is National Public Radio (NPR). It provides daily educational programs for common listeners and covers a wide range of educational topics, such as science, art, literature, technology, and other related educational topics from the daily news. In addition, NPR provides an easy to navigate web site that offers a text option for its educational programs as well as many other options, such as podcast, RSS feed, mobile, social media, and newsletter formats.

Listening to educational radio programs strengthens English practice for non-native English speakers and provides a learning strategy that continues all day long. In addition, listeners learn about different topics and are provided with recent educational findings and knowledge that are relevant to current events. Educational radio programs are conducted by professional announcers, who utilize a standard accent of English that English Language Learners should become familiar with.

Purpose of the Study

Language learners recognize a gap between the slow-paced English they listen to in language classes and the actual English they encounter in daily life. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the impact of listening to authentic educational radio programs for English learners. The major points of this examination are to determine the educational topics that participants prefer, the amount of time that participants feel comfortable to listen to such educational radio programs, the radio program format which participants prefer, the English skills that radio programs strengthen, and the impact of web-radio on learners.
Research Questions

The researcher was able to answer to the following questions after conducting the study:

1. How does listening to educational radio programs impact English learners’ language skills?
2. How does listening to educational radio programs impact English language learners’ comprehension skills?
3. What kind of educational radio topics do English language learners prefer and why?

Summary of Chapters

Chapter One provided an introduction to the thesis as well as the personal context and meaning behind my interest. Chapter Two reviewed past and current literature to better understand the topic of Digital Audio over history as well as the impact it has had on learning in several different cultures. Chapter Three explained the qualitative research methods used in this study. A brief description of the Saudi Arabian participants, the data collection methods and analysis of the data were described. Chapter Four contained six detailed vignettes, which documented participants’ individual experiences with the Digital Audio learning practices. In conclusion, Chapter Five provided conclusions and discussion for each of the three research questions as well as final recommendations for the reader.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Radio is a traditionally an old media format tool that transfers different kinds of information to people in different places via audio format. This media format developed as a means to transfer information to people and communities before it became an educational tool in the classroom. The role of educational radio programs has developed over the past decades. New ideas regarding the educational role of radio emerged when people noticed how the radio was becoming more popular and enjoyable. This was the start of educational radio stations in the United States.

National Public Radio-NPR

When I came to the United States, I did not know anything about radio stations. Listening to the radio was not something I did in my free time, nor to improve my English skills. However, when my English teacher advised me to listen to NPR because of its varying programs topics and lengths, I started exploring the NPR website (www.npr.org). Browsing the NPR website helped me to know more about the history of this station.

From the NPR website, I learned that the United States has around 14,000 stations. National Public Radio emerged in February 1970, and before that, it was called the National Educational Radio Network (http://www.npr.org/about/aboutnpr/#pg-1). The roots of NPR go back to radio stations produced by colleges and universities in the 1920s through the 1940s. Also, “NPR was incorporated on February 26, 1970, by 90 forward-thinking charter stations to provide national news programming” (http://www.npr.org/about/aboutnpr/#pg-1). The first program that hit the air on NPR covered the war in Vietnam in 1971. After that, NPR expanded quickly and presented other topics such as educational programs. “The mission of NPR is to work in partnership with Member Stations to create a more informed public — one challenged and invigorated by a deeper understanding and appreciation of events, ideas and cultures”
The content of this station is decided by many different people; “Every day more than 800 NPR employees come to work bringing you high-quality news, information and entertainment programming” (http://www.npr.org/about/aboutnpr/#pg-1). According to NPR there is no specific person who creates all these programs. Instead, there are different specialists in many fields who prepare programs to meet the NPR station goals.

NPR presents information through the radio, website, podcast, and other tools. There are diverse educational programs that offer a variety of information in different educational fields such as history, agriculture, science, technology, social issues, and politics. These topics are presented by different people such as broadcasters, reporters, professors, doctors, specialists, workers, students, and others who can provide important information and insight to people. Also, unlike the early days of radio, NPR today engages in another era of innovation to provide faster service to the people. National public radio established a strong digital foundation service to help people to listen to information live, read the transcript, and repeat as needed. Information from NPR broadcasts is always available on newsletter, podcast, mobile, RSS Feeds, widgets, API, and radio (www.npr.org).

Eventually, after browsing the NPR web site, I learned it was a useful station for international students to improve their English language skills so they could earn an academic degree in an American university. NPR has helped me a lot, especially to improve my English-speaking ability and learn how to greet, open, and end conversations in English. Also, I found it a basic resource to know more about American and world news.
Interactive Radio Instruction-IRI

Interactive radio (IRI) is defined as “an educational methodology that actively engages learners in learning through carefully designed audio programs, such as radio or cassette” (Learntech, 1994, p.7). Bosch (1997) explained that interactive radio is different from other distance learning methods because IRI is used for interactive lessons in which an acoustic component is delivered by an “audio teacher” through a radio or audio cassette. In such cases, the learners are carefully integrated into classroom activities. Bosch’s (1997) research demonstrated that students who learned through IRI showed high achievement over time and the equity gap between genders was decreased, especially in rural community. For example, Bolivian students who used radio lessons such as “radio math” improved their average score by 19 percent (Bosch, 1997). Interactive radio lessons provide a framework for educational improvement followed up with open learning pedagogy for both learner and teachers.

Radio lessons depend on an educational methodology supported with printed material and learners’ activities. As a result of applying interactive radio lessons in South Africa from 1993 to the end of 2004, the program achieved the study goal of teaching English and language arts more generally (Potter & Naidoo, 2006). Learners’ involvement in a daily routine of English teaching activities focused around the radio lessons developed their performance on the test of English language proficiency (Potter & Naidoo, 2006).

The use of information communication technology, or ICT, has helped to bridge the communication gap between teachers and learners. It has been identified as one of the greatest tools of distance learning and delivery systems. ICT includes the following educational communication tools: radio, television, audio, video, telephone, computer, Internet, mobile telephones, videoconferencing, and teleconferencing (Ofulule, 2011). In a case study in Nigeria
about learning through ICT, the results showed that computers promoted more learning than telephones or other communication tools (Ofulule, 2011). Furthermore, these learners indicated that motivation and communication, provided by computers, are crucial factors in education.

Interactive radio instruction has been used in different parts of the world to educate people, especially people in poor, rural places without easy access to universities because of demographic difficulties. Since the 1980s, IRI has been an important development for Radio Language Arts (RLA) program in Kenya for students in the first to the third grades (Berman, 2008). The RLA program was based on stories, games, and songs that engage students in learning by stimulating their imagination. The basic structure for the program was conversation.

In her study, Berman (2008) examined the traditional technologies of distance education, or more specifically radio, in Asia and Africa. Educational radio in Asia provides the basic education. The aim for this radio educational program was to improve the life for those in the poor communities and educate those who live in rural areas by exposing them to a variety of content fields that they may not have had access to. Also, as an educational medium, radio has helped children in economically deprived areas to have education similar to children in urban cities. As a result of applying educational radio in Asia, people in rural or poor areas have improved their quality of life. The main sponsorship for this project was The United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) (www.unesco.org). The largely educational radio program was used in Africa helped to cover the education deficiencies and improve the quality of education. The major goal of the radio movement in Africa was to deliver the education to people who in unreachable area or communities. UNISCO is the one of the most notable organizations supported by educational radio (Perkins, 2011).
One study conducted by Odera, and Kusumu (2011) described radio as a one of the most affordable education technologies available in all countries. They used school radio when students wanted to learn English language. They had two native languages, which were Kiswahili and Vernacular besides learning English, they came up with another language called “Sheng”. To help students raise their English proficiency without mixing it with other languages, students listened to the school’s radio programs, which were broadcast in English. This study demonstrated that using the radio in the school was helpful in improving bilingual and trilingual students’ English language skills on examinations. Other research in advanced countries has concluded that learning a foreign language can be faster learned by radio because it helps the pronunciation of difficult words and practices listening clearly (Odera, 2008).

Furthermore, Mishra (2005) showed that many countries have become interested in broadcasting education programs and created specific educational radio programs to provide basic or advanced education. For example, radio has been extensively used in India for primary, secondary, and higher education purposes as well as informal learning to educate economically deprived community areas (Odera, and Kisumu 2011). In addition, radio in India is considered a useful educational tool because it is known to be the most affordable, accessible, and appropriate tool for a wide range of teaching and learning process (Mishra, 2005).

A third study in Pakistan used educational radio to improve the life of people in rural community. Jumani, Rahman, Chishti, and Malki (2009) explained that radio and television have been used as an alternative learning system for formal and non-formal education to educate disadvantaged people who desire to obtain a bachelor’s degree in education but they cannot because they live in rural communities without access to universities. In the Allam Iqbal Open University (AIOU) in Pakistan, radio has been a crucial medium to deliver information to
students. AIOU has been a successful distance university because it offers students easier and more affordable ways to earn their academic degrees by using tools such as radio and television.

**School of the Air**

Like the IRI movement in Africa and Asia, American’s sought ways to share information more readily to the masses. Bianchi (2008) defined School of the Air as a radio program used to present information in many states across the United States. Ohio was one of the most famous state that establish School of the Air, was founded by Darrow in 1929. The University of Wisconsin, Madison, followed shortly thereafter, with their own university supported School of the Air (Lamb, 2012).

Utilizing the radio, “School of the Air” presented a 4-level curriculum to students in different age groups. The educational programs in School of the Air were ranked by grades and subject matter and produced by college professors, teachers, and students. Bianchi (2008) described the School of the Air movement in Wisconsin as another way to learn through educational technology, specifically sound technology. He mentioned some successful examples for the American educational radio programs and how they functioned in state education. Also, he noticed how the radio developed students’ imaginations when they listened to educational programs related to their classes. Schools of the Air built the communication skills of writing, reading, speaking, and listening. Students’ involvement in the School of the Air movement helped them to produce educational programs such as narrated radio programs. According to Bianchi (2008), Radio allowed students to practice their imagination skills in a way that television did not, and it promoted step-by-step problem-solving methods.

Jamison, Searle, Galda, & Heyneman (1981) presented teaching mathematics to first grade Nicaraguan students by text books and radio to identify the crucial factors that could
increase the value of primary education with an inexpensive cost. This quantitative study showed that the text book and radio treatment in math had significant positive effects on students’ achievements. According to this study, radio was the strongest variable to raise students’ mathematical achievements in both urban and rural schools (Jamison, Searle, Galda, & Heyneman, 1981).

**Digital Audio- Web Radio**

From the day it first appeared, radio has had a great effect on education and other fields. Radio is a media format tool of mass communication which has developed over the years. This media format has presented different types of information, not just educational programs. Listeners can access a variety of knowledge in the most inhospitable and unreachable places. Progressivism in the technological world has offered people a flexible communication tool that can appear anywhere with the web-radio or digital radio.

Today’s technology is developing so fast that no one can disregard its direct effect on our lives, specifically in education (Bahrani, 2011). Students can communicate with native speakers to practice language by using chatting (typing) features, audio, and/or video programs such as Skype. In addition, there are speech-to-text or text-to-speech programs that help English learners to improve their reading, listening, and pronunciation skills. Berkeley and Lindstrom (2011) explained that many editors offer the highest quality digital formats of their books (e-text) and some of them have versions available online. Many of these publishers provide even more than online versions and e-texts; they also provide large-print editions for students with vision deficiencies or offer digital audio (CD or MP3 format) of their texts. Likewise, there are many text-to-speech and speech-to-text programs that are inexpensive or free online. Text-to-speak software converts text to audio or MP3 files. Speech-to-text programs convert software from
speech into text by speaking into Windows-based applications at speeds up close to 160 words per minute.

One of the most affordable and easy technological tools is the radio. Everyone can listen to the radio through a radio device, phone, touch tablet, or computer. Modern technology has caused the radio to develop and be offered either by the web or through other digital means. Teixeria and Silva (2012) described the concept of web-radio as “radiophonic emission on the Internet in real time, usually in audio formats (MP3 or MP4, OGG Vorbis, WebPlayer, Real Audio, Windows Media Audio and HE-Acc), different from the traditional radio, your transmission could be followed by images, video, text, pictures, and links” (p. 89). With the web-radio, listeners have a better chance to learn in a high quality and dynamic environment than that of the traditional radio. Learners can access extra communication tools, such as attached files, PDFs, or videos to support their listening. Also, teachers can disseminate their lessons over email, blog, Facebook, and other communication tools (Teixeria & Silva, 2012). Furthermore, O’Neill (2007) illustrated that new digital audio broadcasting would enhance the audio quality and reception over the coming years, as well as integrated data and multimedia content, and more productive use of the radio spectrum. It is likely that radio will remain a developing medium and a rich resource to educate people around the world.

**English Language Learners**

In the 21st century, English has become a tool of communication and interaction for people from different countries in our globalized society (Yau, 2012). The English language is an important language in many parts of the world, and many people want to study English to communicate with others from different countries because it has become the most important language for non-English speakers. Learning another language, however, is not the same as
learning another subject. Students who learn another language have to practice the four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Rautrao, 2012).

Learning strategies play a crucial role in a second language because they help to determine learners’ learning processes. Learning strategies help students to accumulate new information and knowledge, so second language teachers should employ and combine different teaching methods and instructional approaches to promote student learning (Pei-Shi, 2012). Applying Egan’s (1997) Imaginative Education (IE) theory helps to change how we understand second language learning, and it has direct implications for classroom practice. It helps students to transfer various kinds of understanding. IE has changed how second language learners understand and, as a result, it affects classroom practices (Broom, 2011). After reading *Second Language Learning through Imaginative Theory*, written by Broom (2011), I found that listening to radio programs raises students’ imaginations and helps them to practice the theory by listening, or listening and reading on the web-radio.

Furthermore, there are many tools for teaching English effectively rather than simple verbalism. Learning can be strengthened with audio-visual aids of different varieties because they may inspire, motivate, or arrest the learner’s attention during the instructional process (Rautrao, 2012). Practice listening, reading, speaking, and writing a new language is necessary in order to develop learners’ skills. Nomass (2013) found that using different strategies, such as listening to the radio or web-radio, can assist students in acquiring a second language. In his research, a case study at a Libyan university, the collected result showed that 83% of the students believed that computers could improve their listening skills and 90% of the students believed using technology could improve their speaking skills. This study supported the use of computers,
broadcasting (television and radio), Web 2.0 tools, electronic newspapers, and other tools to
develop new language skills.

Today technology is growing so fast that it is changing the way educators think about
education and literacy (Pilgrim, Bledsoe, & Reily, 2012). Furthermore, Bahrani (2011) has
argued that by using current technology, everybody should be able to learn the English language
easily without attending formal classes. A popular software program, Rosetta Stone®, contains
lessons for twenty languages including English. This software is praised as being easy to use
because it has interactive video, audio, pictures, as well as being easily accessible (Melillo,
2007).

In addition, radio can help learners to practice English as a second language and improve
their listening skills, but digital radio also helps to increase reading, listening, and
communications skills. As a result, the presence of web radio has changed the educational-
communicative paradigm because it requires a new way of thinking and intervention strategies to
merge educational programs with the present technology. Therefore, radio has supported the
education of many over the years. Not only has educational programs changed, but as a
communication tool, radio has also gone through many changes over the years (Teixeria and
Silva, 2012).

Moreover, Xiao (2008) described research conducted to measure teaching English as a
second language via distance learning in China’s Radio and Television University- RTVU.
Teaching a second language via radio and television has a long history in China, but today,
China’s Radio and Television University network has a strong foundation of distance English
language teaching (Xiao, 2008). In the beginning of the 2007 academic year, about two million
students enrolled in the RTVU program. Most students, who were between the ages of 18–29
years old, were enrolled in graduate or undergraduate programs. The key feature of this distance program was enhancing technology so that students could learn more in their own space and time. It was a successful experience that balanced academic and non-academic methods while creating a specific learning context in China as well as learning style for the teachers and students. In addition, Balcikanli (2012) showed that students enrolled in traditional foreign language classes were limited by the time and opportunities to practice the language they were learning. Engaging the students with technology, especially Web 2.0 tools, helped them to practice the foreign language outside the classroom. Furthermore, with easy and affordable tools, students could use the digital audio format to improve their new language skills and learn about native speakers’ cultures and ways of speaking. One of these tools is the radio.

Summary

This chapter introduced the findings of other researchers. There was an introduction to National Public Radio, a common educational radio station. Next, the history and benefits of interactive radio instruction (IRI) was explained. Then, the School of the Air movements in the American educational system was introduced, and a brief explanation about the role of the radio in American education was discussed. After that, information about the modern audio formats, such as Web-radio and other forms of modern technologies like digital aids to learning a foreign language, were included. Then, strategies and tools to help English learners practice their developing skills were given. At the end, examples of other experiences that supported English as a second language learning throughout technology were cited.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

The methods and procedures used in this study are outlined in this chapter. Details include: the research design approach, the participants, instruments, procedures, and data analysis methods. The research explored radio programs as a means to improve English language learning skills. In addition, this study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How does listening to educational radio programs impact English learners’ language skills?
2. How does listening to educational radio programs impact English language learners’ comprehension skills?
3. What kind of educational radio topics do English language learners prefer and why?

Research Design

In order to answer the research questions, qualitative research was the primary research approach (Glesne, 1999). Qualitative studies focus on words to describe and answer social phenomena (Le Compte, & Schensul, 1999). Glesne (1999) explained, “Qualitative methods are generally supported by the interpretivist (also referred to as constructivist) paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex and ever changing” (p. 5). In this study a listening practice session with comprehension questions and interviews was designed to explore participants’ experiences in using educational radio programs on the NPR station as a listening tool. Qualitative methods were chosen because I was interested in understand the individual impacts of the listening sessions on each of the participants and their particular descriptions of their experiences. Also, using qualitative methods was valuable because it allowed the researcher to interact, talk, and ask the participants about their opinions.
Participants

This study focused on the impact of radio programs on English language learners, so the participants in this study were six non-native English speakers from Bowling Green State University. All of the participants came to the United States from Saudi Arabia to study English and then to obtain academic degrees from American universities. Each of the participants native language is Arabic and they had limited English proficiency upon arrival in the United States. The participants in this study included four females and two males, all ranging in age from 21 to 28 years old. All of the participants have been changed to protect their identities.

The first participant, Debi, is a 25 year old graduate student in the College of Education and Human Development. Debi has been in the United States for four years, and she is now pursuing a master’s degree in Curriculum and Teaching. Debi describes her English skills as upper intermediate to advance. She completed her English language training several years ago which means she has been practicing English for a few years.

The second participant, Amelie, is 22 years old. She is in the first year of her master’s program in Curriculum and Teaching. Like Debi, Amelie skills are intermediate. She completed a one year English language program before attending graduate school. Amelie described her English skills as low before coming to the United States because of the weak English curriculum in Saudi Arabia.

The third participant, Sam, is in the last semester of his graduate program in the College of Education and Human Development. He is seeking a master’s degree in Curriculum and Teaching. He is 28 year old.

Dana, the fourth participant, is a 25 year mother with a 4 year old daughter who was born in the United States. Whenever, Dana speaks with her daughter in Arabic, her daughter replies in
English. Dana has been in the United States for five years. She is an undergraduate student in the College of Education and Human Development, majoring in Interior Design.

The fifth participant, Mohammed, is 24 years old. He is a junior in Electronic Technology Engineering. He has been practicing English for three years. He studied English for two years in an intensive English language program before beginning his undergraduate degree. He has also lived with an American family to practice his English language skills and learn more about American family life.

Fatti, the sixth participant, is a graduate student in the College of Arts and Sciences pursuing a master’s degree in Computer Science. She is 25 years old, and she took English classes for eight months in an intensive English program before beginning her graduate degree at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. Also, she studied English in her home country to prepare for her studies in the United States.

**Procedures**

All research participants volunteered for this study. To recruit participants, an email was sent to students taking English language classes at Bowling Green State University. After receiving responses to this initial email, recruitment emails were sent to interested students to explain study procedures. Once participants were recruited, a meeting was held in a classroom in the College of Education on BGSU campus to explain and model the procedures to the participants. Participants provided their consent to participate in the program (Appendix A).

Next, the participants were divided into two groups, male and female (as is customary in the participants culture). Each group listened to one NPR program (Topic: Out Of The Rat Race: Lucky Rodents Find Their Own 'Taj Mahal' ([http://www.npr.org/2013/10/04/228887451/out-of-the-rat-race-lucky-rodents-find-a-rat-taj-mahal](http://www.npr.org/2013/10/04/228887451/out-of-the-rat-race-lucky-rodents-find-a-rat-taj-mahal)). The participants were asked to try to answer
several comprehension questions. The researcher also explained some of the program’s challenging vocabulary. In addition, the researcher prepared comprehension questions to measure students listening skills. Participants answered the questions while they listened to the program. Both groups requested that the audio file be played more than once. After I modeled the procedures, I asked the participants to repeat the procedure with four additional topics from NPR. Each topic took around two to five minutes to listen, and then read the transcript from the NPR website after the comprehensive questions that made to the participant by the researcher.

The researcher observed participants during the first listening session to make sure that they understood the procedures and to answer any questions participants might have had. Participants keep practice listening to NPR until schedule individual interview for each of them. The researcher used comprehension questions to evaluate participant learning from the program. Finally, participants were directed to read the program transcript as they listened to certain radio programs and then answered comprehension questions related to the radio program. A follow-up interview was conducted after the participants completed the individual listening component. The researcher communicated with the participants’ throughout the phone or email to arrange interview with them. The interviews were conducted depend on the participants free time.

Instruments

There were two main instruments used in this study, the comprehension questions from the listening sessions and the structured interview protocol. Each is described in more detail below.

Comprehension questions. One of the methods used to collect data for this study was the comprehension questions that followed each of the NPR programs (Appendix B). The main goal of these questions was to evaluate the students’ English listening skills, and help the participant
to know their level of understanding for each program. For each of the NRP programs, the researcher developed a list of several comprehension questions. These questions were provided in advance to each of the participants. Questions for the first two listening programs were designed for the beginning level. After that, more advanced questions were used for the remaining three programs. The participants were then given time to read the questions. When the researcher played the radio program, participants were allowed to answer the questions. The researcher repeated the program upon participant request. Sample comprehension questions can be found below:

1. Which city did the reports mention?
2. What are the dengue fever symptoms?
3. How can smartphones solve the problem?

These questions were provided by the researcher to get a clear view of each student’s listening ability. After the participants answered the questions, the researcher gave them the correct answer and collected the responses from the participants.

**Interview protocol.** After participating in the listening training session and answering the comprehension questions, participants were asked eight open-ended questions (Appendix C). The interview was conducted by the researcher and included only one participant at a time. The intention of the interview was to gather more information than the responses given during the listening practice session. Interviewing allowed for the participants to express their thoughts clearly. There were eight open-ended questions that encouraged the participants to expand their thoughts and provide further reflection on the listening training session. The interviews were conducted at a quiet, comfortable, and appropriate place and time for the researcher as well as participant. The researcher followed the interview protocol outlined by Glense (2006). The
researcher took notes during the interview, and the interview was recorded with a Digital Voice Recorder (DVR). Each interview was transcribed and saved on computer. Researchers agree that interviewing is an effective method used to gather data in qualitative research. Seidman (1991) stated, “At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 3). The interviews were transcribed entirely to ensure that all relevant data could be coded and used. After the interview was transcribed, the qualitative portion of the data was analyzed by using content analysis strategies (Glesne, 1999).

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The data from the listening training session and interviews were analyzed by the researcher. The interviews responses were analyzed using coding methods described by Erickson (1986). First, each recorded interview was transcribed. Next, a personalized reading for each transcription was used to determine the main ideas. Then, assertions were identified in the interview transcriptions. Erickson described some key points in analyzing data. These included: Assertions, Evidentiary Warrants, Disconfirming Evidence, Key Linkages, Particular Description, Interpretive commentary, and Vignette. Assertions are statements that are believed to be true and can be supported with data. Evidentiary warrants are facts stated by participants that are supported by assertions from the data collected. In addition, disconfirming evidence are facts from the data collection that do not follow or are not supported by my assertions. Key linkages are direct quotations from the participant transcripts that strongly support the assertions. They are critical for analyzing the data. A particular description helps the researcher when she wants to report specific details to support assertions. Ultimately, all these elements help to create a vignette. Erickson (1986) defined the vignette as “a vivid portrayal of the conduct of an event
of everyday life, in which the sights and sounds of what was being said and done are described in the natural sequence of their occurrence in real time” (P. 149-150).

**Limitations**

Most research studies have some limitations. One limitation in this study was the lack of time to collect and analyze the data. The listening training sessions and interviews took place over a three-week period. The researcher started to collect the data in October when participants were busy with midterm exams.

Another limitation was the small number of participants and limited location of the study. The study was conducted in Bowling Green, Ohio; it is in the Midwestern region of the United States. Results may differ in other areas of the United States. Also, this study focused on learning English as second language by using the radio, specifically NPR. Likewise, there were only six participants in the study. The results could have been different if we had had a larger number of participants or if we had applied other radio stations or other languages.

Even though there were limitations to this study, it is still valid due to its focused nature. The English language background of the participants varied, and the researcher received detailed feedback from each one of them. Also, the participant interview responses enhanced the validity of this research.

**Summary**

This chapter explained the methods and procedures used to conduct this research study. The research design, participants, instruments, and procedures used for this study were described in detail. Also, the process of data collection and analysis were explained. All the steps contained in this chapter were conducted to help to get the results discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Listening training session participants practiced five different topics of varying degrees of difficulty in this study. The data collected from the observation during the session, comprehension question, and interviews questions were analyzed and coded according to Erickson’s (1986) process of coding data. First, as the researcher, I observed the participants during the session, analyzed the participants’ comprehension questions answers, and then wrote a vignette for each participant after coding and transcribing the interviewees’ assertions.

Researcher Observation

I observed several key elements about the participants’ attitudes during the listening training session. First, the first program was a storytelling format. The program’s length was two minutes and 47 seconds. The participants repeated the program three times to answer four comprehension questions. Conversely, the last program, which was a report about Bill Gates, had seven comprehension questions, but the participants listened to it just once. From these differences, I concluded that the participants’ practice helped them to be familiar with the second language and more easily understand the topic than they first did.

My second observation was the participants had a difficult time writing correctly about what they had heard. They always asked about the right spelling and sometimes they repeated the words out loud to help them determine how to write the words. I found that repeatedly listening to the radio programs helped the participants to know the broadcaster’s words more easily. Lastly, the length of the program or the number of comprehension questions did not matter. When the participants practiced listening to the radio programs, their listening and comprehension skills improved.
Analyzing Comprehension Questions

Two to seven questions accompanied each radio program. On average, two of the questions were answered incorrectly; most of the answers were correct or contained minor spelling mistakes. Participants found the second topic, which was “To Get the Benefits of Olive Oil, Fresh May Be Best,” the easiest and most useful topic because they answered all questions correctly. There were some incorrect answers to questions on all the other topics. The following narrative descriptions present relevant findings about each participant. The assertions and warrants\(^1\) which directly correspond to the research questions were determined from the transcribed and analyzed interviews.

Amelie. When I first met Amelie, she was in her first semester of her master’s degree in Curriculum and Teaching. Amelie said that attending graduate school is big achievement for international students because of the English language proficiency test score required for admission. I was interested to know her opinion after the listening practice session. She told me that listening to the NPR station was interesting and something she would enjoy doing, especially in her free time.

Amelie found that radio programs help English language learners to become familiar with the English used in conversations. She had difficulties interacting with native speakers before the listening session. As she explained, language programs always have international students, so she did not have chances to talk with native English speakers in class. The language school she attended had a lot of students from her country, Saudi Arabia. Listening to NPR helped her to know how to start and end conversations with native English speakers. She said, “I found it is difficult to start a conversation with American students; I want to start small conversation with my peers in the class but she does not know how to start.” Also, she said “NPR helps me with

\(^1\) Warrants contain some grammatical mistake because of the participants’ English language level.
that, and I am choosing the conversation topic to focus more.” Moreover, she also explained that her “listening skills, conversation, and words” improved as a result of NPR. Also, she mentioned that she would advise other international students to use NPR because “it very helpful for them to gain new words and how to speak.” Amelie’s examples showed, that she worked after the listening session to raise some of her second language skills, including how to open and end conversations in English.

Second, she found English language learners gain new vocabulary by listening to radio programs. During the listening practice session, I explained some vocabulary that students might not have been familiar with. I noticed this discussion helped them because when I asked them about some words they had learned these new words. Amelie explained that these vocabulary words were new to her because her vocabulary knowledge was limited to educational settings. She said, “As second language learner, I think it is help me on my English skills and have new words, improving my other English skills” and “it very helpful for me to gain new words and how to speak.” These examples clearly showed that she specifically mentioned “new words.” When asked which NPR topic was easiest to understand, Amelie said, “Umm . . . the Olive Oil, because all most vocabulary there are easy to understand.” she showed that students also keep practicing their active vocabulary by listening to radio programs. NPR can be a new practice tool for language learners to access anywhere and anytime. Coincidently, I met Amelie after this initial listening session, and I noticed her English language skills had improved.

When transcribing the interviews, I noticed that the interviewees frequently mentioned that they had gained some useful information besides improving their English language skills. Upon this observation, I wrote the third statement, which is listening to a radio program in another language can also provide the listener with cultural context and information. Amelie
said, “It talks about a lot of subjects and it helps them in their daily life to gain more knowledge” and “Olive oil listening it was helpful topic for me because I learned new information about the olive oil.” I asked her if she believed that listening to NPR was a good strategy to train new English language learner students. She answered, “It is help to know different information than our study.” She explained that English language learners can know information and news about the United States. It was an interesting point that she made about international students being able to educate themselves about a new language and culture.

It is challenging to combine reading, listening, and writing skills all while listening to NPR programs. During the listening practice session, I noticed students had a hard time to listen, read, and write at the same time. Thus, I let them read the questions first to become familiar with them before listening and then answering the questions. Amelie found it difficult to listen and write, so she asked to hear the topic more than one time. Also, I noticed she did not write complete sentences to the comprehension questions. She wrote phrases or words so she could participate with us to answer the questions orally. She said, “They talk fast, the first one, the story type and I understand but it difficult to write it quickly” and “It become to understand easy for me to read after listening several times.”

Students find topics related to health and food easier than other topics. Amelie found the topic that discussed the benefit of olive oil to be the easiest because the vocabulary level was easy to understand. When asked which NPR topic was easiest, Amelie replied, “Ummm . . . the olive oil . . . it was helpful topic.” Amelie explained, “I learned new information about the olive oil” because she found it was easy to understand.

Sam. Sam was the second participant who volunteered to participate in the listening training session to help him improve his English language skills. Although Sam wrote detailed
answers to the comprehension questions, he frequently requested that the radio programs be played more than once.

Radio programs help English language learners to become familiar with the English used in conversations. Sam used his imagination and practiced conversation while listening to NPR. He said, “Using your imagination to make a conversion” and “it show me the American different speaking dialect.” These words demonstrate Sam’s desire to listen to the NPR topics to better understand the real or common conversations spoken by Americans. Another example about his interest in the conversation was, “Last thing about the conversation radio help me how to start a nice conversation with stranger students.” By listening to the radio programs, he taught himself how to speak with American students.

English language learners gain new vocabulary by listening to radio programs. When asked him about this topic, Sam replied, “Learning new vocabularies- giving you a chance to understand and give your opinion of the topic.” He continued and said, “Some vocabularies that I do not know, which let me to search about the meaning to have better understanding ” and “yes, new words” to demonstrate the value of these listening tasks to improving his vocabulary. All these examples support my idea regarding English language learners gain new vocabulary through radio programs. Sam found the radio to be a good resource for learning new vocabulary and raising students’ skills.

Listening to a radio program in another language can also provide the listener with cultural contexts and information. Sam found the technology topics were very interesting because they related to his research interests. Radio, especially web-radio, can be a helpful tool for learning information about another culture because it provides video, pictures, and attached files. Sam said he gained new information when listening to the radio programs. For example,
he commented on “the topic relate to my interesting subjects,” and he was “interested about the words that in technology topic.”

It is challenging to combine reading, listening, and writing skills all while listening to NPR programs. Sam really had a challenging time because he was writing complete sentences to answer the questions, not phrases or words. He said, “also, difficult to listen, and write.” He mentioned it is difficult to synchronize two skills in another language. As a result, he frequently asked me to repeat the topic three to four times. Lastly, he mentioned even if it was hard to listen, write, and understand the main idea for the topic, he gained a better understanding after reading the transcripts.

Students find the health and food topics easier than other topics. Sam, however, was not interested in food and health topics. He was interested in technology and other academic topics because of his interest to educate himself more in his major. He explained that the listening program about Bill Gates was “interesting” as he reiterated his “interest about the words that in technology topic.” He used the computer to listen to topics on NPR about technology and followed up by reading the transcripts. He mentioned in the interview that he enjoyed “Computer, so I can read and have better understanding in my interest topic.”

Dana. The third participant was Dana. Unlike the other participants, Dana said that she used to listen to radio programs in her home country because she is familiar with stations in Saudi Arabia.

Radio programs help English language learners to become familiar with the English used in conversations. Dana told me she was happy to learn about the NPR station because she liked to listen to the radio, especially when she was driving. She said, “Used Computer and radio in the car because I like to listen to the conversation program that talk about child education.”
Also, she is interested in making conversation with others, especially because her daughter’s first language is English. She also mentioned that the radio helped her to know about American’s speaking. She has a lot of friends who are native English speakers, but she explained that she is always careful with her conversation. She said, “How to talk with my Americans friends because they always start and end the conversation” and “Yes, it helpful strategy and help to understand the American accent especially in the restaurant they talk very fast.”

English language learners gain new vocabulary by listening to radio programs. She explained vocabulary or new words were critical to her, so the listening training session was a good resource for vocabulary development. She said, “The more you listen, the more you understand many different words.” Also, Dana reported that “the hardest thing is some of the word and pronounce these words quickly,” but the radio programs helped her to correct her pronunciation in some difficult words.

Listening to a radio program in another language can also provide listeners with cultural context and information. Dana reported that because of her daughter, she already listens to the radio to educate herself on topics related to children’s education. NPR has a lot of topics that relate to children’s education, food, and health. After the training session, Dana said she would listen to NPR to educate herself on more information about American culture. “I am gaining new knowledge- vocabulary,” she explained. Lastly, reading the transcript helped her to focus more on reading and understanding. She measured her understanding of the main idea as 70% before reading the transcript and 80% after reading it. She said, “The more you listen, the more you understand in many different words . . . and area.”

She explains it is challenging to combine reading, listening, and writing skills all while listening to NPR programs. Also, she found it difficult to focus on reading, listening, and writing
at first. Dana reported “When I listen to many different topics, like I notice myself being more attention to listen.” As Dana’s interview demonstrates, she had a hard time focusing and answering the questions but trained herself to practice English by listening to the radio outside of school. As a result, her English skills developed.

Students found the health and food topics easier than other topics. Specifically, Dana mentioned that the program about the benefit of olive oil was the easiest topic because the vocabulary level was not very advanced. She also found the main idea of the topic was easy to understand because she had background knowledge on the topic. She said, “Olive oil topic because I think words are easier than other topics . . . and they present easy information.” Also, the length of each program did not exceed more than 5 minutes which helped her to focus on all topics and choose the one she liked.

**Fatti.** The fourth participant, Fatti, was very eager to improve her English language to an advanced level. She had two goals: the first one was to obtain her master’s degree in computer science, and the second one was to speak English in a professional way without any second language mistakes. In the observation, I noticed that Fatti took great care to correctly write the words answering the comprehension questions. Also, she was the only participant who did not ask to listen to a radio program more than three times.

She found that radio programs help English language learners to become familiar with the English used in conversations. She said, “It helps me to understand my friend in the class when they talk fast” and “make me on the track with the native speakers’ conversations.” She was interested to have better conversations, so she wanted to develop her conversation skills in English with other students. I like her opinion when she explained that she prefer short conversations, because she is a quiet person. She struggled with people who talk a lot. She said,
“I like the small conversation how start and end.” She did not know how to stop long conversations, especially when students have to talk in groups in class. NPR helped her to practice listening to different conversation types between native English speakers.

English language learners gain new vocabulary by listening to radio programs. Students in the listening training session were frequently exposed to new vocabulary. Fatti’s knowledge of vocabulary related to computers was stronger than her vocabulary in other fields, so she liked NPR because of the different topics and words. She said, “Yahh! It increased my vocabularies . . . It increased my vocabulary in some field.” The NPR programs helped Fatti to improve her vocabulary with other skills as well. When I asked her about what skills listening to NPR specifically helped her with, she said “Aaahhhhh increased my vocabulary, improve my skills.” Fatti continued to listen to NPR after the training session to develop her English skills.

Listening to a radio program in another language can also provide the listener with cultural context and information. Fatti was very interested in the information provided about the benefits of olive oil. Also, she mentioned that different topics gave her more information in English than just her knowledge about her major. More specifically, she said, “Also have more information in other areas as well as computer science.” Besides that, she mentioned that she would know more about culture or conversation such as slang words. She praised the NPR programs because she could “know American slang and accent.”

She claims that it was challenging to combine reading, listening, and writing skills all while listening to NPR programs. Fatti mentioned that it was difficult to concentrate on the first topic, but with practice, it became easier. She said, “At the first time I could not concentrate . . . because it is difficult to listen and answer but after the second topic I found it is okay.” After listening to the broadcasts, Fatti understood 70% of the information, and after reading, she
understood 90%. Fatti mentioned that reading helped her to understand, because when she listened, she focused more on answering the comprehension questions than on truly understanding the program. As an international student who just practiced her second language in school, listening to NPR helped Fatti to practice outside her classes.

Students find the health and food topics easier to understand than other topics. Fatti mentioned that the easiest topic to understand was the topic about the benefits of olive oil. This topic helped her to improve her vocabulary because it was simple and included general information. Fatti said, “Yahh! It increased my vocabularies and improves my listening skills.” She liked topics that discussed information about food, human health, and nature.

Debi. The Fifth participant was embarrassed to speak English with other people. So she attended a graduate class for three hours and she could speak or participate because she was embarrassed of her pronunciation. When I interviewed Debi, I noticed she could speak better than in the past time, but she needed someone to encourage her. I asked her about NPR, and she was happy to listen and repeat after the program.

Radio programs help English language learners to become familiar with the English used in conversations. Practicing listening through the NPR station was something Debi said she hoped to continue after participating in this study. In her interview, she explained that although she was not familiar with NPR before this session, she liked the station. She said, “Besides having raising my language skills and conversation I know how to introduce or present topic to other people in second language.” Radio programs helped her to repeat the information independently, so she could practice without being embarrassed. She said, “It help and raised their listening skills in English as a second language and trained people to repeat the sentence and know how to speak with other people.”
English language learners gain new vocabulary by listening to radio programs. As evidence of this, Debi showed great interest when I explained the new vocabulary before each topic. She knew that she gained more words besides those from her classes and she found some of those words interesting to know. She mentioned in her interview that NPR “improve my listening, learned some new words, vocabularies,” and she commented that listening to NPR was a learning strategy.

Listening to a radio program in another language can also provide the listener with cultural context and information. In addition to learning new vocabulary words, Debi explained that she also gained new information about unique topics. For example, she commented on learning about adding live bacteria to tea. In this respect, she gained more information beyond just improving her English language skills. Also, she liked to listen to the daily news, “I gained new and strange information for example adding live bacteria on it, about the American culture, and the important daily news.” Debi found that listening to NPR helped her to have more and different knowledge than that provided in her classes.

She claims it is challenging to combine reading, listening, and writing skills all while listening to NPR programs. In her interview, Debi stated, “To be honest, it is really helpful strategies to prepare English language learner to university class, so students will be fast in the class to listen, read, and write at the same time with the professors.” She thought that training new English language learners in this way would help them a lot because she found reading, listening, and writing difficult to do simultaneously in a second language. Also, she said, “It helps to have new vocabulary, new information, how to write while listening, and combine two skills.” The last assertion explained that students found the health and food topics easier than other topics. Debi thought that choosing easy topics always depends on students’ interests. She,
like most of the other participants, liked the program that explored the benefit of olive oil. Also, she liked the tea topic because of the interesting information she learned from it. She said, “It gives me more knowledge such as the topic that talks about the tea. I gained new and strange information for example adding live bacteria on it.”

Mohammed. The last participant had lived with an American family, but he was not familiar with the NPR station. Instead, his primary means to improve his English outside of the class was to spend time with native English speakers.

Radio programs help English language learners to become familiar with the English used in conversations. To this end, Mohammed mentioned that NPR provided conversation topics for talking with native English speakers. He said, “It helps me to practice English outside classes.” Also, he mentioned “I should listen to the radio at the free time because it really helps me to understand, speak with the native speakers.” NPR can help newcomers to listen to conversations between native English speakers as it exposes learners to different slang, ways of speaking, and pronunciation. Also, learners can listen to international people when they speak in English as well.

English language learners gain new vocabulary by listening to radio programs. Mohammed was interested in the vocabulary he encountered by listening to the radio program. He noticed that he could catch some words and use them when he spoke English the next day. He said, “The most you listen, you will hear new words.” It is a good strategy to gain new words without seeking them out.

Listening to a radio program in another language can also provide the listener with cultural context and information. Mohammed gained a lot of interesting information about the benefit of olive oil because he did not have information about food. After being exposed to NPR,
he listened and read the transcript to daily and international news every two days to improve his language skills and general knowledge.

He states, it is challenging to combine reading, listening, and writing skills all while listening to NPR programs. As evidence of this, Mohammed asked to have extra time to answer the comprehension questions. He said, “Listen, read, write at the same time it is difficult practice.” Mohammed’s major required him to mostly solve equations on computers, so he was slow in writing, listening, and reading. Before reading the transcript, his comprehension was 60%, and after reading it, it was 80%. He believed the more he used his second language skills, the more his understanding would improve.

Students find the health and food topics easier than other topics. Like the other participants, Mohammed found the information about the benefit of olive oil to be interesting, but he reported that the easier topic was “Out Of the Rate Race.” He explained the vocabulary from this program was easier to understand and the program itself was shorter than the others. He said “I need more time to know the meaning” when asked about unfamiliar topics.

**Summary of Findings**

After analyzing the data, it is easy to see there are similarities and differences in the participants’ ideas. Among the similarities, all participants strongly support the assertion that NPR helps English language learners to become familiar with conversations between native English speakers. Also, they found NPR was useful in talking in English with non-native English speakers as well. They practiced listening to the radio in their free time to learn more about non-formal speaking or slang because they had focused primarily on the formal or academic forms of English when studying in classrooms. Next, all participants agreed that their vocabulary knowledge in diverse fields would increase the more they listened to NPR programs. Some of
the students had rich academic vocabularies but weak general or news vocabulary. NPR provides
them with the chance to listen, read, and repeat new words frequently. Also, they can easily
translate unknown words by using translation websites such as Google Translate
(http://translate.google.com/). In addition, listening to NPR can also provide listeners more
knowledge about culture contexts and general topics. The participants mentioned they gained
interesting information when they practiced in the training session. Indeed, they believe the more
you listen to radio stations, the more vocabulary and information you will receive. Furthermore,
the listening practice challenged their comprehension ability by combine reading, writing, and
listening skills. It was hard to listen and answer the questions in a second language, so
participants asked to repeat each program more than one time. The participants agreed that
listening and reading practice utilizing NPR before attending an American university would be
very helpful because it would aid them in not missing any information in the professors’ lectures
during the university classes. Finally, most participants were interested in topics about food
while a few of the participants were not.

Conversely, there are no major differences between participants’ opinions on the impact
of radio on English language learners’ comprehension skills. Indeed there are some differences
in minor points, such as which topic is easier. Some participants chose the first topic which was
“Out of the Rat Race: Lucky Rodents Find Their Own 'Taj Mahal'a;” other participants chose
“To Get the Benefits of Olive Oil, Fresh May Be Best.;” another participant chose “Bill Gates:
Making Teacher Evaluations Public ‘Not Conducive to Openness.’” Participant choices ranged
according to gender, interest, and major.
Summary

This chapter presented the analysis of the data collected about each of these six participants who came to the United States to practice their English language to achieve their academic goals. The data analyzed in this study included observations to listening tasks, answers to comprehension questions, and interviews. The participant vignettes explained the similar and different ideas that participants held.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main goal of this study was to understand the impact of digital audio listening on English language learning. The study also explored how the participants viewed listening to digital audio in relation to improving their English language skills. From this study, I learned that participants have the same feelings I do regarding my listening practice with NPR. These findings suggest that international students should use NPR as a supplemental tool to help them strengthen their English language skills. NPR is preferable to buying commercial digital audio programs because it is cheaper and easily accessible. The results of this study emphasize that although there are a lot of educational tools available that use technology, the radio remains a reliable and effective tool.

Discussion

The findings from this study will be discussed based on each research question posed.

Research question one: How does listening to educational radio programs impact English learners’ language skills? The findings demonstrate that listening to educational radio programs positively impacts English learners’ language skills. First, it impacts participants’ listening to English words and sentences; learners can train their ears to listen to and understand fast speakers. Odera, and Kusumu (2011), described that radio is one of the most affordable educational technology help students to learn English language. Most international students listen to language that has a slow pace, especially in those materials designed specifically for English learners (Pei-Shi, 2012). Because native speakers speak faster than these materials, such inauthentic material can create difficulties for the learners when they enter actual classes in a university where English is the medium of instruction. Also, by listening to authentic listening materials, English learners can learn slang and American idioms that will help them in university
classes. In addition, English language learners can become more educated in culture in general when listening to educational topics, and they will know about diverse topics such as food, holidays, state news, etc. Ultimately, all the participants agree that listening to NPR raised their vocabulary in different fields beyond their major.

Research question two: How does listening to educational radio programs impact English language learners’ comprehension skills? The findings demonstrate that listening to educational radio programs impacts learners’ English language comprehension skills, including listening, reading, writing, and understanding. In interviews, most participants reported that it is difficult to listen, read, write, and understand at the same time in another language. So, they asked me to repeat some programs more than one time. Rautrao (2012), mentioned that students who learned another language have to practice the four skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking. I noticed that the first topic was the most difficult one for students to combine these skills. However, after the third topic, the participants’ stress had decreased because they had practiced combining these skills. Also, with practice, the participants listening skills seemed to improve because they were able to catch words that were spoken at a quick pace. All the participants agreed that it is a challenge to read, write, and listen at the same time, but after practicing the radio listening, it became much easier for them to master these skills.

Research question three: What kind of educational radio topics do English language learners prefer and why? There were no specific answers for this question, but I can say that the analyzed data showed that participants chose their preferred topic based on their English language level, gender, major, age, and culture. I noticed that the participants were interested in topics related to food, health, such as a listening program about the benefits of olive oil, and technology. NPR presents different types of formats such as reports, interviews, stories, and a
mixture of each. The participants mostly preferred the interview format because it was similar to class discussions. They felt that listening to NPR’s interview programs helped them practice the conversation skills they needed. Sam is one of the participants who used his imagination when he listened to conversation programs as he pretended to have a discussion with the broadcaster. Also, Fatti trained herself to open and close a conversation because she liked small talk.

Ultimately, I noticed that participants became better in English after the listening training session. As a result, I have concluded that listening to NPR is a beneficial strategy for teachers to apply in their English classes since participants have positive responses when they listen to NPR. Also, radio is an affordable tool available to all English learners who have Internet access. The NPR website is a helpful tool to strengthen listening because it has pictures, videos, and transcripts. It is important to note, however, that most participants preferred using the computer to listen to NPR programs, instead of simply a radio.

One of the major findings of this study is that participants feel that there is no gap between the English they listen to on the radio and the actual English they encounter in their daily lives as they communicate with native English speakers or listen to lectures and different forms of mass media. The main purposes of this study are to determine the educational topics that students prefer, identify the number of times participants need to listen to a program in order to fully understand it, pinpoint the radio program format that students prefer, determine the types of English skills that radio programs strengthen, and understand the impact of web-radio on learners overall language skills. All these points have been answered as sub-points of the above research questions after analyzing the participants’ data.

Findings in this study were supported by prior research such as Odera (2008), who reported that learning foreign language can be faster learned by radio because it help the listener
better understand pronunciation and to practice listening clearly. In Kenya, they use radio to learn English language for the first time successfully (Odera, and Kusumu, 2011). Furthermore, Rautrao (2012) explained, learning second language can be strengthened with audio-visual aid because it allows the listener to understand different tones and inflections. In addition, Xiao (2008) described, teaching English as second language via distance learning by radio and television. Ultimately, learning second language can be easier with the web-radio because it has visual aid such as reading the transcript, videos, and photos. Using current technology to help learn a second language easily without attending to the classes can be helpful (Bahrani, 2011). In this study it helped to provide practice English language for Saudi Arabian students who speak Arabic as a first language.

**Recommendations**

To improve this study, I would like to interview international students for whom Arabic is not their native language as participants shared the same first language. Also, I would like to include in my methodology a descriptive survey to better understand the participants’ interests before introducing them to the procedures. In addition, I would also like to work more closely with them. More specifically, I would like to use more than five topics over a three-week period to get better results. Finally, I would like to have more than six participants in the study to measure the English language differences between the participants in different countries.

There are limited recommendations to add based on the research findings. I noticed that in the interviews students focused on the same two points: vocabulary and conversation. For this reason, I would like to add sentence structure and pronunciation to my study. My only change would be to have students try to write full sentences during the listening to train themselves to
improve their grammatical awareness and learn more about how their listening affects their speaking.

Finally, this study is potentially useful for teachers who teach intensive English classes and international students who want to improve their English language skills. The research results suggest that the radio can be an educational tool that promotes second language learning, regardless of the native language or the language one wants to learn. Also, people who want to improve their second language skills without attending formal classes can benefit from listening to language programs on the radio in the target language. For example, if participants in this study finish their academic degrees and return to their home countries, they can continue to develop their English language skills by listening to NPR and visiting the station’s website without any cost. Digital audio has many positive impacts on learning English as a second language.
REFERENCES


Erickson, F. (1985). Qualitative methods in research on teaching (pp. 119-62). Institute for Research and on Teaching.


from http://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco


*Open Learning*, 23(3), 171-183.

APPENDIX A.
CONSENT LETTER

DATE: November 1, 2013

TO: Nawal Alotaibi, Master
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [506494-4] The Impact of Digital Audio on English Language Learning
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: November 1, 2013

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 2

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has determined this project is exempt from IRB review according to federal regulations AND that the proposed research has met the principles outlined in the Belmont Report. You may now begin the research activities.

Note that an amendment may not be made to exempt research because of the possibility that proposed changes may change the research in such a way that it is no longer meets the criteria for exemption. A new application must be submitted and reviewed prior to modifying the research activity, unless the researcher believes that the change must be made to prevent harm to participants. In these cases, the Office of Research Compliance must be notified as soon as practicable.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact Kristin Hagemyer at 419-372-7716 or khagemy@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.
Students Participant Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to investigate the impact of radio on teaching English as a second language. The Principal Investigator of this project is Nawal Alotaibi, a student at BGSU in the College of Education and Human Development in the Masters degree program Curriculum & Teaching. The research questions addressed in this study are: 1). How does listening to educational radio programs impact English Language Learner Language Skills? 2). How does listening to educational radio programs impact English Language Learners Comprehension skills?, and 3). What kind of educational radio topics do English Language learners prefer and why?

You are being invited to participate in several evaluation activities during this research. The first is a meeting, held in a classroom in the College of Education on BGSU campus that explains and models the procedures for listening to a US radio program. You will learn where to find the programs, where to find the transcripts of the programs and also where to find the comprehension questions that will help you evaluate what you learned from the program. Next, you will be observed during your first listening session to make sure you understand the procedures and to answer any questions that you may have. Finally, your own you will listen to certain radio programs, answer comprehensive questions related to the radio program information, and read the program transcript. A follow up interview will be conducted after you have completed the individual listening component. The research will take approximately three weeks. There are no risks to you in this research. This research will add to the research base about improving English language learning teaching strategies and provide radio designers to introduce effective radio programs in terms of learning English.

You are under no obligation to participate in this research study; your decision to participate is entirely voluntary.

Your voluntary participation in this research is important to understanding the impact radio on English learners around the world and identifying new strategies that improve teaching English as a second language. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study. If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign your name on the appropriate line below return it to the researcher. Providing us with your information will ensure that we contact you for the research study. When we contact you, you will be given the opportunity to provide a false name (pseudonym) to for the researcher to use in the study so that we can protect your identity. By using a different
name we will be able to protect your confidentiality. All of your data will be maintained in password-protected files on the researchers personal computer. Your name will never be associated with your pseudonym so your identify will be protected at all times. You may refuse to participate in this study or withdraw your voluntary consent and discontinue participation in this study without penalty and without affecting your relationship to the university, the project staff, or your school. By agreeing to participate, you give us permission to use your responses in the research of this program.

If you have questions concerning the evaluation, please contact the Principal Investigator Nawal Alotaibi (nalota@bgsu.edu) or the research advisor Tracy Huziak-Clark at 419-372-7363 (thuziak@bgsu.edu). If you have questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University's Human Subjects Review Board at 419-372-7716 (hsrb@bgsu.edu).

I AGREE to participate in this study.

Participant’s name (print): _____________________________________________________________

Participant’s signature: _________________________________________________________________

Date: ________________________________
APPENDIX B.
COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS
NPR- Training session

Practice #1

Topic: Out Of The Rat Race: Lucky Rodents Find Their Own 'Taj Mahal'


Vocabulary

Filthy: very dirty

Cuddly: having the soft or appealing quality of a thing or person

Question

1. Where is the couple’s house? Boise, Idaho

2. The rats grow very quickly on the couple’s house; how many rats did they have? 72

3. How many rats did they keep? Nine

Practice # 2

Topic: To Get The Benefits of Olive Oil, Fresh May Be Best

link:


Vocabulary:

Unsaturated: used to describe a type of oil or fat that is found in foods and that is better for your health than other types

Agriculture: the science or occupation of farming

Fizzled: to gradually fail or end

Degrade: to treat (someone or something) poorly and without respect

Pungent: having a strong, sharp taste or smell

Questions

1. In which group the risk of the heart attacks and strokes are 30 presents? Third group medetermin diet that include 4 table spoons of extra virgin Olive oils and the nut group which was consuming olive oil.

2. Olive oil is good for two reasons mention one of them: first, it is mostly unsaturated fat; second, contain other beneficial plant compounds called polyphenols.

3. The olive oil is no longer good after opining for .............months (4 or 6).
Practice #3

Topic: Asian Investors Find Hot Market In U.S. Properties


Vocabulary

Marble: a kind of stone that is often polished and used in buildings and statues

Roaring: very loud, active, or strong

Inflated: increased to a level that is not normal or proper

Questions

1. What happened to GM building in last May? A large piece of it was purchased by a chines real estate developer.

2. There was a non- American family that purchases the U.S. bank Building in Los Anglos for $ 385 million. Choose one ( China, Indonesian, Korean).
practice # 4

Topic: Kombucha: Magical Health Elixir Or Just Funky Tea?

Link:  http://www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2013/09/30/226531998/kombucha-magical-health-elixir-or-just-funky-tea

Vocabulary

Whiff: to notice a smell
Rubbery: hard or tough
Contaminated: to make (something) dangerous, dirty, or impure by adding something harmful or undesirable to it.

Questions

1. Mention one of the health benefits that Kombucha tea includes? Kill cancer, energy improve, disease prevention.
2. What is Kombucha drinks contains? Live bacteria
3. Mention two of the Kumbucha’s ingredients? Black or green tea, sugar, bacteria, and yeast.
Practice # 5

Topic: Bill Gates: Making teacher evaluations public ‘not conducive to openness’


Vocabulary

Personnel: the people who work for a particular company or organization

Conducive: making it easy, possible, or likely for something to happen or exist

Prominence: the state of being important, well-known, or noticeable

Gauge: an instrument that is used for measuring something

Philanthropic: the practice of giving money and time to help make life better for other people

Comprehension question

1. What is the main point for Bill Gate?

2. If the evaluation is primarily based on test score, what are several problems they might have with it?

3. Does he learned something from the evaluation processes that took place at Microsoft?

4. Did he have an inspiring teacher?

5. What was his private school name when he was in his seventh grade?

6. How does his success relate to having a great teacher?

7. In which year did he reach the highest percentage of his wealth and how much was it?
After you have listened to five of different kinds of National Public Radio- NPR topics, can you give me your feedback?

1. Which NPR topic was the easiest to understand? Can you provide an example?
2. What difficulties did you experience while you listened to the NPR radio program? Can you provide some specific examples?
3. What percentage of the NPR program did you understand before reading the transcript? How did this change after reading the transcript?
4. Did you gain any new skills through listening to NPR program? If yes, what are these skills, how did they help you?
5. Did you understand the main topic the first time you heard it? How many times did you repeat the program? How did this help you as a learner of English?
6. What listening format (computer, MP3 player, I-tunes) did you use when you listened to the NPR programs?
7. Based on your experience, did listening to the radio programs help you in any way? Can you provide a specific example?
8. Would you advise other international students to use this learning strategy to raise their English language skill? Why or why not?