

The Effect of Reading While Listening to Audiobooks: Listening Fluency and Vocabulary Gain

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Fluency has received little attention in L2 language instruction. This study investigates the effects of reading while listening (RWL) to audiobooks on EFL learners' listening fluency and its by-product, vocabulary gain. This 26-week (2 semesters, 13 weeks in each) study involved 19 students of comparable English proficiency. In all, 7 students voluntarily took part in the RWL treatment throughout, while 12 received the usual formal instruction to serve as a control group. Test instruments involved a pre- and post-test of an 80-item (40 multiple choice and 40 items of dictation) listening test delivered at a speech rate of 160 words per minute and a vocabulary levels test. After the 26-week intervention, the RWL group outperformed the control group in both vocabulary gain and the listening scores. The RWL group improved more than 100% on dictation scores, implying that RWL increased students' speed in the listening process. Regarding the vocabulary levels test, the RWL group gained 17 marks (approximately equal to 566 individual words), but only 4 marks (or 123 individual words) for the control group. The RWL group studied a total of 86 books in the first 13 weeks and another 156 books in the second 13 weeks, increasing 81% in quantity. Students also studied longer and more difficult books in the second semester. Based on such successful outcomes, the study calls for more and larger scale studies of this kind.