



PROMOTING LISTENING COMPREHENSION IN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS: INTEGRATING DIGITAL TOOLS AND COURSEBOOK MATERIALS

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Abstract:

Creating engaging and meaningful activities is a fundamental aspect of effective language teaching, as they encourage active participation and sustained learner motivation. With the increasing availability of online tools, teachers have more opportunities to foster creativity and promote interactive learning. This article focuses on developing listening skills in English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, recognizing that many students are already exposed to English through media such as films, songs, and video games. Building on the framework proposed by Vlachos (2020), this study explores how learners enhance listening comprehension similarly to native speakers while contending with cultural and linguistic differences. Listening is integrated with reading, writing, and speaking activities around the contemporary topic of vegetarianism versus meat-eating, aiming to engage students through relevant and socially meaningful content.

Keywords: engaging activities, teaching of listening, integration of reading, writing and speaking skills

1. Introduction

In the evolving landscape of language education, teachers are increasingly encouraged to design lessons that actively engage learners and promote meaningful communication. Traditional teaching methods are being supplemented by innovative, technology-enhanced approaches that enhance innovative thinking and interaction. Among the four key language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing, listening often serves as the foundation for successful language acquisition, as it exposes learners to authentic input and facilitates comprehension of natural speech patterns.

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For many learners of English as a foreign language, listening is perceived as a relatively accessible skill due to the extensive exposure they receive through various media, such as American films, English-language music, and online content, including video games and social media. The above, therefore, highlights the importance of integrating listening activities that are not only authentic but also culturally and contextually relevant.

This article presents a lesson plan that combines listening with reading, writing, and speaking activities in a holistic approach to language learning. The lesson centers on the topic of vegetarianism versus meat-eating, a contemporary and socially significant issue that resonates with the interests and lifestyles of many learners today. By exploring this theme, the lesson aims to enhance students' listening comprehension, critical thinking, and communicative competence while developing awareness of differing perspectives related to dietary choices and cultural identity.

2. Rationale

The use of video-based materials has become an increasingly common practice in foreign language teaching, offering an engaging and multimodal approach to skill development. Videos create authentic language exposure and provide meaningful contexts for comprehension and discussion. Although such activities require careful planning and structured pre-, while-, and post-viewing stages, they help cultivate learners' listening skills in an interactive and enjoyable manner.

As Cannings (2000) suggests, presenting video input in shorter, manageable segments enhances comprehension by minimizing cognitive overload and allowing learners to process information more effectively. This approach is particularly appropriate for adult learners who balance work and study responsibilities, as it accommodates their need for flexible and stimulating learning experiences beyond the traditional textbook. Integrating the digital tool VideoAnt, used here for the first time in this teaching context, introduces an enjoyable and motivational resource that supports learner autonomy, fosters deeper engagement, and encourages interaction through video annotation and discussion (see Appendix II).

3. Teaching Context and Learner Profile

3.1 Learners' Language Level and Background

The participants in this teaching context are ten adult Greek native speakers currently working towards a B1 (Intermediate) level of English proficiency, as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001). All learners studied English during childhood but now display gaps in basic grammatical structures and everyday vocabulary. Their main motivations for improving English proficiency include the desire to travel, career mobility, and potentially relocation to an English-speaking country.

While the learners find extended writing tasks demanding, they show enthusiasm and confidence when engaging with listening activities. For this reason, the listening task presented in this lesson was chosen as the core of instruction (see Appendix II). Listening activities not only serve to enhance comprehension, but to also act as a bridge that aims to further reinforce productive language use in reading and writing tasks through contextualized learning.

3.2 Coursebook and Supplementary Materials

The primary classroom material used with this group is the Restart 2 coursebook, which offers a balanced set of activities that integrate all four main language skills. This book is particularly suitable for adult learners due to its focus on colloquial expressions, everyday contexts, and topics relevant to adult life. Such content aligns well with the learners' linguistic goals and communicative needs.

In addition to the coursebook, students are encouraged to use digital resources to further develop specific areas such as grammar, vocabulary, and writing. Interactive websites like *Agenda Web* provide immediate feedback, which fosters learner motivation and self-directed learning. The combination of coursebook-based instruction and online practice provides a comprehensive framework that blends structure, authenticity and engagement, supporting the long-term development of communicative competence.

4. Lesson Description and Design

4.1 Pre-Viewing Stage

Before engaging with the video and the corresponding comprehension tasks, learners will participate in a brainstorming activity designed to activate background knowledge and stimulate interest in the topic of vegetarianism and veganism (see Appendix II). This stage encourages students to draw on their prior experiences and opinions, thereby building mental schemata related to both the content and the lexical field likely to appear in the video.

Learners will be divided into two groups of five and will discuss guiding questions concerning the reasons individuals choose particular dietary lifestyles and the distinctions among *meat-eaters*, *vegetarians*, and *vegans* (see Appendix I). This collaborative exchange promotes the use of existing vocabulary and encourages learners to articulate personal views in a supportive environment.

Each group will summarize its ideas using a spider diagram, cultivating visual organization of concepts and shared contributions. Through this pre-viewing task, students are prepared both cognitively and linguistically for the video input that follows. The activity also serves to promote communicative interaction, cooperative learning, and lexical readiness, essential elements of a successful listening lesson.

4.2 While-Viewing Stage

4.2.1 Exercises Based on the Video to Practise Reading and Writing Skills

In this stage, learners are introduced to the YouTube video that frames the lesson's central theme. As Terantino (2011) notes, YouTube provides rapid and enjoyable access to a wide range of authentic and instructional content that reflects both language use and culture from around the world. However, as Blake (2016) emphasizes, learners may require explicit guidance on how to engage with technology meaningfully rather than merely using it passively.

The selected video presents a debate on *veganism versus meat-eating*, featuring interviews with individuals who discuss their dietary choices and beliefs about food sources (see Appendix II). In selecting this material, particular attention was given to factors influencing comprehensibility, such as accent clarity, speech rate, and conversational naturalness (Arcario, n.d.; Burt, 1999). Despite the relatively fast pace, its authenticity makes it both challenging and engaging, encouraging learners to focus actively on comprehension.

To support this process, the digital tool VideoAnt will be integrated throughout viewing. Embedded comprehension questions will prompt students to pause, reflect, and respond, transforming the video from a passive to an interactive listening experience. At each relevant point, the video will stop briefly, allowing time for students to answer short, accessible questions (see Appendix II). This scaffolding ensures engagement and maintains comprehension even at moments of rapid discourse.

4.2.2 Exercise 1: Using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to Find Synonyms

The first task familiarizes learners with the COCA online resource by asking them to identify synonyms for five target words drawn from the video (see Appendix II). COCA is a balanced corpus of over 560 million words representing genres such as academic writing, popular texts, spoken discourse, magazines, and newspapers (Vlachos, 2020). Through COCA, learners can analyze how words function in multiple real-world contexts, a practice that fosters deeper lexical understanding.

As Godwin-Jones (2018) observes, vocabulary becomes more memorable when encountered and reused meaningfully. Learners will also be asked to identify the root form of selected derivatives appearing in the transcript. The teacher will pause the video strategically to assist learners during this process. Designed as the first embedded exercise, this stage introduces learners to the topic in a non-intimidating way, maintaining curiosity while reinforcing vocabulary awareness.

4.2.3 Exercise 2: Identifying the Meaning of Unknown Phrases

The second activity focuses on vocabulary development through context. Learners will identify key phrases as they occur in the video and infer their meanings with peer support. The video will be paused at specific moments to allow discussion of these target phrases. By attention-focusing on context and usage, learners internalize lexical items they can

later recycle in writing tasks. This process strengthens form–meaning relationships and enhances active vocabulary recall (see Appendix II).

4.2.4 Exercise 3: Completing Sentences with the Correct Word

This exercise consolidates vocabulary recognition through gap-fill sentences drawn from the video context. Learners must listen carefully for the precise time each target word appears and then predict its meaning and usage. Subsequently, they will verify their choices using COCA, reinforcing both comprehension and lexical flexibility. By combining auditory input with contextual exploration, learners build transferable vocabulary knowledge applicable to later writing tasks (see Appendix II).

4.2.5 Exercise 4: Answering Comprehension Questions

Finally, learners complete a series of comprehension questions designed to confirm understanding of the video’s main ideas. According to Vlachos (2020), videos that include moving images can significantly enhance spoken-language comprehension and sustain learner attention, particularly when associated with enjoyment. Consequently, this task transforms the typical textbook-based comprehension format into an engaging, visually supported activity. These *off-air* questions (see Appendix II) consolidate understanding, confirm gist and detail comprehension, and encourage learners to reflect critically on the topic.

4.3 Post-Viewing Stage

4.3.1 Blog Composition Task

In the post-viewing phase, learners will integrate and extend the language input from the video through a blog-writing task. This activity enables students to apply previously acquired writing techniques within an authentic, technology-mediated genre. As Avgerou (2016) argues, the proliferation of digital technology has transformed traditional classrooms into dynamic, participatory spaces where learners construct and exchange knowledge rather than passively absorbing language rules. Blogs exemplify this shift, offering a user-friendly platform that encourages creativity, self-expression, and learner autonomy.

According to Yang (2009), blogs provide accessible online environments that allow individuals to produce written content without technical expertise, thereby facilitating focus on language production rather than form. Within this task, students are asked to compose a short blog entry expressing their personal views on vegetarianism and veganism, drawing on ideas discussed during earlier lesson stages. This form of written production promotes communicative and reflective practice while strengthening grammatical accuracy and lexical recall.

Most adult learners are already familiar with blogs, which reduces anxiety commonly associated with extended writing tasks. To support those with limited digital skills, the teacher will provide scaffolding through a demonstration on the Wix platform and individual guidance as needed. Learners will first draft their posts offline, allowing

time to plan, organize ideas, and review language use before uploading the final version. Blog writing is now widely incorporated into the curricula of many awarding bodies, and practising it within the classroom offers practical preparation for exam-oriented and real-world communicative contexts. The chosen topic is particularly suitable for adult learners, as many can relate personally to discussions around dietary choices, making the task both meaningful and motivating.

4.3.2 Peer Feedback through Blog Commenting

Following the composition of individual blog entries, learners will engage in a peer feedback activity by commenting on one another's posts. Emphasizing collaborative learning and learner autonomy, this stage encourages students to interact with peers as both writers and readers. Peer assessment provides a valuable opportunity for reflection and awareness-raising, as learners evaluate the clarity, coherence, and persuasiveness of others' writing while comparing it with their own.

Providing constructive comments helps learners refine their critical thinking and editing skills, and it fosters a sense of community within the classroom. As they read and respond to classmates' blogs, students are likely to notice new lexical and structural strategies that can inform their future writing. This activity thus integrates reading, writing, and intercultural communication while consolidating the thematic and linguistic objectives established throughout the lesson (see Appendix II).

4.4 Reflection on the Use of the Video and Its Effectiveness

At this stage of the lesson, learners are invited to reflect on the video material and share their perceptions regarding its engagement, relevance, and overall effectiveness. They will discuss how interesting they found the topic and suggest alternative themes they might prefer for future lessons. This reflective discussion fosters a sense of learner agency, as students take an active role in evaluating classroom materials and contributing to curricular development.

Encouraging learners to articulate their opinions and preferences supports a learner-centered approach and acknowledges the diversity of interests within the group. Moreover, such reflection promotes critical thinking and metacognitive awareness, enabling students to analyze how the chosen topic, pace, and content influenced their comprehension and motivation. From a pedagogical standpoint, gathering learners' feedback provides valuable insight for the teacher to improve future lesson design and topic selection, while also enhancing a collaborative classroom atmosphere built on dialogue and mutual respect.

5. Discussion of the Approaches Adopted in the Present Assignment

The approaches employed in this lesson combine listening comprehension, vocabulary development, and digital literacy within a communicative and learner-centered framework. A range of exercises allowed students to practise listening in authentic

contexts, promoting deeper understanding and long-term lexical retention. The integration of tools such as VideoAnt and blog writing expanded the scope of classroom interaction, exposing learners to technology-based resources that support engagement and creativity. For many adult learners, these tools represented new experiences that made the learning process meaningful and enjoyable.

While the incorporation of digital tools may initially present challenges—such as creating online accounts or navigating unfamiliar interfaces—adequate scaffolding and teacher guidance ensure equitable participation. The selected video, though relatively fast-paced, offers genuine exposure to natural speech and authentic cultural perspectives. Frequent pauses during playback allow for accessible comprehension while maintaining a desirable level of challenge for stronger learners.

Overall, the pedagogical design reflects principles of communicative language teaching, task-based learning, and integrated-skills development, emphasizing the importance of authentic input and learner autonomy. By combining multimedia comprehension, online interaction, and reflective production, the lesson successfully creates a multidimensional learning experience aligned with contemporary trends in English language teaching.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the lesson outlined in this assignment aimed to create an engaging and learner-centered environment that promotes active participation and authentic language use. By integrating digital tools such as VideoAnt and Wix, the lesson provided innovative opportunities for learners to interact with multimedia content, reflect critically on contemporary issues, and produce language creatively through blogging. As Canning (2000) emphasizes, video-based activities can integrate visual input with a variety of communicative tasks, leading to meaningful comprehension and long-term retention.

The chosen video and theme of *vegetarianism versus meat-eating* proved particularly effective for adult learners, as the topic is current, relatable, and discussion-rich. These characteristics foster intrinsic motivation and encourage learners of varying proficiency levels—including those less confident in writing—to contribute actively. The teacher's role in scaffolding digital participation and supporting less technologically experienced learners ensures that all students can benefit equitably from the tasks.

Overall, this lesson demonstrates how purposeful integration of technology, authentic content, and contextualized language tasks can transform the EFL classroom into an interactive space that nurtures learner autonomy and communicative competence. Future applications of this design may explore adapting similar approaches to other themes and proficiency levels, thus continuing to bridge technology, authenticity, and active learning in contemporary language education.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest

About the Author

Afroditi Doulkeridou is an experienced English language teacher specializing in communicative and technology-enhanced approaches to education. She has taught English, Mathematics, and ICT to adult learners in the United Kingdom, focusing on Functional Skills and digital literacy. Since 2020, she has taught English at Maritime Academies of Syros and Crete and, since 2021, across vocational fields in public colleges, apprenticeships and adult education sectors in Chania, Greece. She holds a Master's degree in the Teaching of English as a Foreign/International Language from the Hellenic Open University. Her practice integrates interactive tools and learner-centered methods to foster engagement, inclusion, and cultural awareness in diverse learning contexts.

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Appendix I. Lesson Plan

Lesson Aim: Develop writing skills through the use of a YouTube video.

Learner:

Age: 30 +Level: B1 (CEFR)

Time: 60 minutes

Materials and Teaching Aids: COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English), VideoAnt, blog (Wix), worksheets, and hyperlinks to additional online resources.

Stage / Task	Procedure	Interaction	Objectives	Time (min)
Pre-Viewing Stage				
1. Discussion of ideas on vegetarianism and meat-eating	Learners work collaboratively to discuss their opinions on the topic. The teacher monitors the discussion and offers support where needed.	Group work	To use speaking and listening skills to exchange ideas on the topic.	5
2. Comparing dietary options	Learners write individually about advantages of each dietary choice, then compile a <i>spider gram</i> collaboratively. The teacher assists as necessary.	Individual / group work	To use writing, speaking, and listening skills to express and organize ideas effectively.	5
While-Viewing Stage				
1. Completion of viewing exercises	Learners respond to tasks based on the video, using correct grammar and spelling. The teacher supervises and guides.	Individual	To consolidate understanding of new vocabulary and structures through comprehension tasks.	10
2. Comprehension questions	Learners answer comprehension items individually while watching the video. The teacher supports as required.	Individual	To practise listening for detail and scanning subtitles to extract specific information.	10
Post-Viewing Stage				
1. Blog writing	Learners plan and publish a short blog on Wix. The teacher	Individual / teacher feedback	To apply correct grammar and vocabulary to	15

	monitors and provides feedback.		express personal views on the topic.	
2. Peer commenting	Learners post comments on one classmate's blog entry. The teacher observes the interaction process.	Pair / whole class	To practise constructive peer feedback using accurate and relevant written English.	5
3. Reflection and improvement	Learners discuss ways their work could be enhanced. The teacher elicits responses through guided questioning.	Whole class discussion	To use persuasive language and reflective thinking to suggest improvements.	10

Appendix II. Teaching Materials and Digital Resources

A. Pre-Viewing Task

Learners are divided into two groups of five. They may record their ideas using a spider gram while discussing the following:

- a) a. Why do you think people eat meat?
- b) b. Do you think it's based on caring for animals, or is it a matter of taste?
- c. Would you ever become a vegetarian or vegan? Why or why not?

B. While-Viewing Tasks

Exercise 1: Finding Synonyms

Access COCA (<https://www.english-corpora.org/glowbe/>) and register to locate synonyms for the following words (0:00–1:11 min of the video).

Word	Synonym (learner response)
broaden	
reach	
commonality	
consumption	
exploit	

Exercise 2: Understanding Meaning

Use the same link to identify the meaning of the following expressions (1:12–1:45 min):

- 1) canine teeth = _____
- 2) food chain = _____
- 3) moral agency = _____

Exercise 3: Completing Sentences

(1:56–3:06 min) Fill in the blanks with correct words from the box below:

stuff slaughterhouses ranches misconceptions welfare labels

- 1) These debates have also highlighted society's _____.
- 2) I am talking about locally grown _____.
- 3) They still go to the same _____.
- 4) We often attach _____ and high _____ to everything we do to animals.
- 5) They don't have any added _____.

Exercise 4: Listening Comprehension

(3:31–4:20 min) Answer the questions below.

- a) What has changed in Ed's debates since 2015?
- b) What made Ed feel optimistic?
- c) When does Ed believe he has done a good job?

Video Link (annotated): Retrieved from <https://ant.umn.edu/nnhdknsczy/view>

Original YouTube Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xe0vMAWbOc>

C. Post-viewing Tasks

Exercise 5: Blog Writing and Peer Feedback

- a) Write a short blog expressing your opinion on vegetarianism or veganism.
Platform: Wix (<https://manage.wix.com/dashboard/0f609a8e-b1c0-49a9-9c30-cca084350546/blog/87ed2fe5-db9f-4f00-af9e-f7eabdf30732/edit?referralInfo=sidebar>)
Plan your ideas, draft your paragraph, review it, and then post the final version.
- b) Comment briefly on one of your classmate's blog posts, offering constructive feedback.