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### Animate Your Communicative Class and Embark Your Students with Fun Facts

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#### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to use listening worksheets, interviews with participants, results of listening quizzes, and listening observations in English courses at foreign language schools in public universities in Vietnam to understand how listening enjoyment is improved through fun facts. The purpose is to analyze how it is promoted. Researchers can identify learner responses and identify student feedback that may lead to more productive activities. For many students, listening to the target language is a difficult task. Listening for pleasure with fun facts is intended to make listening enjoyable for learners. Improving listening skills through fun listening with fun facts is one of the functional and practical methods thanks to simple and interesting teaching

materials that allow learners to listen fluently in a proficient manner. The main value is that it gives students the opportunity to choose and decide for themselves how to use their time effectively to improve their listening skills in the target language. It is about the giving of the participants in this study; 160 Vietnamese English learners participated, and from 2022 to the summer term of 2023, they completed a worksheet after each listening activity for 5 weeks. The analysis showed that all participants showed positive tendencies toward listening and improved their listening comprehension level, in addition to several other skills in the target language.

**Keywords:** Listening for Pleasure, Fun Facts, Communicative Class, Learners' Perceptions

#### 1. Introduction

Fun facts-interesting, unusual, and often little-known facts-are a popular form of entertainment around the world. There are countless books, TV quizzes (*Jeopardy*), board games (*Trivial Pursuit*), and museums (*Ripley's Believe It or Not*) dedicated to puzzles and unusual things that fascinate people of all ages. Short presentations of interesting facts will engage your students, engage them, and enliven your classroom (Beer, Julic, & Harris, 2018) <sup>[2]</sup>. Besides, fun facts can do all of the following: bring fun and humor to the lesson; add variety and allow for changes in tempo; act as a springboard for a brief discussion; and add up effectively when you find yourself with extra time during a lesson (Fenster, 2000) <sup>[6]</sup>.

This article describes how to liven up your class and motivate your students with occasional short oral presentations of interesting facts. These presentations are not intended to practice listening (although some activities are often used to practice listening). The article's opening section defines fun facts, reasons for using activities based on fun facts, listening for pleasure, and websites for fun facts. The next section focuses on the literature of fun facts, listening for pleasure, and websites for fun facts, and the final section shows how to answer two research questions through interviews, worksheets, quiz results, and the researcher's observation.

#### 2. Literature Review

In this literature review, the article consists of definitions of fun facts, reasons for using activities based on fun facts, listening for pleasure, and websites for fun facts.

##### 2.1 Definition of Fun Facts

You can find interesting facts about many different topics, such as animals (a blue whale's heart is as big as a small car), the human body (there is enough tissue in a pair of humans lungs to cover a tennis court), the universe (*there are more stars in the universe than grains of sand on all the beaches on Earth*), cities (*there are no stop signs in Paris*), environmental concerns

(about 27,000 trees are cut down every day to make paper toilets), and famous people (Napoleon was afraid of cats). There are a few different authors and years that write about the definition of fun facts. Here are a few examples: Fenster (2000) [6] explores the psychological impact of fun facts. The authors argue that fun facts can make us happier, more creative, and more productive. In particular, the author argues that fun facts can be a great way to learn new things and engage with the world around us, covering a wide range of topics. Moore argues that fun facts can be a great way to learn new things and entertain yourself. In addition, the author explores the history of fun facts and their impact on popular culture. Fenster (2000) [6] argues that fun facts can be a powerful tool for communication and persuasion. In other words, in this book, fun facts can be a great way to spark conversation and ignite curiosity.

**2.2 Reasons for Using Activities based on Fun Facts**

There are good reasons to use activities based on fun facts:

- *They are fun.*

Just like listening to jokes or songs, hearing strange or funny facts is also interesting. Learning is enhanced when an activity is so enjoyable that students forget, at least temporarily, that they are in a classroom (Gifford, 2018) [8].

- *They are so charming*

Every teacher knows the importance of using texts (oral or written) that interest students and capture their attention (Lloyd, Mitchinson, & Harkin, 2012) [10].

- *They attract students.*

Activities that involve interesting and unusual events engage students actively, whether paying close attention to a short passage or making personal comments about what is heard (Lloyd, Mitchinson, & Harkin, 2013) [11].

- *They provide the ability to respond verbally, concisely, and authentically.*

Given the engaging nature of the events, student reactions and feedback will be authentic and meaningful, not simply a classroom performance (Lloyd, Mitchinson, & Harkin, 2013) [11].

**2.3 Listening for Pleasure**

First, listening for pleasure, listening for entertainment, listening as a fun activity, and listening as a stimulus that leads to other activities, such as role-play, student commentary, and vocabulary expansion, as appropriate, Just like hearing jokes, songs, poems, and anecdotes, hearing fun facts is motivating because students want to understand (Lloyd, Mitchinson, & Harkin, 2013) [11].

Second, listening for pleasure also exposes students to new languages they can pick up along the way, allowing them to develop their listening skills without directly focusing on the language (Lloyd, Mitchinson, & Harkin, 2013) [11].

Then, however, fun facts provide the basis for listening practice. For example, you can design a series of lessons around numbers. Possibilities include numbers used in the data (*Agatha Christie was born in 1890 and died in 1976*), measurements (*the average height of a male giraffe is about 55 meters*), and statistics (*São Paulo in 2020 has a population of 2185 million people*). 101 years old (*Mary Hardison flew a tandem paraglide at age 101*). Morley (1972a, 1972b) [14, 15] uses dictation to provide interesting and informative lessons about numbers and numerical relationships, dates and time series, and measurements and quantities.

Third, listening for pleasure is a fun way to improve your listening skills. Listening for fun, defined by Reinders (2010) [18] as listening for enjoyment and in the context of one's own interests, regardless of attention to detail, is a functional tool for developing listening comprehension and other language skills. It is considered a method that provides a large amount of target language input according to the learner's interests and level (Yeh, 2017, p.88) [26]. Nation (2008) states that listening skills improve when learners engage in meaning-oriented input and fluency-building tasks, such as listening to a wide range of simple and interesting material. And” the main point of extensive listening is to focus on the listening material of your choice and the meaning while listening (Schmidt, 2016) [22]. Additionally, learners have the opportunity to choose how often they listen to tracks with extensive listening exercises. Finally, listening for pleasure has significant benefits in a variety of language skill areas, including the development of vocabulary, productive skills, especially pronunciation and speaking, and motivation for learning (Renandia & Farrell, 2011) [20]. The teacher's role in implementing an extensive listening program should be to be a guide, explaining the purpose and methodology of the process. Holden (2008) [9] suggested that a significant amount of vocabulary knowledge is acquired through vocabulary exposure, but this was not assessed. This knowledge may include recognition of lexical phrases, collocations, and collocation patterns, new nuances of meaning, increased speed of lexical access, and more. Perhaps this is where the real benefits of extensive reading and listening for pleasure come into play. "Practice is king. Listening gets better the more you listen, and subskills become automatic as they become more automatic." Renandya and Farrell (2011, p.56) [20].

**2.4 Websites for Fun Facts**

**Table 1:** Websites for Fun Facts

<b>General fun facts</b>	
facts legend	factslegend.org
OhFact!	ohfact.com
the FACTfile	thefactfile.org
The Fact Site	thefactsite.com
<b>Facts about People</b>	
Ducksters	ducksters.com (see "Biography").
the FACTfile	thefactfile.org (see "People")
<b>Records</b>	
Most Extreme	mostextreme.org
Guinness World Record	guinnessworldrecords.com
<b>Facts about countries</b>	
the FACTfile	thefactfile.org (see "Countries")

**3. Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to promote focused listening for pleasure and find out whether it leads to improved listening skills in learners with the use of fun facts.

The methodology of this study is kept within the boundaries of qualitative and quantitative research, considering the characteristics of a mixed research design.

In parallel, this qualitative research study was conducted within the context of an exploratory case study to gain a deeper understanding of learners' perceptions of comprehensive listening. Participants' performance was analyzed and used as quantitative data. This case study allows researchers to “discover contextual features that shed

light on a problem or object” (Sanders, 1981, p. 44) [21].

Participants were 160 Vietnamese English learners who completed an English course at a foreign language college at a public university in Vietnam. The study was conducted during the summer semester of the 2022-2023 academic year for 5 weeks. The researchers asked about student volunteers who wanted to participate in the study. Participants will be provided with an audio list and a website. Learners listened to different topics related to their interests and learned fun facts by completing worksheets on listening activities taken from the website. Data for this study were collected from interviews with participants, worksheets that participants completed after the listening activity, participants' listening quiz results, and researcher observations of focused listening. During the first and second semesters of the 2022-2023 academic year, students were tested and assessed using four main assessment types, including midterm 1, midterm 2, quiz averages, and portfolio.

In this study, researchers analyzed learners' listening rates at each assessment to determine whether learners' listening skills improved. For qualitative data, content and frequency analysis were used, and for quantitative data, student performance was analyzed to determine if there was improvement. After the interviews were transcribed and translated, the transcripts were thoroughly analyzed, and key concepts that frequently appeared in the interviews were highlighted and coded using content analysis techniques. Content analysis is a qualitative research analysis used to analyze textual materials such as interviews, magazines, observations, and media products. Mayring (2000) [13] defines the basic idea of this step as “formulation of derived definition criteria.” It is analyzed based on the theoretical background and research questions that determine the aspects of the textual material that are considered. Content analysis partially reduces the material, making it more clear and distinct compared to other data analysis methods (Flick, 2009) [7].

All students in my study were evaluated by watching, listening, and interacting with students at the intermediate level on listening skills through websites for fun facts. Validity and reliability, in particular, were validated prior to this investigation.

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the learners' perceptions about listening for pleasure with fun facts?
2. Does listening for pleasure have an effect on learners' listening-skill development with fun facts? If yes, how does it affect it?

#### 4. Results

This study aims to investigate learners' perceptions of listening for pleasure and provide suggestions for using this type of activity by incorporating it into the language-learning process with fun facts.

To achieve this goal, data was collected and analyzed from various sources.

These data collection tools for this study included interviews conducted with participants, worksheets completed by participants after listening activities with fun facts, participants' listening quiz results, and the researcher's observation.

#### A. Participant Interviews

After completing extensive listening activities with fun facts, the participants were interviewed, and their responses were recorded and transcribed. Content analysis techniques were used to identify themes related to participants' thoughts and perceptions about the process.

A question and topics categorized as advantages and disadvantages are listed below: What do you think about listening outside the classroom?

**Table 2:** Themes of answers to first interview questions

Advantages	Disadvantages
- fruitful	-tired
- improve teacher understanding	-insufficient vocabulary
- controls external factors	
- satisfying	
- increase text effectiveness	
- appeals to all students	

The answers to the first question are mostly positive (Table 1). Content analysis of responses to the initial interview questions revealed only two negative ones. First, listening for pleasure was exhausting for him, one of the participants. The reason is the fact that this participant did not complete his listening exercises regularly and attempted to complete them in a short period of time, leading her to believe that it was a tiring process. Another participant stated that the lack of sufficient vocabulary knowledge made it more difficult to understand the listening track better, which negatively affected the perception of the listening activity.

#### B. Worksheet

Another data collection tool for this study was a worksheet that participants completed after each in-depth listening activity. The worksheet included his three steps: pre-listening, during listening, and post-listening. All participants completed these worksheets during the study. However, the key question at this point was how regularly the worksheets would be processed. Thirty participants completed a worksheet each day.

#### C. Results of Listening Quizzes

The listening tests administered as part of the participants' comprehensive listening process were also evaluated to gain insight into how they influenced the development of the participants' listening skills. Participants took part in her four tests during the study period. Their results for these four quiz questions showed an overall increase in the scores of the participants. For example, for these four tests, Participant A's listening test score showed an increase of 58% with her listening quiz scores on these four quizzes. Participants B, C, and D had their scores increase by 30%.

#### D. Researcher's Observation

Finally, the researcher's thoughts and beliefs, which were based on her observation of this process, were asked as part of the data collection process. Their views about listening to pleasure activities and the participants' perceptions were generally positive. The researcher expressed that willingness about and interests in the listening skill were higher than before the participants first started doing these listening

activities for pleasure. The increasing scores of the participants' listening quiz results support this view of the researcher. "All of the participants stated that they wanted to continue doing the listening activities during the summer holiday." Individually, the researcher stated about the participants that "participant A is already motivated, "participant B has started to show interest in the lesson, and her quiz scores increased, "participant C is more willing to learn," and "participant D expects negative quiz results first, but she gets good results eventually.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

### ***Question 1: What are the learners' perceptions about listening for pleasure?***

Topics of interest to each student are one of the most powerful aspects of listening activities for pleasure. Each student has the opportunity to choose a particular topic that he listens to for fun.

In this way, students can become more interested in listening and complete activities without time or topic constraints.

*"I started dreaming in English."*

*"Now I'm interested in finding the lyrics to my favorite songs."*

*"And I learned more words from them."*

*"Because the audio pieces were short, I was able to finish them and the worksheets in a short amount of time and was never bored, and I had a great time."*

Interviews with these participants, worksheets, results of listening quizzes, and the researcher's observation reflected a positive attitude towards continuing activities for pleasure.

*"I think my listening skills have improved because I practice regularly."*

*"I think it would have been better if I practiced regularly."*

### ***Question 2: Does listening for pleasure have an effect on learners' listening skill development? If yes, how does it affect it?***

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of a wide range of listening activities on the development and perception of English language learners' listening skills. The results of this study showed that those participants' perceptions of extensive listening were generally positive. Listening for pleasure, the opportunity and freedom to choose the topics to listen to, and participants' spontaneity may contribute to this positive outcome.

This method greatly facilitates students' personal responsibility. In this study, participants were free to choose what they wanted to hear, consciously or unconsciously, considering their own language and comprehension level.

This freedom to choose one's own materials and its benefits to the learner are consistent with Oxford's (2011) [17] theory of self-regulated behavior, which emphasizes the importance of learners being in control of their own learning. Learners find motivation and excitement by engaging in activities of their own choosing (Onoda, 2012; Oxford, 2011) [16, 17]. Chang and Millett (2013) [4] found in their study that listening materials that are appropriate to a learner's skill level are a source of motivation to continue listening. Learners also have the opportunity to listen to tracks multiple times at their own pace, making the most of listening activities rather than doing activities assigned by a teacher (Mayora, 2017) [12].

Through the two research questions and findings, we found that listening activities for pleasure are not only beneficial to participants' language learning in terms of listening ability and exceeding their current level, but also beneficial for further engagement and input in the target language.

It has been shown that there is a desire for better pronunciation, reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and more communication and interaction in the classroom. "In EFL environments where exposure to the target language is limited, intensive listening is essential for language development" (Vo, 2013, p. 36). Furthermore, this result suggests similarities with Antle's (2011) [1] study conducted with 35 Japanese university students, in which extensive listening improved participants' reading speed. It has been shown to have a positive effect. Similarly, Ucan (2010) [24] states that intensive listening is beneficial for improving students' vocabulary and listening comprehension, making them more confident in language learning. Furthermore, Reinders and Cho (2010) [19] argue that extensive listening activities can increase learners' motivation and help lower their emotional filters. It is also argued that "the listening skills learned in EL can be applied to listening to unfamiliar texts by L2 learners" (Chang and Millett, 2013, p. 37) [4].

Other benefits of focused listening include "independent learning, listening outside the four-walled classroom, technology as a window into open-access libraries, and the expansion of language and knowledge" (Widodo & Rozak, 2016, p. 240) [25].

In addition, regular activity also influences the development of listening skills and perception. Regularity of activity contributes to improved comprehension, which is a result of focused listening (Chang & Millett, 2016; Holden, 2008) [5, 9]. Participants who engage in the activity regularly rate the process more positively. Two of these participants, Participant A and Participant C, reported completing the worksheets regularly. Furthermore, the results of the listening quiz showed that the scores of four participants increased. Finally, researchers say they observed participants' motivation, interest, and listening scores to be higher while engaging in pleasure-seeking listening activities. All these results indicate that comprehensive listening influences the development of listening skills and learners' positive attitudes towards listening in the language learning process.

Negative themes such as challenging and tiring that emerged from content analysis do not necessarily imply negative perceptions of the participants' enjoyment of the listening process. When learning a language, it's normal for learners to feel a little nervous about it for the first time. For example, Yeh (2017) [26] found that participants in their study experienced similar challenges when performing listening activities for fun. Furthermore, Chang (2010) [3] investigated how listening activities for pleasure-affected participants' listening anxiety. The results showed that the comprehensive listening group was more successful than the formal listening skills instruction group, but their anxiety increased significantly. Researchers have concluded that it is the underlying anxiety that contributes to learners learning the target language. Therefore, the purpose of multi-listening is to allow learners to listen and enjoy themselves at the same time. Siegel (2011) [23] states that it is beneficial to incorporate extensive listening into listening training.



As the results of this study show, listening for pleasure has several benefits for language learners. This study shows that extended periods of listening for pleasure have a positive effect on the listening skills and perceptual development of learners. Exposure to different types of listening materials helped learners develop and consolidate their receptive skills. They updated their vocabulary. From the worksheets, it appears that the English learner is practicing the skills in a meaningful and productive way. Researchers also observed an improvement in the learners' speaking skills. Learners enjoyed listening to materials and activities. Some participants mentioned the need for more comprehensive listening. During the main course, they expressed a lack of exercise and time. Listening for pleasure can be effective because it provides an opportunity to gain more real-life experience. Listening activities like this are fun and enjoyable. Learners have freedom of choice, which contributes to their satisfaction with the learning process. Despite the challenges that teachers and learners may face, there are always ways to solve problems. The tasks in this study encouraged learners to focus on the process rather than answering questions directly.

Administrators, curriculum developers, and instructors working in preparatory schools to encourage and guide learners to engage in listening for pleasure may use the results of this study. Course book selection may also be considered and designed with these outcomes in mind. Additionally, students have more time, opportunities, and resources to engage in intensive listening both inside and outside the classroom. Although this study was carried out only in the preparatory classes of one school, it can be carried out in other foreign language schools in order to generalize the results and reach more reliable conclusions. Similarly, the researcher could select from all classes in the university, not just the classes taught. In addition to the volunteer students, all students at the preparatory school could become participants in this study. A similar study could be conducted with students of different English proficiency levels. Similar studies can be conducted without time limits. Furthermore, encouraging learners to make greater use of their technology for the purpose of deep listening seems to be a useful way to improve language learning by promoting student agency. For example, podcasts, YouTube videos, Ted Talks, or the lyrics of your favorite songs are definitely interesting sources for learners to listen to in detail. Apart from these alternatives, further research could be conducted to look for difficulties that learners face in listening and look for solutions to overcome them in order to become better listeners of the target language.

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