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]Kurdish-Speaking University EFL Learners' Perceptions of the Usefulness and Effectiveness of TED Talks Videos in Developing Listening and Speaking Skills

A B S T R A C T

It is crucial to collect perceptions of learners after every new experiment where authentic materials, such as TED Talks, have been integrated for educational operationalization in ELF classrooms. Thus, this study investigates Kurdish-speaking university ELF learners' perceptions of how useful the TED Talks videos have been for their listening and speaking skills. A close-ended questionnaire has been used as part of a descriptive quantitative methodology to collect the opinions of 42 Kurd university learners post

intervention period. The instrument demonstrated a very high reliability score (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.92$) after adaptation and piloting. The results revealed overwhelming positive perceptions for all the variables with a collective mean score of 4.45 and a low standard deviation score of 0.38. These findings were proven significant and unanimously consistent through a one-sample t-test ($t = 24.469$, $p = 0.000$). These outcomes indicate that EFL Learners hold highly positive opinions of TED Talks as useful pedagogical resources for developing their listening and speaking skills.

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تصورات طلبة الجامعة الكورد المتعلمين للانجليزية باعتبارها لغة اجنبية حول فائدة وتأثير فيديوات

محادثات التيد في تطوير مهارات الاصغاء والتكلم لديهم

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الخلاصة:

من الضروري جمع تصورات المتعلمين بعد كل تجربة يتم فيها جمع مواد اصلية مثل محادثات التيد لاغراض التاهيل الاكاديمي في صفوف اللغة الانجليزية باعتبارها لغة اجنبية . لذا تبحث هذه الدراسة في تصورات متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية باعتبارها لغة اجنبية من الناطقين بالكوردية حول فائدة وتأثير فيديوات محادثات التيد في تطوير مهاراتهم في الاصغاء والتكلم. واستخدمت الدراسة استبانة مغلقة كجزء من منهجية كمية ووصفية لجمع اراء اثنين واربعين طالبا جامعيًا من الناطقين بالكوردية بعد فترة تدخلهم. وظهرت الاداة معدل موثوقية عال جدا (كرونباخ الفا = ٠.٩٢) بعد التكيف والاختبار. وظهرت النتائج تصورا ايجابيا ساحقا لكل المتغيرات بمتوسط جماعي قدره ٤.٤٥ وانحراف معياري منخفض قدره ٠.٣٨. واثبتت الدراسة اهمية هذه النتائج واتساقها بالاجماع من خلال اختبار تي لعينة واحدة اذ بلغت قيمة تي ٤٦٩.٢٤ وقيمة بي ٠.٠٠٠٠. اذ تظهرهذه النتائج ان متعلمي اللغة الاجنبية لديهم تصورا ايجابيا حول محادثات التيد كمصادر تعليمية مفيدة لتطوير مهارات الاصغاء والتكلم لديهم. الكلمات المفتاحية: مواد اصلية؛ اللغة الانجليزية باعتبارها لغة اجنبية؛ تصورات المتعلمين؛ مهارات الاصغاء والتكلم؛ محادثات التيد

1. Introduction

The oral proficiency skills of listening and speaking are two most fundamental skills, constituting a dominant proportion of the communicative competence. The listening skill is considered the foundation of lifelong language learning (Brown, 1987), stimulates meaning from the surrounding factors around us to build connections in the society (Heidegger, 1962), and occupies a proportion of two thirds of all communication exchanges (Rankin, 1926). The same is said to be true about the speaking skill. Nafa (2023) labels speaking as “the ultimate tool of communication” (p.1), whereas Bailey & Savage (1994) deem it as the major yardstick to successful language learning, labelling it as equivalent to the total mastery of language knowledge. Despite their importance, both skills are of rather complex natures. Rost (2002) and Burns & Hill (2013) state that listening and speaking skills require minute cognitive processes, drawing on linguistic, contextual and interactional factors working simultaneously to make meaning.

Teaching listening and speaking skills in the EFL world used to suffer from total negligence until some non-systematic listening and speaking sessions of instruction

followed years later. This was later replaced by traditions of drilling listening and speaking sessions on decontextualized sentences to presumably form learning habits, which was the fashion until mid-twentieth century (Bailey, 2020; Richards & Rogers 2001; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Mendelson, 1994). The emergence of Hymes' (1972) communicative competence accompanied by methodologies advocating for oral communicative proficiency accelerated by the adoption of technological means into the classroom opened the way for digitally-assisted diversification of classroom materials (Richards and Rogers, 2001). Such an augmentation has meant to satisfy the needs of contemporary learners who are considered digital natives (Prensky, 2001).

This global orientation of integrating multisensory authentic materials into classroom is gaining popularity in Iraq and Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRG), too, given that global market textbooks tend to fall short in satiating present day university level learners' demands. In response, proactive educators are embracing versatile authentic materials as complementation or replacement such as TED Talks videos into language classes.

Given the theoretical and pedagogical arguments confirming the usefulness of authentic materials such as TED Talks videos in other parts of the world, there is a gap in empirical research within the Kurdish EFL context to investigate the perceptions of Kurdish-speaking university students about the efficacy of TED Talks videos for developing the listening and speaking skills. Without such a contextualized attempt through research, there remains a lack of systematic support to yield evidence-based findings for educators in the KRG context within Iraq. Thus, the current paper explores the research question of how Kurdish-speaking EFL learners at the university level perceive the usefulness and effectiveness of TED Talks in improving their listening and speaking skills. It is, in fact, hypothesised that the students will have positive perceptions about the usefulness of the TED Talk as language teaching materials as well as for their listening and speaking skills.

1.1) TED Talks as Pedagogical Tools for Listening and Speaking Classes

TED Talks videos, to begin, are defined by their founder Chris Anderson (2016, p. 35) as the individualized, captivating and intriguing video presentations designed around a unified theme for an audience, aiming to 'engage, inspire and enlighten'

them through a storytelling and conversationalized style. Additionally, Gallo (2014), Vasilevich (2016) and Harrison (2021) highlight that TED Talks offer thousands of videos with transcripts on diverse subjects, facilitating simultaneous watching and reading for free. Concerning their authenticity, since there is a scholarly consensus that any language production that is not merely created for classroom use is considered authentic (Harmer,1983; Nunan, 1989), such a criterion encompasses TED Talks videos as authentic language representations. Additionally, their multisensory features qualify them as proper authentic materials capable of triggering interest and curiosity within learners (Salmon, 2013; Mayer, 2009) – a potential backed by Lindeman’s (1926) adult learning theory which conditions learning to intrinsic interest.

To conclude such objective values on the part of the learners, it is wise that students’ perception in that concern be observed. Defining what perception is, Myers & Myers (1976) characterize it as the man-specific cognitive ability to differentiate phenomena in the world around them, categorize subcomponents relevant to the idea and finally concentrate on a particular side of it for subjective interpretation, using their sensory stimulations. In light of this concept, many studies value the analysis of concept through the lenses of learner perceptions.

1.3 Related Studies

The academic literature holds a number of studies carried out about the perceptions of learners and/or teachers from diverse scientific departments towards the use of TED Talks videos and their impact on language proficiency, in general, and oral skills, in particular. They generally demonstrate a positive attitude towards TED Talks as well as possible challenges associated with them. For example, Ludovikus, Mailintina, & Ellynia (2023) conducted a quantitative study using a questionnaire on 21 health administration students to find out their perceptions about the usefulness of TED Talks on their listening skills across three dimensions. Their results showed that 80.9% of the students agreed that TED Talks were suitable for listening practice and around 71% of the students reported that TED Talks improved their motivations. The researchers statistically reached to the conclusion that TED talks are convenient resources for EFL listening classes. In another qualitative study, Rosanti and Wardah (2025) collected the written narratives and the interviews of three students’ perceptions on the usefulness of

TED Talks for listening comprehension. After thematically analysing the data, the students reported that they benefitted from the talks in terms of vocabulary expansion, variety of themes or topics and motivation. they also reported challenges such as fast speech, unusual vocabulary and technical issues – problems they stated to have tried to overcome using certain communicative strategies. Using an online yes/no format questionnaire followed by open-ended questions as part of their descriptive qualitative methodology on 30 senior high school students who had been exposed to TED Talks, Izzah, Hadi, & Rosa (2020) carried out a study to see how the students perceived the impact of TED Talks on their listening. The results showed that 80% of them agreed that TED Talks could improve their listening skills, and 66.7 of them stated that the Talks could expand their vocabulary mastery. They also reported to have struggled with the fast speech of speakers and unfamiliarity with diverse accents.

Concerning learners' perceptions about the impact of those video talks on the speaking skills, Syafrizal and Syamsun (2023) carried out a qualitative descriptive study in Indonesia using an open-ended questionnaire on 19 university students about their perceptions of TED Talks on their speaking skills. They reported high positive perceptions about TED Talks for the development of their linguistic and non-linguistic dimensions of speaking, highlighting that TED talks helped them acquire additional vocabulary, improve their pronunciation, familiarize with different accents and raise their awareness of the grammatical patterns – all that serve to boost their linguistic competency. They also indicated that watching speakers on the stage helped them with convincing body language movements, tonal speaking dimensions, facial expression and, finally, their self-esteem. In a similar study, Choirunnisa and Sari (2021) conducted a descriptive quantitative study on the use of TED Talks in their English-speaking classes through a close-ended questionnaire which contained items asking about the perceptions of the students towards different aspect of speaking skills. In addition to their positive familiarity with TED Talks platform and the impact they have in boosting their interest in speaking skills, 60.8% of the students showed agreement that the videos improved their vocabulary; 69.5% of them stated the talks improved both their pronunciation and delivering ideas; and only 43.4% of them agreed that TED Talks improved their fluency.

2. Methodology

This study attempts to find out how Kurdish EFL university learners view the usefulness of TED Talks videos in developing the listening and speaking skills, employing a descriptive quantitative methodology which Nunan (1992) defines as the scientific investigation concerned with examining certain features of a given population in a given setting, including attitudes towards a phenomenon, for example.

2.1 Research Design

Within the quantitative methodology, this study employs a cross-sectional survey design, collecting the perceptions of 42 experimental group students in their classroom. The control group learners were excluded because they were not exposed to TED Talks videos. The data were collected once after their intervention period, making this study a cross-sectional one which targets learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of TED Talks on their listening and speaking skills.

2.2 Data Collection Instrument

In line with the descriptive quantitative methodology, a close-ended questionnaire was employed as the primary tool of data collection. Creswell (2012, p. 382) defines a questionnaire as a 'form used in a survey design' to collect information from participants to find statistically-amenable answers to variables under investigation. The questionnaire was adapted from Nugraheni (2017), who had developed and validated a theory-driven instrument in which he devised its items in accordance with the tenets of the foundational theories relevant to language learning to assess learners' and teachers' views on the effectiveness of the TED Talks videos on public speaking skills. The comprehensive scope of the original instrument has been narrowed down for the current study.

In the adaptation process, the original structure of the 5-point Likert-scale tool was retained with the exact adoption of ten core items. However, minor adaptations were made to nine additional items in the instrument to align the scope of the instrument with the orientation of the present study. While doing so, special care was given to maintain the structural and linguistic complexity of the original items to avoid harming its settled consistency. The changes aimed to incorporate the following principal tenets:

- understanding natural speech with its natural speed rate
- understanding varieties of English accents
- acquiring natural speech patterns (expressions and phrases used in real situations)
- acquiring fluency and personal speaking confidence
- overall usefulness of TED Talks Videos as a pedagogical source.

When wording the items, meticulous attention was given to preserve the clarity, relevance, and brevity of the items. Thus, the finalized version of the scale comprises four constructs: general perceptions, listening skill development, speaking skills, and finally general evaluation.

2.3 Validity and Reliability

Following the changes, content validity was obtained by consulting three specialist EFL instructors in person to assess the representativeness of the items, and accordingly, the necessary refinements were made.

The refined scale was then piloted on 15 students through Google Form and the results were analysed statistically via SPSS programme. The results revealed a (0.92) Cronbach's alpha – a high reliability level according to George and Mallery's (2019, p. 236) guidelines ($\alpha \geq 0.90$) since they state the closer the rate to 1.00, the higher the level of the instrument's reliability.

2.4 Participants of the Study

The data were collected from 42 Kurdish EFL learners enrolled in an experimental study at the university of Duhok, college of Basic Education- Amedi. The sample size of the experimental study samples is limited due to the feasibility of classroom-based conventions. The participants' ages ranged between (19) and (22) year olds with relatively similar levels of English language proficiency. Participation was voluntary and anonymous to protect their privacy after their informed consent was obtained.

2.5 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through a paper-based questionnaire distributed to the students in a regular class after their intervention period finished. The collected data were then codified and entered into Microsoft Excell ready for statistical analysis.

2.5 Significance of the Study

The study will yield first hand evidence concerning the usefulness and suitability of TED Talks videos from the very own subjects who have been subjected to the material themselves. Thus, their insights will doubtlessly be of valuable consideration for the instructors, teachers and policymakers when envisioning classroom material production for listening and speaking classes. The study will also reveal how incorporating authentic multimedia materials may enrich classroom environment through students' views.

2.6 Limits of the Study

The current study is limited to collecting data from 42 cohort experimental group students enrolled at the university of Duhok, College of Basic Education-Amedi, English language Department, using an adapted close-ended questionnaire.

3. Data Analysis and Results

For the analyses of the data, the researcher used descriptive statistics in IBM SPSS including mean, standard deviation, one-sample t-test with their representative tables.

3.1 Descriptive Analysis of the Students' Perceptions Towards Their General Perceptions, Listening Skill, Speaking Skill and Overall Evaluation

Using descriptive statistics, the researcher analysed all 19 items in the instrument for each variable. The first six items examined learners' motivation, interest, enjoyment and the potential novelty of material content as their general perceptions. The following five items gathered learners' listening skill aspects including understanding diverse accents, natural speech, pronunciation and native speakers' spoken representations. Six more items were allocated to gather learners' views for the speaking skill, covering areas such as improving their pronunciation, fluency, clear speech delivery, natural speech, confidence in speech and their use of native-like expressions. The last two items aimed at their overall approval and continued use of TED Talks for both listening and speaking. The results are in table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1 Students' Perceptions Towards All Four Variables under Test

Variables	Sample size N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
General Perceptions	42	3	5	4.48	0.4145
Listening Skill Development	42	3	5	4.28	0.4940
Speaking Skill Development	42	2	5	4.34	0.51
Overall Evaluation	42	3	5	4.68	0.4662
Students' Overall Perceptions of TED Talks' Effectiveness in Enhancing the Listening and Speaking Skills	42	٣	5.00	4.45	0.3830

The results in table 3.1 display that the mean scores of all variables are considerably and consistently high, ranging from 4.28 to 4.68. On a 5-point Likert-scale in which 3 is the midpoint (neutral), all the variable mean scores are above 4.28 by a remarkable difference. Based on the mean scores, students perceived the integration of TED Talks very positively for enhancing their listening and speaking skills, on average. As it appears in the table, the 'general perceptions' has gained a high mean ($M=4.48$) which reflects that majority of participants have had very positive preferences towards the use of TED talks. The 'listening skill' variable has a moderately high mean score ($M=4.28$). Though it seems to be the lowest in comparison to other variables, it is still significantly positive compared to the midpoint, indicating that learners hold positive opinions about the use of TED Talks in terms of improving their listening aspects. Additionally, the 'speaking skill' mean is 4.34 which is a rather high score, and it shows learners' very positive attitudes towards TED Talks on their speaking skill aspects. Finally, 'Overall Evaluation' has gained the highest mean ($M=4.68$), signifying that learners generally acknowledge the effectiveness of TED Talks on listening and speaking skills together and they favour their continued use in English classes. The low level of standard deviation (between 0.41 and 0.5) across all variables shows a general consensus among the students' responses with very little variation. Such a fact is further verified by the even lower overall perception standard deviation ($SD=0.3830$) – a confirmation of remarkable homogeneity and consistency in the students' views.

To determine whether the obtained mean scores are statistically significant as compared to the midpoint value (3=neutral) and are not a mere result of chance, a one-Sample T-test was conducted. Table 3.2 illustrates that t-values of all the variables under test are considerably large ranging between the lowest 16.805 and the highest 23.203. In addition to large t-values, the significance levels (Sig.2-tailed) are all 0.000, scoring a value less than 0.05. Such definitive findings confirm that the mean scores in table 3.1 are significantly different from the midpoint range (test value =3) statistically. Moreover, a positive range from 1.28 to 1.48 of mean differences further ascertain the remarkable positive perceptions in comparison to the neutral midpoint. In plainer terms, students conclusively agreed that the use of TED talks for the improvement of their listening and speaking skills was highly positive.

Table 3.2 Results of One-Sample T-Test of the Students' Perceptions (test value=3)

Variables	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
General Perceptions	23.203	41	.000	1.48413
listening Skill	16.805	41	.000	1.28095
Speaking Skill	17.044	41	.000	1.34127
Overall Evaluation	23.203	41	.000	1.48413
Students' Overall Perceptions of TED Talks Effectiveness in Enhancing Listening and Speaking Skills	24.469	41	.000	1.44623

The t-test results of the composite overall perceptions denote a highly statistically significant t-value ($t= 24.469$) with a significance level (Sig.2-tailed =0.000). Combined with a positive total mean difference of 1.44623, the collective perceptions of students towards the usefulness of TED Talks indicate a positive, overwhelming significance that is highly above the neutral level as shown in table 3.2. A variation of that level cannot be attributed to chance.

4. Discussion of the Results

The results of this study have statistically shown that all 42 students unanimously and overwhelmingly have positive perceptions and opinions affirming that using TED Talks videos improves their listening and speaking levels. All four variables under investigation have remarkably high mean scores that are way above midpoint (neutral =3). The collective mean score of all variables ($M=4.45$) with the

considerably low standard deviation (0.38) denotes a robust, positive agreement amongst the learners regarding the effectiveness and suitability of TED Talks for their listening and speaking classes. For instance, the outstandingly high rating for the variable ‘overall evaluation’ implies that learners see TED Talks very suitable for classes where listening and speaking are taught parallelly, and they also support the continued integration of TED Talks as authentic materials in language classes. Such a preference might have stemmed from the dense discourse texture of the Talks in authentic language that mirrors real language use or it could be because of the multidimensional nature of the talks. Such high mean scores and percentages of the students’ perceptions were also found in the studies of Albion and Susiati (2024) whose students’ positive perceptions percentage is 79%. An even higher percentage was found in another study by Nenti and Perdhani (2024) with a rate of 94.5 % positive perceptions towards the TED Talks use.

The first construct of the study – general perceptions – contained questions that itemized learners’ motivation, interest and liking of the TED Talks – along with their views of the suitability of the talks for language classes. The high mean score of this construct ($M=4.48$) with its low standard deviation (0.41) and high t-value (23.2) indicates an overwhelming agreement that TED Talks were considerably engaging, interesting and motivating alongside their usefulness for language classes. This finding matches closely with the results of Rosanti and Wardah (2025) who found out that their learners viewed TED Talks as motivational and educationally-enhancing. Likewise, Esmiyanti (2021) and Syafrizal & Syamsun (2023) reported that their learners viewed TED Talks inspiring, motivating and interesting. These findings conclude that the compelling nature of the talks creates a safe environment for language learning that lowers the affective filter of the learners. Concerning the novelty and relevance of ideas interwoven in the talks, studies by Nenti & Perdhani (2024) and Albion & Susiati (2024) are in agreement with the findings of this study, concluding that students’ views are heightened by the Talks because of the authentic content as well as variation of topics – a phenomenon that enlivens learners’ engagement. Such a high preference could be linked to the authentic nature of the talks that goes beyond the confined nature of textbooks to enrich classrooms with fresh, relevant and inspiring ideas.

On the other hand, the listening skill getting the lowest mean score ($M=4.28$) in comparison to other constructs suggests differing implications. In spite of its

moderately low rate, it is still significantly positive if taken alone. Rightly so, students might have reservations towards their categorical usefulness due to several challenges. Challenges such as the natural and authentic speed rates of the presenters who happen to speak with distinct accents, individualized vocabulary use, and/or varied phrasal expressions. In the literature, similar challenges are also documented in other studies. For example, in the studies of Rosanti & Wardah (2025) and Albion & Susiati (2024), students reported struggling with the speed rate and the accented speaking styles of native speakers presenting TED Talks.

Despite this, the moderately positive rating of the listening still explains that an overwhelming majority of the students have positive perceptions towards TED Talks as being beneficial for their listening improvement with their inherent challenges, scored an average mean score (4.28) which equates a percentage over 85% - a range that is substantially positive. The students perceived that TED talks improved their general listening skills, their knowledge of diversity of accents, natural speaking patterns and native speaker-like expressions. A substantial body of research aligns perfectly well with the findings of this study. For example, studies by Wulandari et al. (2024), Rosanti and Wardah, (2025) and Izzah et al (2020) all share common conclusions that TED Talks are perceived to be effective in improving linguistic as well as non-linguistic dimensions of the listening skills such as noticeable improvement in their lexis, exposure to divers accents and natural linguistic examples, and motivation.

Concerning the perceptions of this study participants of TED Talks affecting their speaking skills, all three statistical measures of mean (4.34), standard deviation (0.51) and t-value (17.04) confirm that students view TED Talks highly useful and effective in improving their speaking skill dimensions: pronunciation, fluency and confidence in speaking English, and speaking and delivering ideas in English in a natural manner using natural expressions. These findings align with a body of research that confirm similar results. For example, Albion and Susiati's (2024) study found that learners perceive TED Talks effective in improving their pronunciation, increased vocabulary level and confidence in speaking. Other speaking dimensions were also found to have been improved in the study of Choirunnisa and Sari (2021) who concluded that learners assumed TED Talks to have improved their idea delivery performance, appropriacy in accent performance as well as their fluency. The strong alignment of the present study and previous

research could be attributed to the authentic nature of the TED Talks which are richly-built around well-rounded themes that pose a uniquely valuable resource for speaking classrooms.

5. Conclusions

The present study examined the Kurdish-speaking university students' perceptions about the usefulness of the TED Talks on their listening and speaking skills. The results showed an overwhelming agreement among the students towards the use of TED Talks as being useful in improving their listening and speaking skills. All the four variables in the study gained mean scores higher than the neutral midpoint with low standard deviations. The mean scores revealed significance levels lower than (0.001), which confirms that the general consensus among the students is statistically significant.

In light of the research question and in alignment with the research hypothesis, the students generally hold very positive perceptions about the effectiveness of TED Talks in improving their listening and speaking skills. They found TED Talks motivating, interesting and idea-building in the classroom. Additionally, they reported that TED Talks improve almost all the dimension of both skills such as their pronunciation, accent familiarization, exposure to variety of natural expressions and vocabulary, fluency and content delivery. They encourage the continuous use of the TED Talks and find them very suitable for language classes. While a few of them reported the challenging nature of the talks caused by their authentic nature, the reservations did not at all affect the positive dimensions of them.

6. Implications and Recommendations

The strong outcomes of this study endorse the educational benefits of the TED Talks for language educators to consider. They also indicate that the talks met the preferences of all learners regardless of their individual learning styles. The results give an implication that using TED talks, similar to other video-based authentic materials, bridges the gap that ready-made textbooks fail to fill in the listening and speaking classes.

It is recommended, though, that teachers tailor their talks prior to the classroom application. They are advised as well to use pre-listening phases, scaffolding

strategies and guided comprehension tasks where the authentic language of the talks gets challenging. It is also recommended that further research should investigate action research where students' views are gathered after each lesson, using other means of data collection such as interviews, learning diaries or focus groups.

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