ZOOM AND PADLET: A SOLUTION FOR TEACHING LISTENING ONLINE

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Abstract: How to teach listening skills effectively has always been a concern, especially when it is conducted online during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. This research aims to examine the impact of using Zoom and Padlet in teaching Listening online for B2 students at a university in Vietnam. The participants included 76 students, separated into a control group and an experimental group with pre-test mean scores of 57.50 (SD=7.24) and 57.39 (SD=6.27), respectively. The treatment applied to the experimental group was a combination of Zoom's main room, breakout rooms, and Padlet interactive tool. After fifteen weeks, both groups were required to do a post-test, and then the experimental participants were asked to fill in a survey. Findings from post-tests revealed that both groups got improved, but more improvement was found in the experimental group. The survey results reported a high level of students' concentration and enjoyment of learning when the applications of Zoom and Padlet were combined. In light of the outcomes, further research on a larger scale should be carried out to provide ESL listening teachers with an alternative in teaching their listening lessons online effectively.

🎯 Introduction

The issue of effectiveness in teaching and learning has always been a concern for all stakeholders. This issue has particularly become the focus of many forums, conferences in the time of the wide spreading of COVID-19 pandemics since online learning mode leaves in many educators a concern of quality (Fresen, 2018), of how to keep learners focused and motivated (Davis, Gough, & Taylor, 2019) and simply of what applications should be combined to secure the highest quality possible for teaching and learning. Pinpointing the indispensable role of engagement and interaction in language teaching (Martin & Bolliger, 2018), especially the receptive skills like listening, the university has purchased the full version of Zoom application, hoping that lecturers would utilise the breakout rooms function to improve interaction, motivation, and effectiveness. This study was an attempt to foster and intensify the level of motivation and student-student interaction by combining Zoom application and 'Padlet' (https://padlet.com), aiming to help learners get a boost in their listening skills.

In recent years, various research studies have been carried out to prove the role of interaction and discussion in EFL listening classrooms. Madani and Kheirzadeh (2018) investigated 80 university students and found that the four pre-listening activities including discussion of the task questions had a positive impact on the listening comprehension. Teaching listening skills does not merely mean giving learners an abundance of listening practice but setting different tasks for different listening stages (Harmer, 2017). A study by Kobayashi (2018) with 48 EFL learners on the effect of metacognitive instruction reported that the experimental learners outperformed the ones in the control group. Regarding Zoom, this application is reported to be one of the three most popular applications for online learning according to a research survey by Surani and Hamidah (2020). The lessons via Zoom allow teachers with more opportunities to use other interactive apps to improve interaction or simply to keep learners motivated (Cheung, 2021). Kohnke and Moorhouse (2020) performed a thorough review of Zoom application and stated that Zoom came with a variety of possibilities for EFL classrooms, providing lecturers with a useful tool from engagement to assessment and that a classroom via Zoom application would be more interactive and dialogic. In 2021, Vu and Bui explored the use of Zoom's breakout rooms and screen sharing functions in teaching reading skills and concluded that this technique was beneficial and helped learners improve their vocabulary and reading comprehension scores. Turning to the use of Padlet, a survey involving 61 university students reveal positive feedback toward the use of interactive Padlet in the teaching learning process (Setiawati, 2020). Syahrizal and Rahayu (2020) interviewed 35 first-year students at one of the private universities in Cimahi after allowing them the chance to experience Padlet. The findings revealed three main benefits including high level of collaboration with peers and teachers, flexibility in use and tool to set personal goals. Also, a study with 87 ESL participants in a public university (Rashid, Yunus & Wahi, 2019) in Malaysia claimed that Padlet motivated learners to participate in class activities, lower anxiety, encouraged interaction among class members, and improved language accuracy through learning from peers.

The previous studies have been conducted in various countries and show their effectiveness. However, whether Zoom and Padlet work well in another setting is another issue needed to be discovered. Until now, in Vietnam, there have been very few published findings on the use of Zoom or Padlet application in teaching English skills at higher education level, especially listening skills.

The objectives of this research study were to investigate (i) the relationship between the combination of two applications (Zoom's breakout rooms function, Padlet) with the intensity of learners' interaction and learners' performance in Listening and (ii) the attitudes of students towards this teaching and learning style. There are two research questions, as follows:

(i.) Do the experimental group learners achieve higher Listening post-test scores than those in the control group?
(ii.) What are the students' perceptions of this teaching and learning mode?

The sampling

Method

Participants of the study were intermediate students from two Listening and note-taking classes. These students were freshmen and were taking compulsory academic courses. They all had achieved the IELTS score of at least 6.0 and wished to achieve academic English skills like presentation skills, Listening and note-taking, Academic writing, Research writing before starting the courses in their bachelor major.

After providing consent to participate in the study, students were asked to do the 45-minute pre-test, which consisted of three parts: True False; Brief notes with empty blanks to fill in; Summary lecture – Filling in the gap with the limited number of words. The 100-score scale was applied.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the pre-test

Variable	N	Mean	Min	Max	StDev.
PRE-TEST C	38	57.50	44.00	71.00	7.24
PRE-TEST E	38	57.39	48.00	70.00	6.27

Note. PRE-TEST C stands for pre-test of the control group. PRE-TEST E stands for pre-test of the Experimental group

Based on the pre-test scores, 38 students of one class were selected and named as the control group (N=38, M=57.50, SD=7.24), and 38 students of the other class named as the experimental group (N=38, M=57.39, SD=6.27). The pre-test scores of the two groups were similar, which meant that students had the same level of competency before the interference of the treatment.

Procedures

In the first-class meeting, all the participants were announced of the study to serve the purpose of improving the quality of teaching and learning. They were then asked to do the pre-test. Scores were recorded for comparison at the end of the treatment.

During the 15 weeks of the course, students of the two groups studied with the full version of Zoom application with the utilization of the breakout rooms function. This allowed a high level of student-student interaction during class time, which was an important component for the success of ESL teaching and learning (Hall, 2017). Course materials, including the textbook, vocabulary preparation, summary of listening strategies, classroom activities, etc. were kept the same for the two groups. Each group also shared similar routines, ranging from a warm-up activity, teacher's introduction of the topic, students' brainstorming, vocabulary preparation, discussion of schemata and strategies, teacher's tips to students' group work, sharing, summary in the post-listening phase.
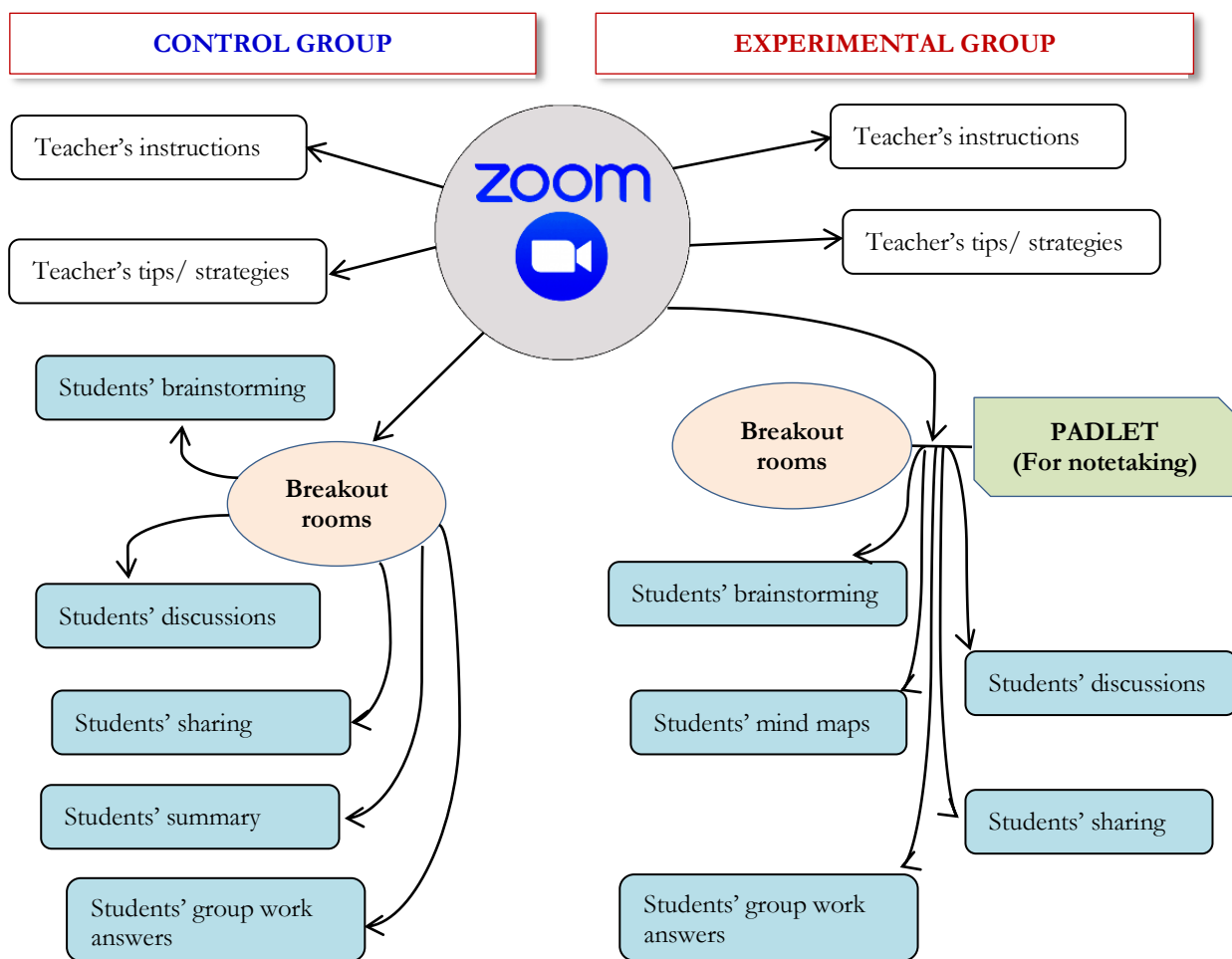
Figure 1. Illustrations of Control group and Experimental group

As illustrated in Figure 1, while the control students made the best use of breakout rooms for peer interaction, those in the experimental group experienced the combination of breakout rooms and Padlet. It was believed that if the learning media was kept unchanged, students would easily get bored and lose attention. Lack of attention from students would make learning ineffective and hampered (Hasri, Basori & Maryono, 2019). To be more specific, the teacher created a Padlet link or QR code for each activity, students in groups joined the breakout room to create their own 'pad', they discussed and then completed their pad in form of notes or mind maps. Once they posted their pad, it would appear on the general Padlet of the activity. The teacher could use this illustration of all the pads to give feedback or to save it as a pdf file for students' further reference.

In week 15, students in both groups did the post-test, which was in the same format as the pre-test. The experimental participants were then required to complete a short survey to reflect on the effectiveness and perception after the training period.

Research instruments

Built on the requirements of Validity and Reliability (Taherdoost, 2016), instruments of the study included the Listening pre-test and post-test, the questionnaire: 5 questions on the Likert scale to get learners' reflection on the study and 5 open questions to collect clarifications or suggestions. To pass the validation process, the pre-test and post-test were developed to test learners' listening comprehension and note-taking skills. Both tests were in the sample format and with a similar level of difficulty and had been used in the faculty for more than 5 years. The test specifications with test parts and score weightings were announced to learners before the administration of the test. The questionnaire was designed, checked by another lecturer, and piloted by 5 random learners to confirm the clarity of the instructions and questions.

Data collection procedure and Data analysis

Collection of data on the pre-test was processed in the first week. Data on the post-test and the questionnaire in Google form were collected in week 15. A shortened link and QR code of the Google form was generated for easy and convenient access via desktop, laptop, iPad, or smartphones. The statistics software Minitab19 was employed to analyse descriptive statistics from the pre-test and post-test scores. Regarding the questionnaire, the criteria on the Likert scale were coded as 1-5 (negative to positive). Then, a spreadsheet of data was extracted from Google form to run necessary statistical formulae or to create illustrative graphs.

🗐 Result

Test results

Descriptive statistics of the post-test in Table 2 showed the mean score and standard deviation of the Experimental group at 84.82 and 8.81 respectively while the figures for the Control group were 66.32 and 10.36 correspondingly.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the post-test

Variable	N	Mean	Min	Max	StDev.
POST-TEST C	38	66.32	46.00	87.00	10.36
POST-TEST E	38	84.82	61.00	100.00	8.81

Note. POST-TEST C stands for post-test of the Control group. POST-TEST E stands for post-test of the Experimental group

As shown in Tables 3 and 4, statistics of dependent sample t-test was performed for the Control group and the Experimental group separately. The post-test mean score of the Control group was 66.32, whereas the mean score of the pre-test stayed at 57.50. The post-test also had a much higher SD value of 10.36, compared to 7.24 in the pre-test. Turning to the Experimental group, the mean score of the post-test appeared to be much

higher compared to the pre-test, with 84.82 and 57.39. The SD value of the post-test was reported to be higher than that of the pre-test, at 8.81 and 6.27 respectively.

Table 3. Paired Samples t-test of the Control group

Variable	N	Mean	Min	Max	StDev.
PRE-TEST C	38	57.50	44.00	71.00	7.24
POST-TEST C	38	66.32	46.00	87.00	10.36

Note. PRE-TEST C stands for pre-test of the Control group. POST-TEST C stands for post-test of the Control group

Table 4. Paired Samples t-test of the Experimental group

Variable	N	Mean	Min	Max	StDev.
PRE-TEST E	38	57.39	48.00	70.00	6.27
POST-TEST E	38	84.82	61.00	100.00	8.81

Note. PRE-TEST E stands for pre-test of the Experimental group. POST-TEST E stands for post-test of the Experimental group

Questionnaire responses

TABLE 5. Students' perceptions of this teaching and learning mode

Question 1	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Neutral	Effective	Very effective
	0.00%	0.00%	15.79%	68.42%	15.79%
Question 2	Very boring	Boring	Neutral	Exciting	Very exciting
	0.00%	0.00%	2.63%	76.32%	21.05%
Question 3	Very demotivating	Demotivating	Not sure	Motivating	Very motivating
	0.00%	0.00%	23.68%	57.89%	18.42%
Question 4	Very negative	Negative	Not sure	Positive	Very positive
	0.00%	0.00%	21.05%	60.53%	18.42%
Question 5	Very negative	Negative	Not sure	Positive	Very positive
	0.00%	0.00%	10.53%	44.74%	44.74%

Note.
Question 1: Choose the most suitable level of effectiveness in learning listening online
Question 2: Choose the most suitable level of excitement in learning listening online
Question 3: Choose the most suitable level of motivation in learning listening online
Question 4: Choose the most suitable level of impacts of breakout room on the learning environment
Question 5: Choose the most suitable level of impacts of Padlet on the learning environment

Reflections from the questionnaire (Table 5) showed that more than 80% of the learners rated this combination learning mode as effective and very effective (Q1, Q4) and around 90% claimed that the course was exciting and that Padlet had a positive impact on the learning environment (Q2, Q5).

Discussion

In response to the research question 1: *Do the experimental group learners achieve higher Listening post-test scores than those in the control group?*, four descriptive statistics tests were put into consideration: (a) independent Samples t-test of the pre-test scores of both groups, (b) independent Samples t-test of the post-test scores of both groups, (c) Paired Samples t-test of the pre-test post-test scores of the Control group, and (d) Paired Samples t-test of the pre-test post-test scores of the Experimental group.

In test (a), Table 1 reporting [M(C)=57.50; M(E)=57.39] and p>0.05 indicated that there was no significant difference in the pre-test scores of the two groups. In other words, students of the two groups possessed similar English competency at the beginning of the research, which is an important criterion for reliability. Test (b), described in Table 2 with [M(C)=66.32; M(E)=84.82] and p<0.05 showed that after a 15-week treatment for the Experimental group, there came a significant difference in the post-test scores of the two groups. Test (c) as shown in Table 3, [Pre(C)= 57.50; Post(C)= 66.32] and p<0.05 revealed that the Control group students performed better in the post-test compared to the pre-test. It is logical and understandable that students were trained with pedagogical standards, and they got improvement after a course of fifteen weeks. This was a matter of maturity that students studied, and they made progress (Britzman, 2012). Test (d) in Table 4 with [Pre(E)= 57.39; Post(E)= 84.82] and p<0.05 meant that the experimental students got higher scores in the post-test than in the pre-test. It is significant to note that the improvement in the Experimental students is much higher than the improvement the Control students have made (27.43 and 8.82 respectively for the Experimental group and the Control group). From the results of the four tests (a), (b), (c), (d), it can be claimed that Experimental students achieved higher scores in the post-test than those in the Control group.

Considering the research question 2: *What are the students' perceptions of this teaching and learning mode?* Table 5 showed that the Experimental students saved very high ratings for the combination of Zoom breakout rooms and Padlet in the Listening course. Approximately 84% of the learners stated that the course was effective. Up to 97% of the learners felt excited during the online class time. This might be thanks to the competitive atmosphere, the sharing moments, the enjoyable time looking at the lively funny mind maps conducted via the interactive tool Padlet. It is notable that one student just rated the excitement level as neutral. The open question revealed that the frequent use of Padlet might end up students using Vietnamese or discussing irrelevant topics when working on the group's 'pad'. The last three questions indicated that students felt highly motivated in the course and showed positive attitude towards the use of Padlet and Zoom's breakout rooms. This finding coincides with a few research studies on the aspect that Padlet is a useful and interesting tool, keeping students engaged and motivated in ELT classrooms (Toti & Abahhussain, 2018; England, 2017; Syahrizal & Rahayu, 2020).

Although the study provided promising results, it was a small-scale study. Also, other referential statistics or correlation tests hadn't been employed to prove the relationship between test scores and learners' attitudes. A follow-up study should be

conducted to give better confirmation on the effectiveness of the combination of Zoom's breakout rooms and Padlet in teaching listening skills online.

Conclusion

The research study tempted to explore the impact of the combination of Zoom's breakout rooms and the interactive tool Padlet into a Listening course. Results from the fifteen-week training course suggested that combining two applications to boost the level of interaction and motivation brought about considerable improvement for the experimental participants. Also, learners showed a very positive attitude towards the mix of these two online learning applications. It is obvious that one prominent challenge of online learning is how to help learners learn autonomously, persistently, and actively (Lin, Zhang & Zheng, 2017). The use of Zoom's breakout rooms and the interactive tool Padlet could serve as an alternative to keep learners engaged, motivated, which helps facilitate an exciting and effective learning environment.

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