

CHILDREN LISTENING ABILITY THROUGH CARTOON VIDEOS: A CASE STUDY IN BATAHAN VILLAGE

Aida Parista¹, Sartika Dewi Harahap²

^{1,2} Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri Mandailing Natal, Indonesia

Email: aidaparista@gmail.com



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34125/jkps.v11i3.2484>

Sections Info

Article history:

Submitted: 23 April 2026

Final Revised: 29 April 2026

Accepted: 16 May 2026

Published: 29 May 2026

Keywords:

Listening Skill,
Cartoon Videos,
Early Childhood,
Qualitative Case Study



ABSTRAK

Listening is a fundamental language skill that plays a crucial role in early childhood English acquisition. This study aims to describe the listening ability of children aged 4-5 years through the use of cartoon videos as a learning medium in Batahan Village, North Sumatra. This research employed a qualitative case study design involving three children as participants. Data were collected through observation, interviews with parents, and documentation, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's qualitative data analysis model. The findings reveal that cartoon videos positively influence children's listening skills, attention, and learning motivation. Children were able to recognize characters, understand basic activities, follow simple instructions, and respond emotionally to the story. However, differences in listening development were observed among the children, indicating that individual characteristics such as attention span and learning style affect learning outcomes. The study concludes that cartoon videos are effective instructional media for developing listening skills in early childhood, particularly when supported by active guidance from teachers and parents.

ABSTRAK

Mendengarkan adalah keterampilan bahasa fundamental yang memainkan peran penting dalam pemerolehan bahasa Inggris anak usia dini. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan kemampuan mendengarkan anak usia 4-5 tahun melalui penggunaan video kartun sebagai media pembelajaran di Desa Batahan, Sumatera Utara. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif yang melibatkan tiga anak sebagai partisipan. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara dengan orang tua, dan dokumentasi, dan dianalisis menggunakan model analisis data kualitatif Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa video kartun berpengaruh positif terhadap keterampilan mendengarkan, perhatian, dan motivasi belajar anak. Anak-anak mampu mengenali karakter, memahami aktivitas dasar, mengikuti instruksi sederhana, dan merespons secara emosional terhadap cerita. Namun, perbedaan dalam perkembangan mendengarkan diamati di antara anak-anak, menunjukkan bahwa karakteristik individu seperti rentang perhatian dan gaya belajar memengaruhi hasil belajar. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa video kartun merupakan media pembelajaran yang efektif untuk mengembangkan keterampilan mendengarkan pada anak usia dini, terutama jika didukung oleh bimbingan aktif dari guru dan orang tua.

Kata kunci: Keterampilan Mendengarkan, Video Kartun, Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Studi Kasus Kualitatif, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris

INTRODUCTION

Language learning is a complex and dynamic process that involves the development of four essential skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, listening is considered the foundation of language acquisition because it provides the earliest exposure to linguistic input before learners begin to speak or read more fluently. Listening is not a passive act of hearing; rather, it is an active process that requires learners to identify sounds, interpret meanings, and construct understanding from what is heard (Brown, H 2001). Without a solid listening foundation, learners especially children will face greater challenges in mastering other skills such as pronunciation, vocabulary recognition, and sentence construction.

In early childhood, roughly between the ages of 4 and 5 years, language learning occurs naturally through exposure, imitation, and meaningful interaction. At this developmental stage, children learn best when the process is engaging, enjoyable, and closely connected to their daily experiences. According to (Harmer 2007), learning becomes more effective when supported by attractive media that integrate both auditory and visual elements. Visual media, such as cartoon videos, play an important role in helping children grasp meaning more easily because they provide concrete contexts that accompany the spoken input. Through the combination of moving images, colors, sounds, and music, children receive richer linguistic input that helps them associate words with actions, emotions, and visual cues.

Cartoon videos are particularly effective for young learners because they present language in a repetitive, predictable, and emotionally appealing manner. The dialogue in cartoons often contains simple sentence patterns, familiar vocabulary, and everyday expressions that children can easily understand. As Cameron (2001) notes, children learn language effectively when they encounter repeated language structures within meaningful and contextualized situations. This means that the use of cartoon videos can serve as a natural and enjoyable method of exposing children to English, helping them to acquire listening comprehension skills without feeling pressured or overwhelmed by formal instruction.

In the Indonesian context, especially in rural areas, early exposure to English remains limited. Over the past few years, children even in remote regions have become increasingly familiar with digital media such as mobile phones, YouTube, and television. However, this exposure is often unintentional and primarily for entertainment purposes. In Batahan Village, for example, most children aged 4–5 years enjoy watching cartoon programs like Dora the Explorer, Peppa Pig, or Cocomelon at home. Yet, these opportunities are rarely utilized by parents or teachers as educational tools for language learning. Many adults perceive cartoons merely as entertainment rather than potential learning resources. This creates a gap between media accessibility and educational utilization a situation that reflects the underused potential of digital media in early childhood education.

Moreover, observations in early childhood learning centers in Batahan Village show that teachers generally rely on traditional listening practices such as rote vocabulary drills or the use of static picture cards. While these methods can help introduce basic vocabulary, they lack the multimodal stimulation that young children need. In contrast, cartoon videos combine sound, visual cues, movement, and contextual meaning simultaneously. This multimodal input is more aligned with children's cognitive and emotional learning styles. When children are exposed to meaningful visual-auditory materials, their attention span increases, and they tend to retain information better. Consequently, integrating cartoon videos into listening activities could make language learning more engaging and effective.

According to Krashen (1982), second language acquisition occurs most efficiently when learners are exposed to comprehensible input that is, language slightly above their current ability but still understandable through context and visual support. Cartoon videos naturally fulfill this criterion because they provide comprehensible input supported by contextual actions and visuals. For instance, when a character says "Let's go to the park!" while showing an image of a park, children can infer the meaning even without full lexical understanding. Therefore, the use of cartoon videos is not merely a supplementary activity but can become a core strategy to develop early listening competence.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on exploring the English listening ability of children aged 4–5 years in a rural village context, specifically in Batahan Village, where exposure to English is very minimal, and instructional practices remain traditional. Previous studies on English listening development often focus on urban or semi-urban contexts, where learners have greater access to technology and richer English input. In contrast, this research attempts to show how cartoon videos can serve as meaningful multimedia resources in rural settings, providing children with exposure to authentic and contextual English language use.

Additionally, this study introduces a qualitative case study approach to deeply explore not only the outcomes but also the process of how children respond to cartoon-based learning. It examines how children interpret visual cues, react to repetitive dialogues, and display understanding through gestures, expressions, or verbal imitation. While most previous studies have measured listening improvement through quantitative methods (e.g., test scores), this research provides a more holistic description of the listening process, offering insights into children's engagement, attention, and meaning-making in real classroom contexts.

In summary, the researcher aims to highlight that cartoon videos when used with pedagogical guidance can transform from simple entertainment into effective learning tools that foster English listening development in early childhood, particularly within resource-limited rural environments. This research is expected to encourage teachers and parents to adopt more creative, multimodal, and child-centered approaches to language teaching.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the listening ability of children aged 4–5 years through the use of cartoon videos as a learning medium. A qualitative approach was selected because the research aimed to describe and interpret children's listening behaviors, responses, and learning processes in a natural context rather than to measure them quantitatively. The case study design enabled an in-depth investigation of a specific and bounded phenomenon, namely children's listening development during cartoon-based listening activities in a rural setting.

The research was conducted in Batahan Village, Mandailing Natal, North Sumatra, from October to November 2025. This location was chosen because children in this area have limited exposure to English, and instructional practices tend to rely on traditional learning methods. The participants of the study consisted of three children aged 4–5 years who were selected purposively based on their age and willingness to participate. Parents were also involved as informants to provide additional insights into children's listening behavior and learning responses during the activity.

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation focused on children's attention, listening responses, ability to follow simple instructions, and verbal and non-verbal reactions while watching cartoon videos. Interviews were conducted with parents to gather information regarding children's

habits in watching cartoon videos, their listening development, and parental involvement during the learning process. Documentation, including field notes and activity records, was used to support and complement the observational and interview data.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, data triangulation was applied by comparing data obtained from observation, interviews, and documentation. The data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Through this process, relevant data were selected and organized into descriptive narratives, and conclusions were continuously verified to ensure consistency and accuracy with the research objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this study indicate that the use of cartoon videos had a positive influence on the listening ability, attention, and learning motivation of children aged 4–5 years in Batahan Village. Overall, children showed enthusiastic responses during the listening activities. From the beginning of the cartoon video sessions, most children demonstrated focused attention toward the screen, as indicated by their body orientation, eye contact with the video, and reduced distraction from the surrounding environment. Colorful visuals, familiar characters, repetitive dialogues, and songs played a significant role in maintaining children's interest throughout the activity.

In terms of listening ability, the children were able to demonstrate basic comprehension of the cartoon content. They could recognize characters by mentioning simple physical features, identify basic activities performed by the characters, and understand the general atmosphere of the story, such as whether it was funny or happy. Children were also able to follow simple verbal instructions given during the activity, such as clapping hands or responding to prompts, although the level of responsiveness varied among individuals. These findings indicate that cartoon videos supported children's ability to process auditory input by providing clear visual context that helped them interpret meaning.

Differences in listening development were observed among the participants. One child demonstrated strong and consistent listening skills, showing the ability to focus for a longer duration, respond accurately to questions, follow instructions confidently, and express emotional understanding of the story. The other children showed moderate development, characterized by partial comprehension and less consistent attention. While they were able to grasp the main ideas of the cartoon, they sometimes required repeated instructions or additional guidance to respond verbally. These variations suggest that individual factors such as attention span, confidence, and learning style influenced listening outcomes.

Regarding attention, cartoon videos were effective in attracting children's focus, particularly during scenes involving movement, music, and expressive character actions. However, attention was not always sustained equally among all participants. Some children displayed fluctuating attention and were more easily distracted, especially when the viewing duration was longer. This indicates that while cartoon videos are engaging, listening activities need to be adjusted to children's developmental characteristics and combined with interactive elements to maintain optimal attention.

In terms of motivation, all children showed positive emotional responses toward the cartoon videos. They expressed enjoyment through smiling, laughing, and verbal comments indicating that they liked the video. Some children expressed a desire to watch the cartoon again, reflecting high intrinsic motivation. Others showed enjoyment but preferred engaging

in physical activities afterward, suggesting different learning preferences. These findings demonstrate that cartoon videos can create a fun and low-anxiety learning environment that encourages children to participate in listening activities.

Additionally, the results revealed the importance of parental involvement during the learning process. Children who were accompanied by parents tended to show better focus, longer attention spans, and greater willingness to imitate words or actions from the cartoon. Parental support in the form of encouragement, repetition, and explanation helped children better understand the content and respond more confidently. This finding highlights that cartoon videos are more effective as a learning medium when combined with active guidance from adults.

Overall, the results of this study show that cartoon videos contribute positively to the development of listening skills, attention, and motivation among children aged 4–5 years. However, the effectiveness of this medium is influenced by individual differences and the presence of supportive interaction from parents or teachers.

This section discusses and interprets the research findings by relating them to theories of early childhood development and English listening instruction through audiovisual media. The discussion focuses on the three main research indicators, namely **listening skills**, **attention**, and **motivation**, as well as the pedagogical implications of using cartoon videos for teaching English listening to children aged 4–5 years.

1. Children's Listening Skills through Cartoon Videos

The findings of this study indicate that the use of cartoon videos provides significant stimulation for the development of listening skills in early childhood learners. The children were able to understand basic information from the videos, such as identifying characters, recognizing activities, interpreting the atmosphere of the story, and understanding the emotions displayed by the characters. This finding supports the theory that young children acquire language more effectively through meaningful and contextual exposure supported by both auditory and visual input.

In the case of Fais, listening skills developed optimally as he was able to comprehend the content holistically, including visual information, verbal instructions, and emotional meaning. This demonstrates that cartoon videos help children integrate auditory and visual information, making the listening process easier and more meaningful. This result reinforces the view that audiovisual media are highly effective in developing receptive language skills in early childhood.

Meanwhile, Taki and Rayyan showed gradual development of listening skills. Both were able to understand the main ideas of the story, but they still experienced difficulties in responding verbally to instructions or identifying specific details. This indicates that listening development is individual and influenced by factors such as attention span, confidence, and learning style. Therefore, while cartoon videos serve as effective learning media, they still require active guidance from teachers or parents to maximize learning outcomes.

2. Children's Attention during Listening Activities

Attention plays a crucial role in successful listening instruction. The results of this study show that cartoon videos are effective in attracting children's attention, particularly at the beginning of the learning activity. The use of bright colors, movement, sound effects, songs, and engaging characters helps capture children's interest and maintain their focus.

Fais demonstrated stable and sustained attention throughout the activity. He was able to watch the video until the end and respond appropriately to questions. This indicates that cartoon videos can support children in maintaining focus within a duration appropriate to their developmental stage.

In contrast, Taki and Rayyan showed fluctuating attention. Taki's focus was inconsistent, while Rayyan was more attracted to physical activities than prolonged viewing. These findings suggest that although cartoon videos are engaging, the duration and implementation of listening activities must be adapted to children's characteristics. Listening instruction should be combined with interactive or movement-based activities to maintain children's attention.

3. Children's Motivation in Learning Listening

Motivation is a key factor in early childhood learning and is closely related to enjoyment and emotional engagement. The findings indicate that all research subjects showed positive affective responses toward the cartoon videos. The children expressed enjoyment and demonstrated enthusiasm during the viewing activities.

Fais and Taki showed high motivation, as indicated by their desire to watch the cartoon again. This reflects strong intrinsic motivation. Rayyan also showed positive emotions toward the cartoon but preferred playing rather than watching again. This indicates that children's motivation may be expressed differently depending on their interests and learning preferences.

These findings confirm that cartoon videos can increase children's learning motivation by creating a fun and low-anxiety learning environment. However, teachers need to recognize individual differences so that learning activities can accommodate various learning needs and preferences.

4. Pedagogical Implications of Using Cartoon Videos in Listening Instruction

Based on the findings and discussion, cartoon videos have strong potential as instructional media for teaching listening to young learners. They help children understand language in context, increase attention, and enhance learning motivation. However, the effectiveness of cartoon videos largely depends on the role of teachers and parents. Active guidance, verbal reinforcement, repetition of instructions, and the integration of motor-based activities are essential to ensure optimal learning. Therefore, cartoon videos should be used as part of an integrated teaching strategy rather than as a stand-alone learning tool.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the use of cartoon videos is effective in supporting the development of listening skills among children aged 4-5 years in Batahan Village. Cartoon videos help children understand spoken English through clear visual context, simple language, and repetitive expressions. The findings show that children were able to recognize characters, understand basic activities, follow simple instructions, and respond emotionally to the stories presented. The study also reveals that children's listening development varies according to individual characteristics such as attention span and learning preferences. Therefore, cartoon videos should not be used as stand-alone learning tools. Active guidance from teachers and parents plays an essential role in helping children focus, interpret meaning, and respond to language input. Overall, this study highlights that cartoon videos have strong pedagogical potential as instructional media for early childhood English listening development, particularly when integrated with interactive activities and adult

support in rural learning contexts.

REFERENCE

- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.
- Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices*. New York: Pearson Education.
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *How to Teach English* (2nd ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mayer, R. E. (2009). *Multimedia Learning* (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press..
- Nation, I. S. P., & Newton, J. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL Listening and Speaking*. New York: Routledge.
- Nunan, D. (1999). *Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Pinter, A. (2011). *Children Learning Second Languages*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Richards, J. C. (2008). *Teaching Listening and Speaking: From Theory to Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wright, A., Betteridge, D., & Buckby, M. (2006). *Games for Language Learning* (3rd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Al-Domi, H., & Smadi, O. (2012). The effect of audiovisual materials on listening comprehension. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 3(2), 1-10.
- Gilakjani, A. P. (2012). The significance of listening comprehension in English language teaching. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2(10), 2054-2059.
- Rahimi, M., & Soleymani, E. (2015). The impact of audiovisual aids on listening comprehension. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 192, 720-726.

Copyright holder:

© Author

First publication right:

Jurnal Kepemimpinan & Pengurusan Sekolah

This article is licensed under:

