A CURRICULUM FOR IMPROVING CHINESE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION SKILLS THROUGH VIDEO GAMES

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A Curriculum for Improving Chinese Elementary School Student’s Listening Comprehension Skills through Video Games

A Field Project Proposal Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language

By
Ming Cheng
May 2018
A Curriculum for Improving Elementary School Student’s Listening Comprehension Skills through Video Games

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

by

Ming Cheng

May 2018

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project (or thesis) has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

Luz Navarrette García
Instructor/Chairperson

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ABSTRACT

English has been a compulsory subject in Grades 3-9 in China since 2010, English is also a compulsory subject at the secondary level and widely used at the postsecondary level as well. However, Chinese English teachers spend more time teaching English grammar and vocabulary translation while ignoring the instruction of listening and speaking. The importance of teaching listening has been ignored while listening skill is primary to the acquisition of the other language skills. Chinese students’ incompetence of listening and speaking has become a common phenomenon. Also, due to the exam-oriented education system in China, students are under intense pressure, which may lead to the reduction of their learning motivation. Materials being used are designed based on Guidelines on Graduation Examination, which could be monotonous and stereotyped.

According to the problems above, this project is aimed to provide a new way for teachers to instruct listening. It is designed to create an innovative and relaxed learning environment to lower students’ affective filter and increase their motivation.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In the current era of globalization, English is widely used all over the world. English language proficiency is often regarded as a basic skill for career and educational advancement because it is the common language of business, education, and diplomacy. Also, literature, films, and music are mass produced and widely published in English. Accordingly, an increasing number of people are learning English to study abroad in English speaking countries and seek jobs in international companies.

China, emerging as an international economic power promotes the development of English education because English is an international language that is necessary in the global competition. The Critical Period Hypothesis suggests that there is a critical time when learners can acquire a new language more easily and rapidly and it is generally accepted that the younger the better (Bista, 2008). In China, since Chinese people believe that it would be better to learn as early as possible, Chinese children are required to learn English from elementary school. It has been a compulsory subject in Grades 3-9 in China since 2010, and schools can begin teaching English at Grade 1 if they have resources (MOE, 2001b). English is also a compulsory subject at the secondary level and widely used at the postsecondary level as well.

Listening, as Devine (1982) states, is the primary means used to receive incoming ideas and information. According to Cheung (2010), listening comprehension rather than reproduction should be precedent, thus understanding spoken words is prerequisite to speaking, writing and reading. Also, in Krashen’s and Hamouda’s study (as cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016), only when learners have sufficient comprehensible input does acquisition happen. In other words, people should have input first, then output could happen. Wolvin and Coakley (1988) write, in
and out of the classroom, students spend more time on listening rather than other forms of verbal communication in daily communication time. Listening does not only lead to the acquisition of other language skills but also provide learners with initial contact to the target language and its culture. (Curtain & Pesola, 1988). In other words, listening skills are very important in second language acquisition. However, most teachers in China spend more time teaching English grammar and vocabulary translation while ignoring the instruction of listening and speaking (Wang, 2016). People mistakenly regard listening as a skill that can be acquired automatically when learners begin to study the target language (Cheung, 2010). Li (2005) suggests that although the traditional teaching methods in China is beneficial in improving students’ translation skills, it is inefficient regarding communication ability such as listening and speaking (as cited in Wang, 2016). This phenomenon also results in the situation that most Chinese international students have difficulty in listening and speaking even though they are able to get good grades on tests like the TOFEL and IELTS (Huang, 2006). The incompetence of Chinese English learners’ communication skills seems to be a common phenomenon in China (Wang, 2016). According to Ma (2012), most English teachers who teach speaking found out that students’ poor listening skill is one of the main causes of students’ incompetence on speaking (as cited in Wang, 2016). Hence, Chinese students’ weakness on listening skills as well as speaking skills needs to be changed.

There are also other problems in teaching English listening in China, for example, the education system in China is exam-oriented, which emphasizes students’ examination performance and regards test scores as a means of proving students’ worth (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011). Students are under intense pressure to get higher scores when they are learning due to the fact that only those who score above the prescribed admission scores will be accepted by
secondary schools and universities (Hu & West, 2015). In addition, there are millions of students going to take entrance examination every year, and the number of prestigious schools is limited, the competition among students becomes fierce. By over underlining the scores as a way to measure students’ abilities, students may lose motivation for learning as a result (Henry, Nyaga & Oundo, 2014). While motivation plays a vital role in learning, evidence shows that one of the reasons students cannot get good grades is because of their lack of noticeable motivation (Yurtseven & Altun, 2016).

In addition, the materials that are being used in elementary schools are created on the basis of Guidelines on Graduation Examination, which is published by government, aiming to outline the key points that will be examined in the graduation examination (Hu & West, 2015). The emphasis of these materials is around reading and writing. There seem to be much fewer teaching materials for listening (Cheung, 2010). Also, the curriculum and textbooks of the English subject, as well as other subjects, are all unified, which can be stereotyped and monotonous (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011). With the traditional materials, students are more likely to lose interest and be distracted. Besides, teachers rely too much on texts and guidelines; they spend a lot of time teaching the knowledge points which will be tested while briefly mention or even ignore those that are not in the Guidelines (Hu & West, 2015). They are also overwhelmed because of being put under intense pressure from parents, who expect teachers to help their children get higher scores and then be admitted to better secondary schools.

In conclusion, there are three main problems with current English instruction in elementary school in China: 1) the ignorance of teaching listening in class; 2) students are under intense pressure due to the exam-oriented education system in China; 3) materials being used are unified and stereotyped, teachers keep to the uniform curriculum and lack of creativity.
Therefore, it is necessary to develop an innovative and effective curriculum for elementary school teachers to better teach English listening in China.

**Purpose of the Project**

The first purpose of this project is to emphasize the importance of listening skills. Even though the importance of learning English has been realized, Chinese teachers tend to emphasize students’ skills in reading and writing while ignoring the development of communication ability such as listening (Wang, 2016). Language teachers mistakenly assuming that listening skills can be acquired by teaching speaking may due to the ignorance of the fact that communication is a two-way process; only when a person first understand what others are talking about can he/she be able to respond (Cheung, 2010). According to Cheung (2010), it is suggested that listening should be the primary skill in second language acquisition, he indicates that there is evidence shows that promoting listening comprehension can contribute to acquiring other language skills and consequently acquiring the target language. This project has been designed to encourage the teacher to pay more attention to English listening instruction.

Lin (2008) and Du (2009) suggest that new teaching methods such as games, music, video should be adopted into class to create a lively and relaxing atmosphere to motivate students and lower their anxiety. According to Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis, only when affective filter is low can learners take in enough input. Learners with high motivation, self-confidence and low level of anxiety can process the language input better than those with low motivation, little self-confidence and high level of anxiety (Ni, 2012). Seeing that the teaching materials being used are stereotyped and the materials for listening are much fewer than for speaking or reading. The
second purpose of this project is to present an innovative curriculum through video games for elementary school teachers to teach English listening. It will provide a new way which is different from traditional listening instruction for teachers to teach listening. This engaging video game makes language learning vivid and lively, thus creating learning atmosphere where students are engaged and motivated.

The Affective Filter hypothesis suggests that affective factors are related to the process of second language acquisition, learners with negative attitudes toward learning will have a high affective filter and tend to receive limited input while learners with positive attitudes will have a low affective filter and are able to take in plenty of input (Krashen, 1982). In the light of the current situation that students are studying in stressful learning environment, the third purpose is to create a lively and low anxiety learning environment to lower students affective filter. Since children are easily distracted during class, and it is hard for them to focus on what teachers say for a long time, this project also takes advantage of the fact that most children love video games to help educators attract students’ attention and increase students’ learning motivation.

The fourth purpose of this project is to improve elementary school student’s listening skills. In most English classes in China, teachers just ask students to listen to them or listen to the material without instructing them how to listen. According to Cheung (2010), the listening instruction is just nominal or sometimes treated superficially in most EFL programs. As a result, some students do not know how to listen and have difficulty in listening. While research shows that listening should be the primary skill to be acquired in learning a new language and it is conducive in the acquisition of the other three languages (Cheung, 2010). This project will help learners improve their listening skills.
In summary, this project concentrates on creating an innovative curriculum by implementing video games in the class to improve elementary school students’ listening skills. This project reminds teachers of the importance of teaching listening and helps them create a relaxing learning environment which lowers the pressure students feel while also increasing their learning motivation.

**Theoretical Framework**

There are two theories being used to support this project: The Affective Filter Hypothesis and the Critical Period Hypothesis. The concept of the Affective Filter Hypothesis was first proposed by Dulay and Burt in the 1870’s corresponding to previous theoretical work about affective variables. Krashen (1982) then developed this hypothesis and assumed that affective factors, such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety, can influence the acquisition of a second language. Assuming that individuals have different levels of their Affective Filter, the Affective Filter Hypothesis demonstrates the relationship between affective variables and the process of SLA. Students who are stressed and unmotivated may not be able to receive input as well as when they are relaxed and motivated ("ESL Glossary: Definitions of common ESL/EFL terms: Affective-filter Hypothesis", n.d.). Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to lower the affective filter to create a comfortable learning environment for students.

The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) assumes that there is a biological timetable when learners can acquire a language more easily and swiftly and beyond this time language is more difficult to acquire (Brown, 2007). The critical period was first put forward by Penfield and Roberts (1959). Although there is still no consensus about the exact onset and offset of the
critical period, the CPH has been supported by many respectable scholars and researchers (Tran, 2009).

**Significance of the Project**

Listening is used as a means of receiving information at all phases of instruction; it is very important in second language acquisition while the teaching of listening in many EFL classes has been overlooked (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). This project will remind elementary school teachers of the importance of listening, which is mistakenly regarded as a skill that one can acquire automatically when starting learning English (Cheung, 2010). According to McBride (2009) and Rost (2007), application of technology such as videos, computers, and the internet in the class can promote listening comprehension by providing various kinds of materials. (as cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). This project will provide educators a new way to teach English listening through video games, not only providing much needed materials for listening instruction, but also making the class vivid and lively.

With the exam-oriented education system in China, students are under intense pressure of getting higher scores that they lose motivation in learning. However, these video games, combining with recorded dialogues, real-time interactions, and interesting options, will provide students a brand-new learning experience. According to Ang and Zaphiris (as cited in Ebrahimzadeh & Alavi, 2016), it is believed that video games have idiosyncrasies such as competition, narrative, fantasy, climax, and visualization, which could contribute to enjoyment and task engagement and thus lead to the acquisition of knowledge. Also, Ebrahimzadeh and Alavi (2016) suggest that the present study showed that learners will develop motivational
engagement by playing video games and this engagement will transfer to educational settings, meaning that applying video games to class can lead to increase of students’ motivation. Students can listen, see, react and think when playing video games, which propels them to study actively. Rather than following the teacher’s step by step instruction passively, active learning could better improve students’ listening skills. Compared with traditional listening materials, video games not only release students’ pressure but also intrigue their motivation. Most importantly, this project will benefit learners in terms of enhancing their abilities of listening and thus promote the acquisition of English.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

English has been a compulsory subject in elementary schools in China. It is generally believed that younger children are better learners in SLA than older children, which is related to the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) (Bista, 2008). The classic argument was that the critical point occurs around puberty beyond which learners tend to be unable to acquire a second language (Brown, 2007). However, Chinese teachers tend to focus on grammar and reading while ignoring listening and speaking (Wang, 2016). People mistakenly regard listening as a skill that can be acquired spontaneously when teaching other skills (Cheung, 2010). It becomes a common phenomenon that even though Chinese students are able to get remarkable grades in exams, their listening and speaking skills are below expectation (Wang, 2016). Many scholars suggest that listening skills are prerequisite to the acquisition of other language skills (Cheung, 2010). Furthermore, due to the exam-oriented education system in China, students are learning in high anxiety environments to get higher scores trying to be admitted to better schools, which results in a loss of motivation. This project includes curriculum for Chinese elementary school students listening comprehension skills through video games.

The purpose of this literature review is to explore theories and studies that support my project. The literature review covers three themes. The first theme is theoretical underpinnings, including motivation, the Affective Filter Hypothesis, and the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH). Motivation is the most frequently used factor in explaining the success of second language acquisition among the affective factors. The CPH assumes that there is a period when people can acquire a language easily, swiftly, and without external intervention (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2013). According to Krashen, the best acquisition will happen in environments where
the “affective filter” is low, which in other words, where anxiety is low and defensiveness is absent (Brown, 2007). The second theme is the importance of teaching listening. It indicates that listening comprehension is prerequisite to the acquisition of other language skills such as speaking, writing and reading. Learning listening could lead to the acquisition of other skills. Therefore, listening instruction should be emphasized more in the class. The third theme is how video games help learners in SLA. For instance, video games can reduce inhibitions of language learners and thus promote language acquisition. Also, video games are able to increase students’ language learning motivation.

Theoretical Underpinnings of the Project

Motivation

Brown (2007) suggests that language is closely related to human behavior and emphasizes the important role that personality factors play in second language acquisition. According to Krashen (1982), research over the last decade has already verified the relationship between affective variables and success in second language acquisition. Krashen (1982) categorizes the affective factors into three aspects: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety while Brown (2007) categorizes them more specifically: self-esteem, attribution theory and self-efficacy, willingness to communicate, inhibition, risk taking, anxiety, empathy, extroversion and motivation. Among these affective factors, motivation is regarded as very central in explaining the success of second language learning.

According to Brown (2007), there are three different perspectives of motivation. The first one is from behavioral perspective, which indicates that people are driven by reward to get
positive reinforcement. The second perspective is in cognitive terms; motivation emphasizes the
decisions people make to achieve or prevent experience or goals and the degree of effort they
will make in that respect. There are needs that drive people’s decisions such as the need for
exploration, manipulation, activity, knowledge and ego enhancement. The third perspective is
about the constructivist view, which suggests that motivation is originated from our interactions
with others as well as our own decisions. In Willian and Burden’s study, motivation focus on not
only social context but also individual personal choices (as cited in Brown, 2007).

One of the most influential dimensions of motivation construct has been intrinsic
motivation and extrinsic motivation. People with intrinsic motivation decide to do an activity for
their own sake rather than extrinsic reward while people with extrinsic motivation are driven by
reward from the outside (Brown, 2007).

According to Dörnyei (1994, 1998), motivation can provide initial will and the driving
force to persist to the arduous process of language learning. Having no motivation for the study
has been confirmed as one of the reasons that students cannot perform well in their learning (Wei,
2016). With motivation, students will study spontaneously and actively (Wei, 2016).

According to Weiner, Deci and Maslow (as cited in Brown, 2007), countless studies and
experiments have shed light on the significant role motivation plays in learning. For example, in
Uguroglu and Walberg’s study, they confirmed positive relationship between motivation and
learning performance on the basis of plenty studies and research (as cited in Wei, 2016). Higher
level of motivation contributes to higher achievement in language learning they interact with
each other (Wei, 2016).

Studies of second language learner motivation could be traced back to the work of Robert
Gardner and his colleagues in Canada in early 1960s. Gardner and Lambert (1959) suggest that
there are two types of motivational orientations: integrative and instrumental. Learners with integrative motivation are those whose aim is to learn more about the language group in the learning process, while learners with instrumental orientations are those who intend to acquire linguistic achievement (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Integrativeness indicates the relationship between learners and target language community; it has also been included as an important part in the following motivation theories (TATAR, 2017).

**The Affective Filter Hypothesis**

Dulay and Burt (1997) originated the concept of an Affective Filter. Then Krashen (1982) further developed this concept and proposed five hypotheses about second language acquisition, including the acquisition-learning distinction, the natural order hypothesis, the Monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis and the Affective Filter hypothesis. Krashen (1982) suggests that affective variables have effects on the success of second language acquisition and he categorized these affective factors into three main categories: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. The Affective Filter presents the correlation between affective variables and the process of second language acquisition by assuming that learners vary in terms of the level of their affective filters (Krashen, 1982). According to Krashen (1982), input is still the critical causative variable in second language acquisition while affective variables will obstruct or promote the delivery of input to language acquisition. Learners who have optimal attitudes are supposed to have low affective filters and thus be able to receive plenty of input. While learners who have negative attitudes are supposed to have high affective filters and therefore take in little input. In other words, positive emotions are conducive to the process of language input while negative emotions will prevent learners from processing input. Stevick (1976) suggests that classes which create a low anxiety environment can keep students “off the defensive” by
encouraging low affective filters (as cited in Krashen, 1982). Krashen also suggests that an effective language teacher should be able to create a low anxiety environment to lower the affective filter.

Lin (2008) conducted a study to prove the effectiveness of pedagogies on the basis of Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis; she applied several student-centered activities such as games, songs, music playing, video into teaching to create a motivating atmosphere based on Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis. Ninety-eight freshmen were included in the teaching experiment at MingDao University in Taiwan. The result of the study showed that over 80% students believed that the application of new techniques in class will lead to their positive attitudes towards learning and thus contributes to better acquisition of second language.

This study not only emphasizes the importance of Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis but also displays students’ optimistic attitude toward the new techniques. The students’ support for pedagogies of games, music, and videos shows feasibility of implementing new techniques. The result of the study also shows that EFL teachers in universities of Taiwan should apply more techniques above to increase students’ motivation in learning English and to make classes which were boring and stereotyped more innovative and interesting. In addition, Lin (2008) suggests that teachers should be familiar with the principles of the affective filter hypothesis and carry out the instructional methods based on the hypothesis.

Accordingly, my project applies video games, a rising teaching method, in English instruction, which tends to lower students’ affective filter and motivate them to learn English. However, this study was conducted in a university in Taiwan; the participants were all university students with intermediate English level (Lin, 2008). Therefore, the result cannot represent the whole population from different age and different English level.
Similarly, Ni (2012) did a study to examine the effects of affective factors such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety in second language acquisition. Fifty English majors were involved to answer the questionnaire which was designed to investigate the factors that prevent learners from full class participation. The result demonstrates that affective factors are decisive in the proportion of learners’ input. The excellent students who are capable of taking in plenty of input usually have high motivation, high self-confidence and a low level of anxiety (Ni, 2012). Ni also suggests that teachers should consider students’ affective factors and adopt some effective techniques to improve their affective development and thus promote their language acquisition. However, since the participants in this study are all English major university students the result of study is limited to a particular population, it is not representative.

Du (2009) wrote a paper to introduce affective filter and how to put it into practice in second language instruction. In terms of motivation, Du suggests that teachers should adopt diverse teaching methods into class to motivate students by creating an innovative and lively class. Teachers can also create activities such as speech, informal discussion, speaking contest to inspire students’ motivation. For self-confidence, Du demonstrates that cultivation of self-confidence depends not only on students themselves but also on teachers’ assistance. Teachers need to encourage and praise students properly and let them know they can do well in language learning. It is also suggested that teacher should create a relaxing and lively learning environment to lower students’ anxiety. Du illustrates the important role Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis plays in second language acquisition. By considering these affective factors, language teachers are able to find better ways to increase students’ motivation, cultivate students’ self-confidence, lower students’ anxiety and thus help students improve language skills.

The Critical Period Hypothesis
Age has been regarded as an affective factor in second language acquisition, most discussions about age and acquisition focus on the question of whether there is a critical period (Brown, 2007). The concept of critical period was first put forward by Penfield and Roberts (1959). The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) claims that there is a critical period of time when learners can acquire a language more easily and swiftly (Brown, 2007). Lenneberg (1967) and Bickerton (1981) stated that before and after the critical period certain abilities do not develop (as cited in Brown, 2007). Brown demonstrated that the classic argument was that the critical point occurs around puberty beyond which learners tend to be unable to acquire a second language. Brown also suggested the possibility of successful language learning beyond puberty and proposed the definition of “successful’ in second language acquisition.

Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2013) gave examples of wild children who were cultivated in environments of extreme social isolation in terms of the Critical Period Hypothesis. In 1798, a wild boy named Victor who was left in the woods when very young was found. In 1920, two children Amala and Kamala who were supposed to be brought up by wolves were found in India. In 1970, a child called Genie who was locked in a small room and was isolated from outside contact for almost fourteen years from the age of eighteen was found. All these children are unable to speak or know any language when they were brought into society, no matter what reasons cause their isolation. Their inability in language could simply be caused by receiving no linguistic input. However, even though these children were capable of learning many words after years of exposure, they were unable to develop grammatical skills. The UCLA linguist Susan Curtiss, who worked with Genie for several years, conjectures that after the critical period, the function of the usual language areas degenerates due to inadequate linguistic stimulation. Another linguistic isolation case also supports the critical period hypothesis, a
woman named Chelsea was born deaf and finally diagnosed at thirty-one, she has received substantial language instruction after then and has acquired a large number of words. However, just like Genie, Chelsea is also unable to develop grammatical skills. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2013) argues that the cases of Chelsea and isolated children show that children are unable to fully acquire a language unless they are exposed to it within the critical period, beyond which the human brains seem unable to develop grammatical skills of language regardless of extensive language training or years of exposure.

Bista (2008) did a research to examine the relationship between age and second language acquisition, which is related to the Critical Period Hypothesis. It is generally believed that younger learners can learn L2 more easily and swiftly than older learners. Mark Patkowskki (1982) did a research to measure the level of spoken English of sixty-seven immigrants to the U.S. and found that pre-puberty learners have advantages in acquiring L2 than post-puberty learners (as cited in Bista, 2008). Yamanda et al. researched 30 Japanese elementary school pupils from seven to ten years old who haven’t learned English before and figured out that the older the age the lower the score. Mark S. Patkowski (1982) conducted a research on 67 highly educated immigrants to the U.S. from different backgrounds. Among these participants, 33 of which came to America at pre-puberty and 34 of which came to America at post-puberty with similar backgrounds. The result showed that the pre-puberty group performed better in L2 learning than the post-puberty group. Asher and Gracia studied acquisition of pronunciation of 71 Cuban immigrants to California from 7 to 19 years old. They also found out that the younger a child was when immigrating to America, the higher the possibility of acquiring native like accent. However, even though most studies support the CPH and confirm age as an affective factor in second language acquisition, scholars haven’t had a consensus about the exact time of critical
period. Some researchers suggest that the critical period is before puberty while others suggest it after the puberty.

In conclusion, there is a critical time when learners can acquire language more easily and rapidly and beyond which the language is increasingly difficult to acquire. It is generally believed that younger children are better at learning L2, which is in favor of my project. The target population of my project is elementary school students from 7 to 12.

The Importance of Teaching Listening

Among the four language skills-listening, speaking, reading and writing, Chinese teachers tend to focus on teaching reading and grammar while neglecting the teaching of listening in EFL class (Wang, 2016). They regard listening as a skill that can be acquired spontaneously, which is not true (Cheung, 2010). Even though Chinese students are able to get remarkable grade in English exam, their communication abilities such as listening and speaking are below expectations (Wang, 2016). It seems to be a common phenomenon that Chinese EFL learners are incompetent in listening and speaking. However, listening is a significant skill in second language acquisition. According to Krashen, Terrell, Ehrman, and Herzog (1984) and Hamouda (2013) learners could acquire a second language when they have sufficient input while listening skill is an important factor in providing input (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

In Cheung’s study (2010), he suggests that comprehension should precede reproduction and listening should be prerequisite to other skills such as speaking, reading, and writing. There is sufficient evidence showing that the acquisition of listening skill can contribute to acquisition of the other three language skills. However, language teachers have not fully implemented listening instructions that they consider listening a skill be acquired naturally when teaching
speaking and reading. Cheung (2010) indicates some reasons for applying the listening-first approach: First, listening comprehension is prerequisite for acquisition of the other three language skills. Second, relaxing the requirement of oral production and emphasizing on aural comprehension training at the beginning of language instruction can promote development of linguistic competence and reach better results.

Cheung (2010) also refers to different scholars’ definition of listening. For example, Goss (1982) defined listening as a process of receiving information and organizing it into verbal units to which meaning can be applied. James (1984) suggests that listening is inextricably interwoven with other language skills that listening is a set of skills rather than one skill. Bowen, Madsen and Hilferty (1985) assume that listening is attending to and interpreting oral language. Chastain defined the goal of listening comprehension is to be capable of understanding native speech at normal speed. Different scholars define listening in different ways but they all basically consider listening as an activity in which listeners conduct various mental processes trying to decode the meaning from oral texts.

Then Cheung (2010) refers to other scholar’s studies to confirm the importance of teaching listening in EFL classroom. For instance, according to Scarcella and Oxford (1992), among the four language skills, listening is most frequently used. Devine (1982) suggests that listening is the most important way by which input is taken in. In Wolvin and Coakley’s study (1988), in and out of the classroom, listening accounts for more daily communication time rather than other forms of verbal communication. Also, Cheung (2010) indicates that listening is crucial in the cognitive processes that form output and promote oral proficiency. According to Rubin (1995), since second language learners must retain short term memory and process the information simultaneously, listening is the skill that makes the heaviest processing demands. Rost (1991)
summarized the importance of listening in three aspects. The first one is that listening provides input for the learner without understanding which at the right level will prevent learning from beginning. The second one states that understanding authentic language spoken by native speakers is a challenge for second language learners. The third one indicates that listening exercises including vocabulary, grammar and new interaction patterns offer teachers a new way to attract students’ attention.

Cheung (2010) mentions an approach called listening-first approach. Since the goal of learning a foreign language is considered to be able to speak that language, learners are trying to speak the language immediately. However, evidence has shown that immediate speaking practice is not recommended for promoting both speaking and listening skills in language acquisition. Listening is actually the premise of acquiring other language skills. Postovsky (1974, 1975) pioneered the listening-first approach and illustrated benefits in postponing oral practice at the beginning of foreign language learning. Postovsky maintained that intensive oral practice at the beginning of foreign language learning is not effective and should be delayed until students are able to understand the spoken language. Other scholars such as Krashen also advocated the listening-first approach, he suggested that emphasizing too much on speaking at the initial phase of language instruction is wasting time for it occupies time that can be more effective and productive in providing input. In addition, Krashen (1985) suggests that anxiety will occur if learners are driven to speak the language at the beginning before they have comprehended the necessary language rules and the anxiety will be hard to eliminate later (as cited in Cheung, 2010).

Cheung (2010) explains listening as an active process. He argues that even though listening is considered by linguists as receptive, learners should keep mental active to process
input instead of just listen passively. Thus, many scholars maintained that listening is an active process rather than a passive one. According to Purdy (1997), listeners do not passively listen to the words but actively try to gain the facts and feelings from what they hear by paying attention to what and how speakers say and the context the speakers in. In O’Malley, Chamot, and Kupper’s study (1989), listening comprehension is an active and conscious process where the listeners use contextual information and their own knowledge to analyze speakers’ words.

Research has shown that listening skills will contribute to the acquisition of the other language skills, which is called transfer of listening to other skills. Postovsky (1975), who advocated the listening-first approach, did an experiment which showed a high degree of transfer from listening to speaking, reading and writing. Other scholars such as Reeds, Winitz and Garcia (1977) found a remarkable improvement of learners’ reading skill after eight hours of listening without practicing reading. Asher et al did a study which showed high degree of transfer from listening to writing, they found out that students performed beyond the 50th percentile rank for writing and speaking after 90 hours of listening instruction without direct training in writing.

Many scholars have suggested that listening comprehension is the foundation of acquiring other language skills. Curtain and Pesola (1988) stated that listening skill is not only the foundation of other language skills but also the means by which learners establish original contact with the target language and its culture.

However, listening is mistakenly regarded as a skill that can be acquired spontaneously by teaching other language skills. Most EFL programs tend to focus on reading and speaking while neglect listening instruction. Cheung (2010) highlighted the necessity of teaching listening and suggests that it should be emphasized more in the classroom teaching. Listening skill should be the primary skill rather than a by-product of other language skills.
Cheung (2010) demonstrated the stages of listening comprehension, the first step is for listeners to comprehend the original information and the second step is the speaker becomes a listener and try to decode and understand the subsequent feedback.

Cheung’s (2010) study discussed the importance of listening skills from several aspects, including theoretical background, the nature of listening, listening skills to be acquired and stages of listening comprehension. He referred to a variety of studies to make his paper assuasive and informative. His study indicates the direction of future language instruction that educators need to increase the percentage of teaching listening in EFL class and teaching materials should be revised to create more listening activities. He suggests that traditional approaches such as Grammar-Translation method and Audio-Lingual method may no longer the best method in language education. Also, Cheung indicates that focusing on listening comprehension instead of requiring oral production at the beginning of language learning will have better results.

Similarly, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) researched to discuss the significance of listening comprehension in English language teaching from some different aspects which include a definition of listening and listening comprehension, a brief discussion of reasons for listening, listening comprehension process, teachers’ roles in listening comprehension, strategies, techniques, and goals of listening as well as importance of listening.

The definitions of listening comprehension has been defined differently by scholars. Rost (2002) and Hamouda (2013) regarded listening comprehension as an interactive process in which listeners are involved in establishing meaning (as cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Nady (2013) defined it as a variety of processes such as receiving speech sounds, analyzing syntax of sentences and understanding the meaning each word of comprehending and making sense of spoken language.
For the reasons of listening, Bouach (2010) suggests that listening comprehension contributes to learners’ pronunciation that learners will be exposed to the pitch, intonation, stress, redundancy and clusters while listening to spoken English (as cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Wilson (2008) mentioned other aspects such as receiving information, enjoyment, unanimity, evaluation and criticism. Underwood (1989) stated that teachers should instruct learners how to listen to get the main ideas in the class, gain information from multimedia and follow the instructions.

Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) then introduced listening comprehension process. The first one is bottom-up process, in which listener establishes comprehension of an utterance or a text by gradually combining increasingly larger units. That is, phonemic units are used to build words, words are combined to make phrases, phrases are connected to make utterances, and utterances are combined to make meaningful text. The bottom-up process is closely related to listener’s linguistic knowledge. While the top-down process is related to listener’s background knowledge such as culture, topic and genre, etc. Listeners use their prior knowledge to understand the incoming messages. The third one is interactive process which connects the bottom-up process and top-down process. By applying both background knowledge, contextual information, and linguistic information will make incoming information easier to decode (Gilakjani and Sabouri, 2016).

Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) cited other scholars’ statements to prove the importance of listening. For instance, Rost (1994) and Ziane (2011) suggested that listening is an important way by which people receive input and without the input learning will not happen. Doff (1995) and Ziane (2011) argued that listening plays an important role in developing speaking skill and learners cannot develop speaking skills unless they have developed listening skills. Also, learners
who are exposed to the target language show better performance in language acquisition than those are not, which indicates the importance of exposure to listening.

Teachers are responsible for the class and play different roles in language instruction. According to Harmer (1991) and Machackova (2009), teachers’ roles include organizer, controller, evaluator, resource, tutor, investigator, prompter and participant.

In terms of the strategies for developing listening, it can be divided into two kinds: one of which is bottom-up strategies and another is top-down strategies (Gilakjani and Sabouri, 2016). The bottom-up strategies focus on linguistic knowledge and force students to decode individual words for their meaning or grammatical structures. The top-down strategies focus on overall meaning of phrases and sentences and encourage students to use their previous knowledge towards the world to understand the meaning of text. While according to Vandergrift (1999) and Ak (2012), listening strategies are metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and socio-affective strategies. A study conducted by Abdelhafez (2006) shows that metacognitive strategies help learners develop listening skills. Nevertheless, it is important to find a proper strategy based on learners’ own need to develop listening skill.

Rixon (1986) and Rubin (1995) maintained that different techniques such as authentic materials and technology should be applied in the class. Also, authentic materials and technology should be connected with each other so that technology should implement authentic materials. McBride (2009) and Rost (2007) stated that application of technology including videos, computers, and the internet can promote the listening comprehension. Based on this, my project applies video games to teach listening in elementary school students in China.

To study how multimedia technology contributes to listening skills, Sejdiu (2017) did a quantitative quasi-experimental research to measure the effectiveness of the multimedia
technology on improvement of listening comprehension skills. Sejdiu also points out the importance of listening comprehension and suggests that listening should be prior to speaking. According to MacWilliam (1986), only the listening comprehension has finished taking place should the phase of speaking begin (as cited in Sejdiu, 2017).

Sejdiu (2017) indicated that applying multimedia tool to language instruction has been an urgent matter and the technology-based materials have to be authentic, flexible and interesting or they will be ineffective to language instruction. Many studies have been conducted to measure the effectiveness of specific multimedia tools in language learning. It was found that application of multimedia in language instruction has better results in promoting listening skills with respect to listening for the main idea and guessing the meaning from context. In Jones’s study (2003), using verbal and visual annotations can also produce more positive results in listening comprehension. Verdugo and Belmonte (2007) did a study to examine the effectiveness of digital stories and the results showed that the experimental group who received multimedia lessons scored remarkably higher in listening comprehension than the control group who did not receive multimedia lessons. Isik and Yilmaz (2011) did a similar study, measuring the effectiveness of computer-assisted listening instruction. Also, the results of the study showed that the experimental group who received multimedia lessons scored remarkably higher than the control group who received traditional instruction.

In Sejdiu’s study (2007), a control group and an experimental group was conducted for 10 weeks at a primary school. The control group received traditional instruction while the experimental group received multimedia-based instruction. Both groups did a pre-test assessment and a post-test assessment to measure the change of listening comprehension. The results of
study indicated that the experimental group showed a much higher level in listening comprehension.

In conclusion, listening skill is very important which can contribute to the acquisition of other language skills; it should be emphasized more in the language classes. The use of multimedia tools in language instruction will lead to improvement of listening skills. Video games are also a kind of multimedia even though it has some other characteristics such as storyline, role-play, etc. My project will apply video games to EFL classes to help elementary school students’ listening skills.

**How Video Games Help Learners in Second Language Acquisition**

The advent of computer technology has affected almost every aspect of our life, including education. Nowadays, people are able to get access to different material to learn English, such as video, radio, computer, etc. It seems that most of parents are trying to prevent their children from playing video games that they believe it is wasting time. However, video games could be used as a tool to help learners acquire second language and it does have some advantages. For example, video games may increase intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which is very important in learning (Ebrahimzadeh & Alavi, 2017). Also, it could imitate real-life context and provide learners with opportunities to experience life and culture of the target language country (Galvis, 2015).

To prove the viability of video game development online programs, Luis and Noriega (2017) conducted a research by reviewing the history and development of online education, they also create a timeline to analyze its growth and reception from the perspective of institutions, employers and students. Based on their research, they conclude that videogames in education are being accepted by modern institutions and students, supported by quantitative data, and that
video game development programs will rocket and finally create a larger and diverse academic environment with other technologies (Luis & Noriega, 2017).

Soyoof and Jokar (2014) conducted a research to explore what role video games plays in reducing the inhibitions of language learners and how video games affect students’ language ego. Making mistakes is inevitable in learning a second language and may hurt one’s ego, hence, learners would build a wall of inhibition to protect their ego, while inhibition may impede success (Brown, 1987). In this research, Soyoof and Jokar interviewed ten people in which five of them learn the language through video games and another five only receive classroom instruction. On the basis of the data analysis, they inferred that videogames plays a significant role in reducing inhibitions and promoting language acquisition.

In Ebrahimzadeh and Alavi’s (2017) study, they randomly assigned 241 male students to three groups: one group as readers who read the game’s story; one group as players who play video games; one group as watchers who watch two classmates play the video games. On the basis of analyzed data, result shows that motivation of language learning goes up over time. They draw a conclusion that video games can increase students’ language learning motivation. However, since the subjects are all male students, this study cannot prove that using video games to language instruction applies to both male learners and female learners. In addition, whether the participants are interested in playing video games should also be considered for the reason that this factor may influence their motivation towards learning.

Another study conducted by Chen and Yang (2013) also came to a conclusion that video games can increase learners’ motivation. In addition, this study suggests that video games can provide input to improve students’ skills in terms of listening, reading and vocabulary. In this study, twenty-two college students in Taiwan were divided to two groups and were asked to play
an English adventure game called BONE. One group could take notes while playing while the other group could not. The researcher used vocabulary pre-test and post-test to measure the subjects’ knowledge of vocabulary in the game, they also used short written report and questionnaire to survey their opinions about language acquisition by playing video games, their enjoyment of games, perceptions toward the game design, etc. Although the study is descriptive, there is limitation such as limited number of subjects which may lead to the situation that the result is less representative.

In addition, researchers including Gee (2007), Molins-Ruano et al. (2014), Schrader, Lawless, and Deniz (2010), and Van Eck (2009) have all indicated that applying video games to education can lead to increase of motivation (as cited in Ebrahimzadeh & Alavi, 2017).

Galvis (2015) explores the foundations for video-game based language instruction (VGBLI). He came up with three aspects about why applying video games to language instruction. Firstly, the economic aspect, Galvis (2015) suggests that there are ESL programs that can not only expose learners to the target language but also provide them with intercultural experiences, which are ideal for second language acquisition. However, not all people can get access to the ESL programs due to the fact that ESL programs are very expensive. While video games can simulate the real world and create a similar virtual reality to help learners save economic capital and offer them opportunities to get access to the country of target language and feel the culture.

Secondly, Galvis (2015) explains three main constructs that support the application of video games in education based on Gee’s (2007) work. The first construct is that video games can promote learners’ acquisition of active not just passive content. Also, according to Gee (as cited in Galvis, 2015), the traditional literacy only allows for encoding and decoding printed
information, while different types of signs such as visual and textual in video games can help learners decode not only linguistic material but also paralinguistic material like images, roles, and in general artifacts that produce context-specific meanings. The last construct illustrates that the use of video games in education should be connected with critical learning for the reason that some learners may fail to distinguish the real world and virtual reality, which may result in crimes.

Thirdly, Galvis (2015) postulates theoretical foundations for VGBLI. He suggests that video games can contribute to incidental language learning, an unintentional learning that may happen at any time and in any place. Another theoretical concept concern language identity, which is a decisive factor for the success of language learning according to Norton’s study (as cited in Galvis, 2015). In TATAR’s study (2017), he suggests that following the original notions of ethnic or group identity is an important factor in L2 learner motivation. Since learners could play different roles that they already have or haven’t experience in life through the video games, from soldier to housewife, learners are able to explore different possibilities and even travel all over the world to the country of the target language, and then their identities will be enhanced. Learners who regard themselves as members of an imagined community, where learners do not have direct access to the target language but feel that they belong to the speakers’ group, are better motivated to learn the language (TATAR, 2017). The last theoretical concept has to do with flow, which defined by Csikszentmihalyi (1997) as the gratification gained when self-interest, self-motivation, obtainable goals, and work orientation contribute to the achievement of a goal (as cited in Galvis’s study, 2015). Similarly, Kirriemuir and McFarlane (as cited in Galvis’s study, 2015) identified flow as a main factor of motivation. Flow plays an important role in our life while video games can produce much more flow than traditional school teaching.
However, there are still some concerns about implementing VGBLI, according to Galvis (2015). For example, people may fail to separate reality and virtual reality and thus commit a crime affected by violent video games. Galvis suggests that video games and academia seem to be on opposite extremes and language educators should find the balance between entertainment, education and learner’s need in the further research.

**Summary**

There are three themes in this literature. The first theme is theoretical underpinnings, including motivation, the Affective Filter Hypothesis and the Critical Period Hypothesis. This part provides theory support for my project. Motivation has been regarded as very central in explaining the success of SLA (Brown, 2007). The Critical Period states that there is a critical time when learners can acquire a new language more easily and swiftly. The Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that learners are unable to receive enough input unless their affective filter is low.

The second theme is the importance of teaching listening. This part introduces studies of scholars such as Cheung (2010), Scarcella and Oxford (1992), Wolvin and Coakley (1988), who all emphasize the significance of listening instructions. According to these scholars, listening should be the primary skill to be acquired and it is conducive to the acquisition of speaking, writing and reading. An approach called listening-first approach is introduced in this part, it suggests that relaxing the requirement of oral production and emphasizing on aural comprehension training at the beginning of language instruction can promote development of linguistic competence and reach better results. This part indicates that listening instruction
should be emphasized more in the class. It also demonstrates that the use of multimedia tools in language instruction will lead to improvement of listening skills.

The third theme is how video games help learners in SLA. This part demonstrates the advantages of implementing video games in second language instruction. For example, learning through video games can lead to the reduction of inhibitions of language learners and thus help learners better acquire the target language. Also, applying video games in the class is a new teaching method, which could create an innovative learning environment and motivate students. This part also indicates the concerns of applying video games in the class. For instance, people may fail to separate reality and virtual reality and thus commit a crime. In addition, it is suggested that educators find a balance between entertainment, video-game based education and learners’ need.

The literature review lays foundations for my project with theories and strong opinions from other scholars. This project will take advantages of the theories and the findings of these previous studies to create an innovative and effective listening curriculum for elementary school students.
CHAPTER III
THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

**Brief Description of the Project**

This project is an English listening curriculum using video games to improve elementary school students’ listening skills. According to the literature review, there are many benefits of applying video games in education. For example, video games can reduce the inhibitions of language learners and increase their learning motivation (Soyoof & Jokar, 2014; Chen & Yang, 2013). Also, different types of signs such as visual and textual in video games can help learners decode not only linguistic material but also paralinguistic material like images, roles, and in general artifacts that produce context-specific meanings (Galvis, 2015). Furthermore, video games can contribute to incidental language learning. These are foundations of the application of video games in the project.

Based on the Critical Period Hypothesis and the Affective Filter Hypothesis, the project is designed to create an innovative and relaxed learning environment to lower students’ affective filter and increase their learning motivation. The Critical Period claims that there is a critical time when learners can acquire a new language more easily and swiftly. The Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that learners are unable to receive enough input unless their affective filter is low.

There are four chapters in this project, in each chapter, there are three parts with a relevant video game to help students practice listening: Pre-playing, Playing, and Post-playing.

Chapter one: What’s the time-This chapter begins with a short riddle and several questions to warm students up. It focuses on teaching students how to ask the time and read the clock in English. There is a relevant video game to help students practice listening. After playing
the video game, there is an activity for students to practice conversation about asking the time. An example has been provided.

Chapter two: How much is this-This chapter begins with introducing new vocabulary. To better help students memorize the new vocabulary, visual representations and definitions are used. Then there are three warming-up questions. This chapter focuses on training students’ ability to ask the price and listen to the price. A relevant video game about buying toys is provided to help students practice listening. The instructions on how to play the game have been listed. After playing the video game, there are two activities including role play to enhance the knowledge.

Chapter three: Whose present-This chapter begins with introducing new vocabulary. To better help students memorize the new vocabulary, visual representations and definitions are used. Then there are several questions to activate students’ prior knowledge. After warming up, teachers will introduce the background of Christmas to students. There is a relevant video game in this chapter, and the instructions have been provided. After playing the video game, there are two activities to practice conversation; an example has been provided. This chapter covers topics like favorite presents and things people like to do.

Chapter four: What’s the weather like-This chapter begins with introducing the weather symbols. To better help students memorize the symbols, visual representations and definitions are used. Then there are several warming-up questions to attract students’ attention. A video game about weather forecast has been attached with playing instructions. After playing the game, students will do activities such as matching, role-play and conversation practice. This chapter focuses on teaching students how to talk about the weather and how to recognize the weather symbols.
The curriculum also includes instructions for teachers on how to instruct students to play the video game.

**Development of the Project**

My bachelor’s degree is in finance, which a lot of people view as a promising field. My father chose this major for me and I just followed his advice. Now that I didn’t have any preferred majors I thought dealing with bond and stock may be a good choice. However, an experience of being a volunteer English teacher in an underprivileged village changed my mind. Students in that village have no access to learning English, so I created a course myself to help them learn English. That was the first time I designed a course and taught students myself; I found out that I love the feeling of being with children and I feel a sense of achievement when I am able to teach them knowledge. Many students cried when we were leaving, and I was very touched. After graduating from university, I decided to study abroad to pursue my master’s degree in education. I hope I could be a teacher one day and created my own curriculum.

The idea of developing this project came up when I found out that some of my classmates who were not good at English were able to memorize the vocabulary and phrases in a video game called Warcraft. They could even imitate the characters’ conversations in the game and their imitations could be as good as the original one. One of my classmates told me that it was cool to say something as those characters say, he found it interesting and easy to memorize the vocabulary and sentences in the game. Not until then did I realize that video games could be an innovative way to learn English, so I was wondering if I could create a curriculum through video games.

Also, there are some problems exist in China’s English education. For example, Chinese teacher pays more attention on reading and writing while ignoring listening and speaking. I
remember when I was in elementary school, our English teacher just played record and asked us to listen and repeat that they never taught us how to listen and speak. Some teachers mistakenly regard listening as a skill that can be acquired automatically, which is not true (Cheung, 2010). This phenomenon leads to the situation that most Chinese international students have difficulty in listening and speaking. When I first came to America, even though I had no problem in reading and writing I found difficulty to understand what other people are saying and how to respond. In addition, due to the exam-oriented education system in China, Chinese students are under great pressure to get higher scores to get admitted by better schools. Overemphasizing the scores to measure students’ abilities may cause reduction of students’ motivation (Henry, Nyaga & Oundo, 2014). While motivation plays an important role in learning, evidence shows that one of the reasons of students’ poor performance in the study is their lack of noticeable motivation (Yurtseven & Altun, 2016). Another problem is about the teaching material, the materials that are being used in elementary schools are designed based on Guidelines on Graduation Examination, emphasizing the key points in the examination which could be boring and stereotyped (Hu & West, 2015). I remember that every English class is similar, we listened to record, read the text and did exercise, repetitive and monotonous. Therefore, I hope I could design an English curriculum through video games to provide an innovative way for elementary school teachers to teach listening.

The first step to develop my project is to find out the theories that back up my project. There is an old saying in China that people should begin learning when they are children. So I referred to a hypothesis we learned in the class-the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH). The CPH assumes that there is a biological timetable when learners can acquire a language more easily and swiftly and beyond this time language is more difficult to acquire (Brown, 2007). I also referred
to the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which demonstrates that positive emotions are conducive to
the process of language input while negative emotions will prevent learners from processing
input. Second, I referred to other researchers’ work in terms of applying video games to
education to confirm the feasibility of using video games in class. Since I have made a simple
video game before, I was wondering whether I could make a game myself. I spent a couple of
days trying to download the tool of game creation but I failed, the tool doesn’t match IOS system.
So I decided to find a suitable one for my project. It seemed easy but did take me several days to
find a suitable one. I have to consider many factors such as difficulty level, the topic of the game,
playtime and whether the game is educational. I finally found four online video games including
different topics for my project. To fully take advantage of these games, I designed relevant
activities to enrich the class. I hope I could create an innovative and relaxing learning
environment through video games to motivate students and lower their anxiety and thus help
them improve their listening skills.

The Project

The project in its entirety can be found in the appendix.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

English has been a compulsory subject in Grades 3-9 in China since 2010, while Chinese teachers spend much more time on teaching reading and writing that they ignore the instruction of listening and speaking. People mistakenly regard listening as a skill that can be acquired automatically. This phenomenon gives rise to the situation that many Chinese international students have trouble in listening and speaking. However, listening skill is vital which can lead to the acquisition of other language skills. Also, due to the exam-oriented education system in China, students are under intense pressure to get higher scores in fierce competition, which may cause the reduction of students’ learning motivation, while motivation plays a significant part in learning. In addition, the materials being used in elementary school are all unified based on the Guidelines on Graduation Examination, which can be stereotyped and lack of creativity.

This project is designed to deal with the problems above. The project is created based on the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) and the Affective Filter Hypothesis (AFH). The CPH indicates that there is a critical period of time when learners can acquire a language more easily and swiftly and beyond which the language is increasingly difficult to acquire. It is generally believed that younger children are better at learning L2. The AFH claims that positive emotions are conducive to the process of language input while negative emotions will prevent learners from processing input. Krashen (1982) suggests that an effective language teacher should be able to create a low anxiety environment to lower the affective filter. Also, studies show that the application of multimedia tools in language instruction will contribute to the improvement of listening skills (Sejdiu, 2007; Jones, 2003). Accordingly, this project applies video game, a rising
teaching method, to the class to create an innovative and relaxed learning environment to lower students’ anxiety and to increase their learning motivation. Researchers have shown that the implementation of video games in language instruction could reduce inhibitions of learners and increase learners’ motivation (Soyoof & Jokar, 2014). In addition, different types of signs such as visual and textual in video games can help learners decode not only linguistic material but also paralinguistic material like images, roles, and in general artifacts that produce context-specific meanings (Galvis, 2015). Furthermore, video games can contribute to incidental language learning (Galvis, 2015).

There are four chapters in this curriculum, the topics of which are all about basic daily conversation that could meet elementary school students’ need. In each chapter, there are three parts: pre-playing, playing and post-playing. Also, the instructions for teachers and students have been listed in the project. This project will help elementary school students improve their listening skills through video games and various in-class activities. This project will also provide a new way for English teachers to teach listening.

**Recommendations**

This project is designed to deal with the problems exist in China’s English education. It will create an innovative and relaxed learning environment for Chinese elementary school students to improve listening skills. However, it should be used along with the existing and traditional materials rather than replace the existing curriculum in schools. To better take advantage of this project, here are some recommendations for teachers who are going to use this project:

1. Teachers should be professional and know well about the process of the curriculum
2. Teachers should let students know that they should not spend too much time playing video games, they could use video games for learning and relaxing, but they should not addict to it.

3. Since the target population is elementary school students, teachers should not constantly correct their grammar errors.

4. Teachers should encourage students when they do well.

5. Students are allowed to speak Chinese in the class.

6. Teachers should know how to liven up the classroom atmosphere.

7. Teachers should be able to find ways to increase students’ motivation, cultivate students’ self-confidence and lower students’ anxiety.

   Also, teachers could create their own curriculum through video games, using this project as an example. However, it is necessary for teachers to find a suitable game which matches students’ language proficiency levels. Also, the video game should be educational. And the chosen game should meet learners’ need and teaching goal. Therefore, it may take time to find a suitable video game. Applying different teaching methods could contribute to learners’ language acquisition. Hope every teacher could find their best way to teach English.
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APPENDIX

Title of Project

A Curriculum for Improving Chinese Elementary School Student’s Listening Comprehension Skills through Video Games
Learning while Playing
Introduction ............................................. 2
To the teacher ............................................. 3
Chapter 1 What’s the time? ....................... 5
Chapter 2 How much is this? ................. 13
Chapter 3 Whose present? ..................... 21
Chapter 4 What’s the weather like? .... 29
In the current era of globalization, English is widely used all over the world. In China, English has been a compulsory subject in Grades 3-9 since 2010. However, due to the exam-oriented education system in China, students are under intense pressure to get higher scores to get admitted to better schools. Also, the materials that are being used in elementary schools are created based on Guidelines on Graduation Examination, only focusing on writing and reading, which are stereotyped and monotonous.

This curriculum is going to apply video games to class to create an innovative and relaxed learning environment to improve elementary school students’ listening skills. Students can listen, see, react and think when playing video games, which propels them to study actively. Compared with traditional listening materials, video games not only release students’ pressure but also intrigue their motivation.

The topics chosen in this curriculum are about basic daily conversation, which could meet elementary school students’ need.
To the teacher

The purpose of this curriculum is to create an innovative and relaxed learning environment for elementary school students not to replace the existing English curriculum.

There are three parts: Pre-playing, Playing and Post-playing in each chapter. In each chapter, there is a game related to the topic. Teachers should instruct students how to play the game according to the guide. Also, teachers need to remind students not to spend too much time in playing video games, students could use video games for learning and relaxing, but they should not addict to it. All images are screenshots of the chosen games from LearnEnglish Kids, a website to support children in learning English. There are many materials such as videos, games, and records on this website, which I found helpful and I recommend teachers to take advantage of this website fully.

This curriculum provides a new way for teachers to create curriculums themselves. It is suggested that teachers adopt diverse teaching methods into class to motivate students by creating an innovative and lively class. A good language teacher should be able to find better ways to increase students’ motivation, cultivate students’ self-confidence, lower students’ anxiety and thus help students improve language skills.
I have no leg.
But I can walk.
I have no mouth.
But I can talk.
I have a round face.
What am I?
1. What’s the time?

2. Tell students the correct answer is “clock” and praise those students who come up with the right answer. Ask the students whether they know how to read the clock and ask them to read the clock in Chinese first.

3. Ask students whether they know how to say the following numbers in English.
1. What’s the time?

4. Teach students to say numbers in English.

5. Encourage them to try to read the clock in English. Then teach students how to read the clock in English.

It’s nine o’clock

It’s twelve o’clock
1. What’s the time?

- It’s half past twelve
- It’s ten past eleven
- It’s a quarter past twelve
- It’s ten to eight
1. What’s the time?

1. Instruct the students how to play the game on the following website:
There are three levels in this game, from easy to difficult. Students will be given five minutes to play each level.
1. What’s the time?

Students will be awarded a blue medal if they get correct answer. After they play 15 minutes, ask students how many medals they get and praise those who get the most medals.
1. What’s the time?

**Post-Playing**

Ask students to practice the following conversation, according to the example.

**Example:**

| ![Clock Image] | ![Child Image] | Student A: What time is it?  
Student B: It’s six o’clock, it is time to wake up. |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|

**Pair work**

| ![Clock Image] | ![Images of Breakfast] | Student A: What time is it?  
Student B: It’s ___ o’clock, it is time to _______. |
|----------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
Student A: What time is it?
Student B: It’s ___ o’clock, it is time to ______.

Student A: What time is it?
Student B: It’s ___ o’clock, it is time to ______.

Student A: What time is it?
Student B: It’s ___ o’clock, it is time to ______.

Student A: What time is it?
Student B: It’s ___ o’clock, it is time to ______.
2. How much is this?

Pre-Playing

1. Vocabulary
   Using the following pictures or bringing the objects to the class to teach students vocabulary.

- Recorder
- Sticker
- Crayon
- Jigsaw puzzle
- Ball
- Card
2. How much is this?

Warming-up

- Ask the students the following questions:
  1. Have you bought things alone?
  2. What did you buy?
  3. Why did you buy it?
2. How much is this?

Playing

Ryan is going to a toyshop to buy some toys. Can you help him give the right money to the shop assistant?

Instruct the students how to play the game on the following website: https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/games/how-much
1. First, teach the students how to recognize bills of different denominations and how to pronounce “pound” and “pence”.

2. Second, ask the students to listen to what the shop assistant says and use their mouse to drag the money to the till. They can use different coins and notes. For example: 22 pence can be made using a 20 pence and a 2 pence or two 10 pence coins and two 1 pence coins.
3. At the beginning of playing, the students could click the blue button to turn on the text to help them understand the listening material. After practicing 2 or 3 times, ask the students to turn the text off.
4. After ten minutes of playing, ask the students how many scores they have and reward the students who have the highest scores.
1. Role play
Ask students to role play the following conversation, using vocabulary inside the box. One student plays the assistant and another plays the customer, then change the roles.

How much is this please?
The _____ is ____.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>£ 1</th>
<th>£ 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£ 5</td>
<td>60 pence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 pence</td>
<td>15 pence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£ 20</td>
<td>£ 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Ask several students the following questions, using the vocabulary above
How much is the ______?
The students are supposed to answer in the following way according to the price above:
    The _____ is ______. 
3. Whose present?

Pre-playing

- Vocabulary
  Using the following pictures or bringing the objects to the class to teach students vocabulary.

- MP3 player
- Story book
- Photo album
- Football
- Paint box
- Helmet
3. Whose present?

Remote controlled car

Camera

- **Warming-up**

Ask students the following questions: 1. Do you know who he is? 2. Do you celebrate Christmas? How do you celebrate Christmas? (Students are allowed to speak Chinese)
3. Have you received any presents for Christmas? What present did you get?
Christmas is celebrated on December 25. It is in memory of the birth of Jesus. Just like Spring Festival in China, Christmas is very popular in western countries. Children will hang up stockings on the fireplace at Christmas eve to receive present from Santa clause. It is said that Santa clause will come to good children's house through chimney and put present in their socks.
3. Whose present?

1. Christmas is coming, Santa and Amy have got a bag of presents. Listen to what Santa says and choose the best present for each child. Click on a child to begin.

Instruct the students how to play the game on the following website:
https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/games/whose-present

Santa and Amy have got a bag of presents. Listen to what Santa says. Can you choose the best presents for each child? Click on a child to begin.
2. Click on “Play Sound” and listen to what Santa says, which 2 presents are best for this child? Click on the 2 best presents and they will go into Amy’s bag.

3. At the beginning of playing, the students could click the blue button to turn on the text to help them understand the listening material. After practicing 2 or 3 times, ask the students to turn the text off.
Kyle likes reading stories, especially adventure stories. And he likes playing with cars too.
3. Whose present?

4. Students who choose the right present will be awarded by Santa.

Post-Playing

1. Share an experience that you received a present with your partner. You should introduce:
   - What present did you get?
   - When did you get this present?
   - Who gave you the present?
   - Why is it so important to you?
3. Whose present?

2. According to the game, practice the following conversation with your partner.

Example:
Student A: What does Emily like to do?
Student B: She likes drawing and painting pictures.
Student A: What present is best for Emily?
Student B: Let’s give her some nice new paints and some crayons.

Practice:
Student A: What does Kyle (Lily/Mohammad/Alisha/Harry) like to do?
Student B: She/He likes ________________.
Student A: What present is best for Kyle (Lily/Mohammad/Alisha/Harry)?
Student B: Let’s give her/him some __________.
4. What’s the weather like?

Pre-Playing

- Vocabulary
  Using the following pictures or bringing flash cards to the class to teach students vocabulary.

- Storm
- Snowing
- Cloudy
- Sunny
- Raining
- Windy
4. What’s the weather like?

Vocabulary

- Foggy
- Hot

Warming-up

- Warming-up

Ask students the following questions:
What weather do you like?
What’s the weather like today?
Who know what is the weather like tomorrow?
Do you watch weather forecast every day?
4. What’s the weather like?

Ask students whether they can recognize the following weather symbols and teach them how to recognize them.

Playing

Instruct the students how to play the game on the following website:
Hello Sam. There's a lot of different weather around the world today...

Now it's time for the world weather with Peter. Hello Peter!
4. What’s the weather like?

1. Lead students to glimpse the symbols of weather and countries.
2. Instruct students to drag the weather symbols into the correct country’s weather box. Click on “Go” to begin the game.
3. At the beginning of playing, students are allowed to click on the “Text on/off” button to help them understand listening materials. After two or three times of practicing, ask students to turn off the text.
4. What’s the weather like?

4. Students are allowed to click on the button “play the sound” to listen again.
5. Award the students who use the least time to put every weather symbol in the right box.
4. What’s the weather like?

Post-Playing

1. Ask students to practice the following conversation according to the weather forecast.
   Example:
   Student A: What’s the weather like in Beijing?
   Student B: It is raining in Beijing.
2. Match the weather symbols with its English word in the box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weather Symbol</th>
<th>English Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Snowing</td>
<td>Snowy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloudy</td>
<td>Cloudy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raining</td>
<td>Rainy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storm</td>
<td>Stormy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunny</td>
<td>Sunny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windy</td>
<td>Windy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foggy</td>
<td>Foggy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot</td>
<td>Hot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Role play:
Students will play the role of weatherman to forecast the weather tomorrow.