

Students' Perspectives about the Influence of Mass Media on Their English Language Acquisition in Higher Education

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Received: October 1, 2023	Accepted: November 13, 2023	Online Published: November 17, 2023
doi:10.11114/smc.v12i1.6460	URL: https://doi.org/10.11114/sm	c.v12i1.6460

Abstract

This study collected students' viewpoints about the impact of mass media on their English language learning in higher education in Albania. Their perspectives hold significance for professors to enhance their future educational experience. The study used a questionnaire that was designed and distributed via Google Forms during the academic year in 2022 and 2023. Study participants were 56 students enrolled in the two study programs: a three-year bachelor's study program in "English Language" and a two-year Professional master's study program for "English Teachers" within the Department of Foreign Languages at the Faculty of Education and Philology at "Fan S. Noli" University, Korça, Albania. Most participants used mass media to improve their English language learning. Additionally, students who used various types of mass media had a more extensive vocabulary, were more fluent in English, had higher levels of motivation, and a more positive outlook about learning the English language. Mass media transformed students from dependent passive learners to active independent learners.

Keywords: mass media, EFL students, higher education, English language acquisition

1. Introduction

English is probably the most common language that effectively bridges international communication. Many students worldwide are committed to learning English to communicate with native or other language speakers. (Hoag, A. Grant, E A. & Carpenter, S. 2017) Diverse approaches, which are fundamental to language acquisition and production, are needed when teaching English as a foreign language. The use of *mass media* is a valuable and practical means that accords students an opportunity to improve their language skills (Crosbie, V. 2002).

Media refers to technologies designed to store and distribute meanings; mass media is a specific type of media. Mass media content is created by specialized organizations based on a pre-established schedule within a national or linguistic community. Although oral communication was the earliest form of media, the concept of media has evolved over time. There are three types of mass media: traditional media, digital media, and social media. Traditional media includes print, outdoor, and broadcast media. Digital media includes computer and smart phone communications. Social media is comprised of the internet and social media. Social media become increasingly popular for remotely sharing information and communication. Social media, such as Facebook, TikTok, and Twitter, allow individuals to create and share information with specific audiences.

Mass media has been growing in popularity in Albania in the twenty-first century where it is not only utilized for daily communication and pleasure, but also as a learning aid in the academic sector.

Albanian higher education classrooms have incorporated mass media as a pedagogical tool for English language instruction and acquisition in response to the demands of the contemporary day.

The widespread use of English as a global language has resulted in its establishment as a commonly utilized means of communication among the educated and privileged segments of society. (Pimienta, D. Prado, D. & Blanco, Á. 2009). As Albania advances as a developing country, the use of the English language is an inevitable necessity.

2. Literature Review

Many researchers have demonstrated the efficacy of mass media in English learning. Muszynska's (2016) research titled "Mass Media in Teaching English," proposes the utilization of Mass Media as an instructional tool for teaching the English language. Muszynska argues that the internet offers a novel teaching resource, especially via movies, which cater to the

learning preferences of visual and auditory learners. Additionally, she suggests that quizzes available on these platforms are suitable for kinesthetic learners. Furthermore, Muszynska highlights that the lessons presented on these websites often incorporate humor as a pedagogical strategy. The utilization of visual, audio, and print media within the classroom setting contributes to the development of English language proficiency because students are exposed to a variety of learning resources beyond the confines of the prescribed course book and teacher-led instruction. According to Tafani (2009), teachers should carefully select a dependable source of online instruction due to the abundance of platforms that lack instructional value. If the mass media platform is not authentic, it can impede students' educational progress.

A study done by Brinton and Gaskill (1978) examined the impact of listening to TV and radio news on the listening comprehension skills of English as Foreign Language (EFL) students. Brinton and Gaskill (1978) report that utilizing television and radio news utterances as instructional material improves the listening comprehension of English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners who struggle with comprehending news utterances. However, Brinton and Gaskill did not provide specific criteria for selecting the type of news to be used as an instructional media. Poon (1992) conducted a study to enhance listening proficiency of 26 students using TV news. An increase in exposure to television and radio news significantly enhanced their listening comprehension skills. Baker (1996) found that the use of television news in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lessons enhanced the listening comprehension skills of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students.

Some scholars have also examined the incorporation of rapid speech, such as that found in TV and radio news, in EFL/ESL classrooms. Cauldwell (1996) investigated the correlation between exposure to rapid speech through mediums like TV and radio news, and the instruction of listening skills to English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Consequently, children may initially encounter difficulties in comprehending rapid speech. Nevertheless, EFL students can mitigate these difficulties and enhance their listening skills by immersing themselves in extensive exposure to rapid speech. A separate brief investigation carried out by Mackenzie (1997) refuted the premise that the speed of speech, complexity of topic, and difficulty of vocabulary in TV and radio news is unsuitable for beginner-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lessons since television and radio news broadcasts are suitable for all stages of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education.

A study conducted by Berber (1997) showed that with sufficient exposure to television and radio news in a foreign language, students can readily comprehend and handle such content. Cabaj and Nicolic (2000) observed that a substantial exposure to television and radio news can enhance students' listening comprehension skills. Additionally, children gain the knowledge, frameworks, tactics, and vocabularies that they can apply in their daily lives by being exposed to television news and radio shows. Nevertheless, exposure to television news does not consistently aid in understanding (Wetzel et al., 1994).

Previous studies have examined the educational benefits and impact of TV and radio news on developing various language skills, particularly listening comprehension. But the capacity of visual media to improve comprehension and memory may exceed that of text media (Cowen, 1984). Willingham (2009) poses a straightforward query in his study: "Why do students recall all the information they see on television but fail to remember what we teach them through lectures?" It is possible that visual media enhances pupils' ability to retain thoughts and ideas. According to Bransford, Browning, and Cocking (1999, p 194), technology plays a crucial role in expanding the capabilities of one-way communication media, such as movies, documentaries, television shows, and music.

2.1 The Role of Mass Media in Higher Education

Television sets, libraries, and computer laboratories are now present in most high education institutions' curricula demonstrating the importance of media in today's education (Hoag, A. Grant, E A. & Carpenter, S. 2017).

There are many different types of media each of which has an impact on how students learn and interpret information. Students from various universities in different parts can connect via the internet. The information revolution has resulted in the permeation of mass media into every aspect of our lives (Alexandra, S., Hanna, S., Sommer, A., & Svensson, H. 2019).

English Language students can benefit from mass media in the following ways: (Murthy, D. 2011)

- *1. Language exposure*: Mass media, such as television, movies, radio, and online platforms expose students to authentic English language users. Learners can improve their listening skills, pronunciation, vocabulary, and overall comprehension by listening to and observing native speakers' conversations.
- 2. *Cultural understanding*: Mass media present a variety of cultural contexts and perspectives. English language learners can gain insights into the customs, traditions, and daily life of English-speaking countries and enhance their intercultural competence.

- 3. Language models: Media often features well-articulated and proficient English speakers. Learners can improve their speaking and oral communication skills by observing and imitating the language patterns, intonation, and expressions used by native speakers.
- 4. Content diversity: Mass media covers a wide range of topics, including news, documentaries, films, music, and literature. English language learners can expand their vocabulary, knowledge, and critical thinking skills from various subjects of interest.
- 5. Language practice: Interacting with mass media allows learners to actively practice their language skills. Learners can participate in listening comprehension exercises, watch subtitled content, read articles, participate in online discussions, and even interact with others through social media or language learning platforms.
- 6. Authentic materials: Mass media provides access to authentic materials that reflect real-life language usage. Such English language content can help learners familiarize themselves with idiomatic expressions, colloquial language, and informal speech patterns used in real-world communication situations.
- 7. Motivation and engagement: Mass media can be entertaining and engaging thus motivating English language learners. Access to interesting and relevant media content can enhance their overall learning experience and encourage continuous language practice.

English language learners should select appropriate media content for their language proficiency level and learning objectives. Incorporating media-based activities into language learning programs and classroom instruction can maximize language acquisition.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

The research questions that this study sought to answer were:

- 1. What types of mass media do higher education students use?
- 2. How often do students interact with traditional and digital/social media?
- 3. What impact do students think that mass media have their English language acquisition?

3.2 The Study Participants

The study participants were 56 students in two study programs: a three-year bachelor's study program in "English Language" and a two-year professional master's study program for "English Teachers." The programs are within the Department of Foreign Languages at the Faculty of Education and Philology at "Fan S. Noli" University, Korça, Albania. Students' ages ranged from 18 to 30 years.

Characteristics	Characteristics	Proportion (%)
Age in years	18-19	25
	20-21	34
	22-23	32
	24-25	5
	26-27	2
	29-29	0
	30 years old	2
Gender	Female	84
	Male	16
Year of study	1st year of a bachelor's degree program	29
	2nd year of a bachelor's degree program	16
	3rd year of a bachelor's degree program	23
	1st year of a professional master's degree program	14
	2nd year of a professional master's degree program	18
Education level	Bachelor's degree	68
	Professional master's degree	32

Table 1. Participants'	demographic	characteristics
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A description of the study participants is presented in Table 1. Most students were aged between 23 and 30 years with a significant number of them being aged between 20 and 26 years. Most students (n=47 students: 83.9%) were female. Close to one third (29%) of the student population was enrolled in the first year of a bachelor's degree program in the English Language. Additionally, 23% of the students were pursuing their studies in the third year of a bachelor's degree program specifically focused on the English Language. Furthermore, 16% of the students were currently in the second year of their bachelor's degree program in "English Language." Fourteen percent (14%) of the student population was enrolled in the first year of a professional master's degree program specializing in English Teaching, while 18% of the respondents were in their second year of the same program.

3.3 The Study Instrument

This study used a Google forms questionnaire that was administered throughout the school year in 2022 and2023. The questionnaire consisted of 14 multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question. Questions 1–4 inquired about each participant's age, gender, year of study, and level of education (Bachelor's or Master's). Question 5 inquired about students' preferred media (traditional, digital, or social media). In questions 6 and 7, students were asked how frequently they used different types of media. Questions 8-11 asked students whether mass media had affected their English language development in four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students had to give their responses to questions 8-111 on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, or highly agree. Question 12 requested students to select one or more advantages of mass media in English language acquisition. Question 13 asked students whether mass media could transform them from passive dependent to active independent learners and question 14 required students to defend their responses to question 15 asked students whether they wished their professors increased the use of more mass media in their classrooms.

The results' section presents quantitative and qualitative data on the most common replies to each question.

3.4 Data Collection and Ethical Considerations

The research aimed to understand the types of mass media used by higher education students, their frequency of interaction with traditional and digital/social media, and the perceived impact of mass media on English language acquisition. The study informed participants about the purpose and voluntarily participation, with an informed consent section on Google Forms. The study emphasized anonymity and confidentiality to encourage honest responses, and participants had the right to withdraw at any point without consequences. Fair treatment of participants was ensured, and data use was clarified for research purposes only.

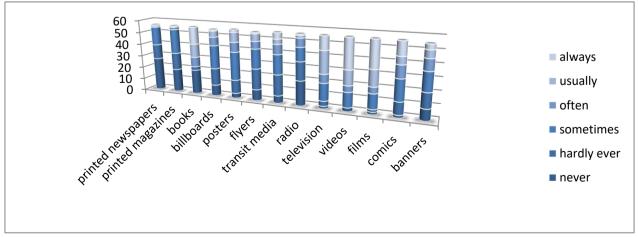
4. Results

Starting from question 5, the Table 2 shows students' preference for different types of mass media. Most students (56.4%) used digital and social mass media while the rest (43.6%) used traditional forms of media.

Table 2. Participants' preferred types of mass media

Types of mass media	Proportion of students (%)
Traditional mass media	43.6
Digital and social media	56.4

Graph 1 displays how frequently participants used traditional types of mass media.

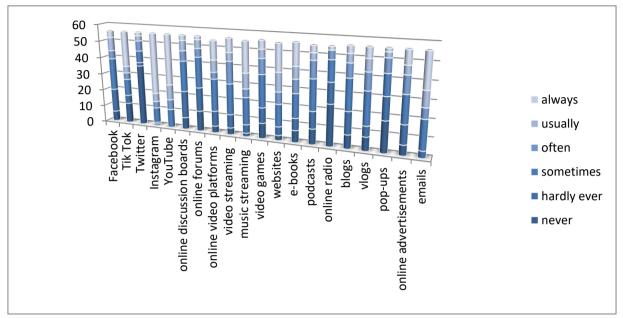


Graph 1. Students' use of traditional mass media

Many students (n=24) frequently utilized videos, while others (n=22) regularly made use of films. Fewer students (n=18) typically utilized television. Participants employed various visual aids including billboards (n=19), books (n=20), posters (n=23), comics (n=17), and banners (n=15).

Students rarely used flyers and transit media (n= 17 students). A total of 27 students did not read printed newspapers, while 19 students did not read printed magazines. Additionally, 20 students did not listen to the radio.

Graph 2 presents the frequency with which students interacted with various forms of digital and social media.



Graph 2. Students' use of digital and social media

Instagram was consistently utilized by students (n=36), followed by YouTube (n=30), music streaming services (n=18), websites (n=16), and emails (n=20).

Students frequently utilized various forms of digital and social mass media including Facebook (n=19), and online discussion boards (n=18). Similarly, 19 students used online forums and online video platforms, 18 students interacted with video streaming services, while 16 students utilized music streaming services. Additionally, 19 students reported engaging in video games, while 14 students utilized eBooks. Furthermore, 18 students reported listening to podcasts, 18 students read blogs and watched vlogs, while 16 students had viewed online advertisements.

Some mass media platforms were rarely used by students; 36 students had never used Twitter, 24 students had never listened to online radio, and 18 students had never encountered pop-up advertisements.

Table 3 describes the extent to which mass media enhanced students' English language listening skills.

Table 3. Students' perspectives about how mass media enhances their English-listening skills

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Mass media can improve listening comprehension.	0%	5%	25%	34%	36%
Mass media can help me understand, evaluate, and make more effective decisions in the English language.	2%	5%	13%	48%	32%
Mass media helps me understand and distinguish various accents and dialects of English language.	0%	5%	20%	37%	38%
Mass media helps me identify correct pronunciation from mass media.	4%	4%	18%	45%	29%
Mass media helps develop my imagination.	2%	9%	18%	30%	41%
Mass media helps develop my auditory memory.	2%	11%	22%	36%	29%

A majority of respondents agreed (34%) and strongly agreed(36%) that mass media could augment their listening comprehension.

A substantial proportion agreed (48%) and strongly agreed (32%) that mass media could help them understand, evaluate, and make effective decisions in English. A significant majority agreed(37%) and strongly agreed(38%) that mass media enabled them understand and differentiate various English accents and dialects. A notable proportion agreed (45%) and strongly agreed (29%) that they could identify correct English pronunciation through mass media. The majority (30% and 41%) believed (agreed and strongly agreed, respectively) that mass media could foster their imagination. A considerable proportion agreed(36%) and strongly agreed(29%) that mass media could enhance their auditory memory. Overall, respondents generally held positive views regarding the impact of mass media on their language skills and cognitive abilities.

Table 4 illustrates students' perspectives about the impact of mass media on their speaking skills.

Table 4. Students' perspectives on how mass media enhances their English-speaking skills

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Mass media can improve my English-speaking skills.	0%	5%	18%	38%	39%
Mass media can develop my pronunciation.	2%	7%	9%	46%	38%
Mass media can help me make clearer pauses when speaking.	0%	7%	21%	46%	26%
Mass media can help me properly emphasize words, phrases, and sentences.	0%	7%	25%	38%	30%
Mass media can develop my word-articulation.	0%	4%	14%	43%	39%
Mass media can develop my tone of voice.	0%	5%	23%	38%	34%

Most respondents strongly agreed (38%) and agreed (39%) that mass media could improve their English-speaking skills in English. A significant proportion agreed (46%) and strongly agreed (38%) that mass media could develop their pronunciation. A substantial portion (46%) agreed that they could make clearer pauses when speaking using mass media. Many respondents (38%) agreed and strongly agreed (30%) that mass media helped them correctly emphasize words, phrases, and sentences. The majority agreed (43%) and strongly agreed (39%) that mass media could help them develop their word-articulation. A notable proportion agreed (38%) and strongly agreed (34%) that mass media could assist in developing their tone of voice.

Table 5 illustrates students' perceptions about the extent to which they felt that their English language reading skills had improved following an increase in exposure to various forms of mass media.

Table 5. Students' perspectives about how the use of mass media had enhanced their English-reading skills

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I can read larger texts faster.	5%	4%	29%	34%	28%
I can understand the meaning of a new word from its' context.	0%	7%	11%	41%	41%
I can understand the general meaning of the text faster.	2%	4%	18%	38%	38%
I can generalize.	4%	4%	24%	30%	38%
I can notice the details in a text.	4%	12%	48%	16%	20%

Respondents had a mix of reactions regarding their ability to read larger texts faster; the majority agreed (34%) and strongly agreed (34% and 28%) while the rest either disagreed (9%) or were indifferent (29%). A significant majority agreed (41%) and strongly agreed (41%) that they could understand the meaning of a new word from its context. A majority agreed (38%) and strongly agreed (38%) that they could understand the general meaning of a text faster. Many respondents agreed (30%) and strongly agreed (38%) that they could generalize based on the text. A significant proportion either disagreed (20%) or were indifferent (48%) regarding their ability to notice the details in a text.

Table 6 summarizes survey responses related to various aspects of writing skills and correct usage of language elements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I can correctly write words.	5%	2%	20%	54%	19%
I can correctly use punctuation marks.	4%	4%	32%	30%	30%
I can correctly capitalize letters.	5%	7%	11%	39%	38%
I can write paragraphs in suitable page margins.	4%	5%	11%	50%	30%
I can organize words in a paragraph.	4%	2%	14%	44%	36%
I can organize paragraphs into a larger text.	2%	5%	9%	52%	32%

The majority agreed (54%) and strongly agreed (19%) that they could correctly write words. There was an even distribution of responses regarding an ability to correctly use punctuation marks. Most students were indifferent (32%) while similar proportions agreed (30%) or strongly agreed (30%) that they could punctuate an English text correctly. A significant proportion agreed (39%) and strongly agreed (38%) that they could correctly capitalize. The majority agreed (50%) and strongly agreed (30%) that they could write paragraphs in the appropriate page margins. A majority agreed (44%) and strongly agreed (36%) that they could correctly organize the words in a paragraph. Most respondents agreed (52%) and strongly agreed (32%) that they could organize paragraphs into a larger text.

Table 7 lists the benefits that students could obtain from using mass media in the classrooms in higher education.

Table 7. The benefits of using mass media

	Percentage (%)
A wider English language exposure	84.0
Cultural understanding	74.0
English language models	80.0
Content diversity in English	63.5
Language practice in English	90.0
Authentic materials in English	83.0
Motivation and engagement	89.0

Most students (84%) felt that mass media exposed them to a variety of English language content that was essential for language learning. A significant portion of respondents mentioned that mass media promoted cultural understanding (74%). More students (80%) believed that English language models or examples were crucial for language learning. A lesser majority (63.5%) reported content diversity in English being a valuable language learning factor. An overwhelming majority (90%) perceived active language practice as a critical component of language learning. A substantial proportion (83%) valued the use of authentic materials in English language learning. Nearly 90% of respondents believed that their motivation and engagement with mass media played a significant role in their English language acquisition.

Students supported their claims regarding the benefits of the use of mass media in the English classrooms as follows:

- In contemporary times, individuals have a heightened inclination towards pursuing internet platforms for visual consumption and surpassing their usual traditional means of acquiring knowledge.
- The use of media can catalyze increased verbal communication among students through continuous exposure to the English language.
- The use of mass media can stimulate students' curiosity to acquire a foreign language while simultaneously sustaining their motivation and entertaining them throughout the learning process.
- The use of mass media facilitates the cultivation of self-learning and self-assessment skills.

- Students can acquire knowledge and assess their own understanding using various educational resources provided by various types of mass media.
- There is a greater level of engagement with digital formats.
- The use of various platforms and websites enables individuals express themselves beyond traditional media such as books.
- The use of mass media fosters engagement in activities which collectively enhance language abilities such as reading, listening to music, and watching shows.

When asked whether professors ought to use more mass media in the English language learning classrooms, most students (n=40) responded in the affirmative, fewer were indifferent (n=13) while the rest (n=3) dissented.

5. Discussion

The current research study investigated the impact of the mass on the acquisition of the English language in higher education at the Department of Foreign Languages at "Fan S. Noli" University, Korça, Albania based on students' perspectives.

Study results demonstrated that students used various types of traditional mass media including videos, films television, billboards, books, posters, comics, and banners. Students hardly ever used flyers or transit media and never used printed newspapers, printed magazines, or radios.

As regards digital and social media, students used mostly Instagram, YouTube, music streaming, websites, emails, Facebook, online discussion boards, online forums, online video platforms, video streaming, music streaming, video streaming, eBooks, podcasts, blogs, vlogs and online adverts. Most students never used Twitter, online radio, and pop-ups.

Study results showed that mass media had a positive and varied impact on students' language skills and cognitive abilities consistent with published literature (Yanar, M. & Tütüniş, B. 2016). Many respondents believed that mass media could improve their listening comprehension, English understanding and decision-making, understanding of different accents and dialects, pronunciation recognition, imagination, and auditory memory.

Students were also asked about the impact of mass media on their English speaking skills, and various aspects of speech such as pronunciation, pauses, stress, articulation, and tone of voice. While some students had neutral or dissenting views, a substantial portion attested to the positive impact of mass media on their language skills and different aspects of speech.

Mass media has an influence on students' English reading skills; students reported that using mass media helped them read and understand larger volumes faster, and understand the meaning of new words from their context (Shao 2012). Students were also able to generalize and note the details in a text.

Writing is also influenced by mass media. Students felt that they could write words and use punctuation marks correctly. Students could correctly capitalize letters and write paragraphs in their appropriate page margins. They believed that using mass media could help them write paragraphs in correct margins and organize words into a paragraph, and paragraphs into a larger text.

Mass media in English language instruction provides an opportunity for English language learners to improve their English language proficiency. Exposure to English-speaking media helps develop listening, reading, and comprehension skills, and allows learners to familiarize themselves with different accents, vocabulary, and expressions (Egbart, J., Paulus, T., & Nakamichi, Y. 2002). Students are aware that English is widely regarded as the global language of communication, and most of the world's media content is produced in or translated to English. By utilizing English mass media, students gained access to a vast array of international news, trends, and cultural developments. Mass media has the potential to transform students from passive dependent learners to active autonomous learners. Audio-visual materials pertaining to the acquisition of a foreign language can serve as a highly effective means of fostering motivation among learners. In the past, individuals exclusively relied on printed books for reading purposes. However, in contemporary times, learners have access to a more extensive range of options as they can now access books through their laptops connected to the internet (Weinberg, L. 2017).

The two ways that mass media can contribute to English language acquisition in higher education are:

- 1. *Engaging learning experience*: Mass media, such as educational videos, interactive websites, and multimedia presentations can make English learning experience more engaging and dynamic. Visual and audio elements, coupled with interactive features can capture students' attention, stimulate their curiosity, and encourage active participation in the learning process (Kim, D., & Gilman, D. A. 2008).
- 2. Access to diverse learning resources: Mass media provides students with access to a wide range of English learning resources beyond traditional textbooks. They can explore educational programs, documentaries, podcasts, online

courses, and e-books, among other multimedia content. This variety of resources allows students to personalize their learning, explore different perspectives, and delve deeper into topics of interest (Roelofse, L. 2013).

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study highlighted the effect of mass media on English language acquisition of EFL higher education students. Study findings provide valuable insights into the benefits that mass media offers in enhancing English language skills including

- Improved language proficiency: Participants reported significant improvements in vocabulary acquisition following exposure to a wide range of words and expressions through various media forms such as television shows, movies, podcasts, and online content. Additionally, regular exposure to authentic spoken English via mass media improved participants' listening comprehension skills. Learners could understand different accents, intonations, and natural language patterns better.
- Enhanced speaking and pronunciation skills: Incorporating mass media in English learning improved speaking fluency and pronunciation skills. By regularly listening to native English speakers, learners were exposed to natural speech patterns, intonations, and colloquial expressions which helped them develop more authentic and confident speaking abilities. Subsequently, learners could comfortably use English in real-life communication scenarios.
- Motivation and engagement: Mass media offers a compelling and interactive learning experience that captures learners' interest and enthusiasm. Participants reported increased motivation to learn English.(Tong, F. &Lin, Ch. 2020)

Overall, incorporating mass media in English learning improves language proficiency and heightens motivation and engagement. Hence integrating mass media into English language teaching and learning methodologies has the potential to create more effective and engaging language learning experiences in higher education.

Acknowledgments

Not applicable.

Authors contributions

Not applicable.

Funding

Not applicable.

Competing interests

Not applicable.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Redfame Publishing.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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