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*TED talks as resources for the development of listening,
speaking and interaction skills
in teaching EFL to university students*

Abstract

The article presents a study conducted on 27 university students and 5 of their teachers in the Winter semester 2020/21. The study was conducted because of recommended online teaching at Polish universities and almost four decades after the first TED event, when the TED community has become worldwide and the recordings of the events can be accessed online cost-free by anybody. The popularity of TEDs and the need to teach online prompted the author to incorporate it in teaching practice and review research literature from the areas of SLA (Second Language Acquisition), EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching and learning, socio-constructivism and adult learning. Based on this review, a hypothesis was formulated: TED talks support the development of listening, speaking, and interaction skills when used as a supplementary resource in teaching English as a foreign language to university students. Three supplementary questions were formed to test the hypothesis. Data was obtained in an online questionnaire and analysed using the qualitative data analysis framework of Miles and Huberman (1994). The study confirmed the hypothesis. Lessons with TEDs are valued as varied, interesting, inspiring and supporting oral communication skills' development. Results are discussed, conclusions drawn and further research explored.

Keywords: TED, online resources, listening, speaking, interaction, EFL, language skills, communication skills, university teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, OER, online language learning

Słowa kluczowe: TED, zasoby internetowe, słuchanie, mówienie, interakcja, EFL, sprawności językowe, umiejętności komunikacji, nauczanie uniwersyteckie w czasie pandemii COVID-19, OER, nauka języków online

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

The purpose of this article is to describe a research project aimed at testing the following hypothesis: TED talks support the development of listening, speaking, and interaction skills when used as a supplementary resource in teaching English as a foreign language to university students. This hypothesis was formulated based on a review of research literature from the areas of SLA (Second Language Acquisition), EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teaching and learning), socio-constructivism and adult learning. This hypothesis was verified via an empirical study conducted among 32 participants: 27 university students and 5 of their teachers. Online questionnaires were used to gather data. The results obtained from the questionnaires of both students and teachers confirmed the hypothesis. Based on the findings, the conclusions are that TED talks should continue to be used as part of the students' structured courses because of their potential to engage, motivate and inspire, and enhance the development of important listening comprehension skills, speaking, and interaction. TEDs are valuable because of their authenticity, variety and their possibility to be used for different purposes, e.g. to conduct a listening comprehension exercise, to watch someone's body language during a presentation before an audience, or as the basis for a discussion.

The article starts with a contextual introduction, rationale and a description of TED talks. After that a section of literature review is presented, based on which the hypothesis was formed. The methodology and ethics part follows, in which also the strengths and limitations of this study are outlined. To help test the hypothesis, three supplementary questions were formulated. Research findings are presented in the form of answers to these questions. The findings are then summarized and discussed using literature reviewed before and after the study. Finally, conclusions are drawn and directions of possible further research are presented.

1.2. Research context and rationale

The research project was conducted between October 2020 and January 2021. The idea was to use the recordings of TED talks as a supplementary resource in online teaching, at a time when it became a necessity to teach online because of the Coronavirus pandemic. As stated by the Government of Poland: 'work and teaching at universities [should be conducted] remotely to the greatest possible extent' (Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2020). In the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in which Poland and the rest of the world are actively engaged, the statistics are daunting: as of 13th January 2021 there have been '90054813 confirmed cases, 1945610 confirmed deaths, and 223 countries, areas or territories with cases' (World Health Organization, 2021).

The European University Association states:

'The coronavirus crisis has challenged higher education institutions in many new and unexpected ways. As universities have to take radical measures and make major efforts to slow the contagion and to better understand the virus, they are forging new paths in crisis management. This brings both challenges and opportunities to Europe's universities, in particular in relation to digitalisation and digitally enhanced learning and teaching, Open Science, research, quality assurance, university autonomy, funding and civic engagement' (European University Association, 2020).

The research study was thus conducted at a particular time, both of danger, but also of new possibilities, of teaching students online and trying to make it work. Technically, during lessons conducted through MS Teams (available from <https://www.microsoft.com/pl-pl/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>), TED videos played on the teacher's laptop could be shown to students at different times of the lessons thanks to the screensharing option. Sometimes the watching was with a clear purpose, with questions given beforehand, sometimes questions were given after watching the video. The videos were always chosen based on the topic of the talk, which had to be linked to the topic of the lesson.

The reason for conducting the study was the wish to explore the potential of TEDs as online resources at the time of recommended teaching online, combined with the popularity of the TED events, more about which is written in the section that follows. Additionally, based on the teaching experiences of the author, students simply like variety in lessons, thus the decision to incorporate TED recordings in the lessons was made, specifically to use them alongside the coursebook, as a supplementary resource, with the aim of fostering the development of the listening, speaking and interaction skills.

1.3. Description of TED-talks resources

In the 'About' section of the TED website (<https://www.ted.com/>) one learns that TED talks started as a conference:

'TED is a non-profit devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks (18 minutes or less). TED began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment and Design converged, and today covers almost all topics — from science to business to global issues — in more than 100 languages. Meanwhile, independently run TEDx events help share ideas in communities around the world' (TED Conferences LLC, 2021).

TED talks can be attended in person or the recordings of the talks can be accessed as videos (<https://www.ted.com/talks>) or podcasts (<https://www.ted.com/podcasts>) via the <https://www.ted.com/> website, as well as the YouTube platform (<https://www.youtube.com>). Visitors to the TED website can select an area of interest or browse videos not only by topic, but also by language, duration, event year, and speaker name and description. If one is interested in a particular topic, one can find many videos available on the same subject by different speakers.

Owned by a nonpartisan foundation, TED's agenda 'is to make great ideas accessible and spark conversation' (TED Conferences LLC, 2021). The first TED event took place in 1984. Even though initially TED events were by invitation only, now everyone can apply to attend. Thanks to being available as recordings online and cost-free, TEDs can now be accessed anywhere in the world by anyone. For speakers TEDs are also open to everybody, 'welcoming people from every discipline and culture who seek a deeper understanding of the world' (TED Conferences LLC, 2021). TED has become a worldwide community, with various events organized all around the world throughout the year:

'We believe passionately in the power of ideas to change attitudes, lives and, ultimately, the world. On TED.com, we're building a clearinghouse of free knowledge from the world's most inspired thinkers — and a community of curious souls to engage with ideas and each other' (TED Conferences LLC 2021).

2. From theory to research

2.1. Literature reviewed to form the hypothesis

The assumptions of the author of this article, upon deciding to incorporate the use of videos of TED talks in online lessons with students, were based on

the following expert opinions and formulated after conducting a review of literature from the areas of SLA, EFL teaching and learning, socio-constructivist and adult learning:

- Discussions based on real-life talks enhance the development of listening comprehension and speaking skills, in line with the so-called communicative approach in EFL learning and are also important based on the conversational method.

The idea behind the so-called communicative approach is that 'learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. When learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used, and this will allow them to learn to use the language' (British Council & BBC World Service, 2021). In line with this logic, if asked to express their opinions on the talks they have just watched, the students will naturally engage in a discussion, exchange of ideas, presenting opinions, etc.

The ability to hold a conversation in a foreign language is also the main aim of the so-called conversational method, as Komorowska reports (2009). In this method contact with native speakers, or visiting the country in which the language learnt is spoken, are encouraged. Using TED recordings in lessons allows for 'contact' with natural language, often used by native speakers, during lessons that are conducted online in Poland. Additionally, a variety of speakers with different accents is available on TED, so the students can familiarize themselves with accents other than standard British English. This is not insignificant in the era of so-called Global Englishes (Rose, Galloway, 2019).

Dialogue and conversation are also key in learning, according to socio-constructivist approaches. Vygotsky (1978) described language as key in the process of understanding ideas, as not only a tool, and a means of communication, but as something that helps the learner conceptualize ideas. Even academic EFL writing can be understood as socially constructed, claims McKinley (2015), while Lantolf, Thorne and Poehner (2015) stress the role of participation in 'culturally organized activity' (Lantolf, Thorne, Poehner, 2015: 20) in learning.

Ellis formulated Principles of Instructed Second Language Acquisition, where Principle 8 states: 'The opportunity to interact in the second language is central to developing second language proficiency' (Ellis, 2008: 4).

- Listening enhances learning and understanding.
Based on the Natural Approach, students learn through listening in situations where the general meaning is clear, mediated by a given situation, 'resulting from a situation comprehensible to them' (Komorowska, 2009: 31). Eliminating the fear of speaking is also important in this method. The purpose of watching TED talks recordings before a discussion in the lessons was to help students overcome any potential fear and engage in communication by having them watch inspirational presenters introducing interesting topics in a simple way.
- Using TED talks in lessons with university students makes sense in relation to their current and future situation and plans
As Komorowska observes, 'an immense role is played by the current communicative needs of the learners, resulting from their professional situations and plans for the foreseeable future' (2009:39). As the students are likely to have to communicate in their further studies or professional careers, learning with and discussing TEDs appears to correspond to these needs.
- Listening and speaking skills are crucial, hence should be developed.
Komorowska underlines that the aim of the teacher should be to 'teach, above all, things of significant communicative value, so things that will turn out to be useful and will allow the student to effectively communicate in the foreign language' (2009:20). Both listening (understanding) and speaking (interaction and production), are included as key language skills in the CEFR document Council of Europe, (2020).
- TED talks are interesting and engaging for many individuals, based on the aforementioned information on the TED website (TED Conferences LLC, 2021), so it is worth using them as a resource in EFL lessons.
Based on the classic theorists of adult learning and andragogy, like Eduard Lindeman (1926) and Malcolm Knowles (1973), interest and engagement are crucial in learning in adult life. With university students the learning is still formal and organized, yet making sure that they are interested in what is happening during the lesson is vital. As TED talks have become hugely popular around the world, both in the business and academic community, the premise was that they would also inspire, engage, motivate and provoke the students to think, communicate and interact.
- Students' oral communication and presentation skills can be developed thanks to watching TED talks.

In line with Bandura's (1971) theory of social learning, modelling behaviours is of crucial importance in learning. As students watch TED talks, they observe presenters using various forms and possibilities of interaction and rapport-building with the audience, e.g., asking questions, storytelling, etc. They observe different presentation techniques applied in practice. Learning from more knowledgeable, expert speakers might also correspond with Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the Zone of Proximal Development notion (1978), whereby one can learn from a more knowledgeable individual what one would otherwise not be able to accomplish on one's own.

- TED talks as a resource used online can enhance and support learning.

Based on previous research conducted by the author of this article on Open Educational Resources (OER) (Kozinska, 2013), technology can effectively support and enhance learning, especially if there is a community of learners formed around a learning course, topic or problem. TED has grown into a global community and there are possibilities of engaging online with other users of TED talks recordings. It is possible to post comments under videos on the YouTube platform and connect with other learners in this way, by observing what is written in the posts and posting. If used in formal learning, the group having a lesson becomes a community of learners and discussions and reflections on the TED video watched happen in real-time via the MS Teams.

2.2. Hypothesis and supplementary questions

The assumptions outlined above, formulated after conducting a review of relevant literature, led to the formulation of the following hypothesis: TED talks support the development of the listening, speaking, and interaction skills when used as a supplementary resource in teaching English as a foreign language to university students.

In order to test the hypothesis, three supplementary questions were formulated. All questions were developed based on doctoral research conducted by the author of this paper (Kozinska, 2013), where open learning resources such as the Oxford podcasts (The University of Oxford, 2020) and their use in learning and teaching were examined. The questions developed in the OpenSpire case study (Kozinska, 2013) worked well in the sense that they helped the author generate plenty of meaningful data to answer the research questions posed in the PhD. Thus, the decision was made to formulate the questions in this study in a very similar way. The three supplementary questions, or sub-questions, are:

a) What do students value most in learning with TED talks?

In order to answer this question, in the questionnaire the students were asked question 1 (What do you like in the TED talks recordings?) and 3 (What do you like in the way TED talks are used in the lessons?).

b) What are the criticisms and problems that students report of learning with TED talks?

To answer this question, the students were asked question 2 (What do you not like in the TED talks recordings?) and 4 (What do you not like in the way TED talks are used in the lessons?).

c) What are the student perceptions of the benefits of using TED talks in teaching and learning?

To answer this question, the students were asked: question 5 (Do you think that thanks to watching TED talks you develop your listening comprehension skills in English?), 6 (Do you think that thanks to watching TED talks you develop your speaking skills in English, e.g. via memorizing and then applying certain expressions, words, observations and imitating interactions with the audience or presentation techniques?), 7 (Do you think that thanks to discussing TED talks you develop your interaction skills during oral communication with other students?), 8 (Do you find TED talks inspiring?), 9 (Do you watch TED talks outside of lessons?) and 10 (What are your reflections on the use of TED talks in other lessons?).

2.3. Research method, ethics and sample

The data to verify the hypothesis was generated through written questionnaires administered online in January 2021, close to the end of Winter Semester 2020/21. Fifty (50) third-year students of the same subject (English in International Economic Relations) were invited to give written responses to any or all of ten questions (outlined in the previous section) in a questionnaire shared with them via MS Teams. Twenty seven (27) students responded to the invitation, accounting for a response rate of fifty four percent (54%). All students had been informed of the purpose of the study prior to filling in the questionnaire and told that participation is voluntary, in line with point 4 of Appendix 1 to the Code of Scientific Research Ethics Committee of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn (Basic Ethical Principles of conducting Scientific Research, see <http://www.uwm.edu.pl/badania/komisja-etyki/dokumenty>). Thus informed consent

was obtained. Consent was also obtained from the author's supervisor at the University to conduct the study and write the article. The students were assured of the fact that the results would be anonymised. The students came from three different groups of the same course. All the students will be graduating in the semester following the Winter term of 2020/21 at the level of C1, based on the CEFR Framework (Council of Europe, 2020). The group was chosen with a purpose, as from among all BA students of Linguistics in Business they had the longest experience in studying. The degree is strongly foreign-language oriented, with the majority of courses taught in foreign languages, hence English as a foreign language, as specified in the title of this article and the hypothesis, should be understood as one of the students' main subjects and not as an additional one, not a language studied additionally, e.g., via the centre for foreign languages. The students can generally be described as young undergraduate students, i.e., those who went on to study the BA course straight after secondary school. The student questionnaire was in Polish and the results were translated into English by the author.

In addition, teachers participated in this study as well. All five (5) teachers teaching English-language courses as part of the course were invited to answer one question in an online questionnaire. For those who use TEDs in their teaching, the question was 'How do you use TED talks to support your teaching of English as a foreign language with the students?' The author of this article also participated in this questionnaire. All teachers had been informed of the purpose of the study in the invitation and the fact that participation was voluntary, thus informed consent was assured. They were also informed that their responses would be anonymised. Five (5) teachers responded, which accounts for a hundred percent (100%) response rate. All the teachers invited to the study are experienced university teachers, with experience ranging from a few to several years of teaching. Assuming that the teachers are highly self-aware about their teaching practice, no detailed questions were asked, just the one stated above. The teachers answered both in English and in Polish (the answers were translated by the author).

All participants were recruited through convenience and purposive sampling, referring to situations in which 'advantage is taken of cases, situations or informants...close at hand...[and purposive as] deliberate...with some purpose or focus in mind' (Punch, 2005: 187).

All data was organized and analysed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework for analysing qualitative data. The data was simply condensed (Miles and Huberman, 1994) so that topics and themes could emerge. These were then organized into groups, and displayed in the article in points. Citations are provided to support the statements made.

The strengths of the study are that primary empirical data was gathered from students who have experience in studying and have had lessons with various teachers using different methods and resources. Moreover, the teachers who teach these students also participated in the study, which resulted in a triangulation (Miles, Huberman, 1994) of participant roles and enriching the findings through including both the learner and educator perspective. The hypothesis was formulated based on relevant research literature and additional literature was reviewed after conducting the study in order to discuss the findings and directions of further research in a meaningful way. The researcher conducting the study was aware of The Code of Ethics for Research Workers of The Polish Academy of Sciences (Instytut PAN, 2021).

The limitations are the small scale of the study with the consequence that the results should not be generalised to a wider student population. Some factors that could potentially influence the responses of participants were not considered in this study, e.g., age, gender or previous educational experiences. The author can generally state that the study was conducted on both female and male participants, with the majority, both among the students and among the teachers, being female. The answers in the questionnaire are based, among others, on the opinions and perceptions of students, which means the results could have been different if obtained through a task that was objectively assessed. The study should thus be treated as an exploratory, pilot study, potentially leading to more in-depth or larger-scale research.

3. Findings: answers to research sub-questions confirming the hypothesis

3.1. Student questionnaire results

The study hypothesis was confirmed based on the following responses to the 3 supplementary sub-questions asked:

- a) What do students value most in learning with TED talks?
 - Variety: of topics, speakers and activities in the classroom,. Almost all students used the word 'variety' in their questionnaires, in relation to topics and speakers, e.g., 'variety of guests and topics', and the lessons, e.g., 'it makes it more varied than just working with the coursebook'.
 - Interest: interesting topics, speakers, ways of presenting, tasks in the classroom. Many students stated that the TEDs were simply 'interesting', e.g., 'they are usually led in an interesting way and there are interesting topics' and 'the lessons become more interesting, especially if conducted online'.

- Educational value: you can learn from TED talks and using TEDs in the class enhances learning and understanding, from generally 'knowledge' or 'language', to more specific things, like 'specialist vocab' or 'techniques of communication'. Students stressed a number of things that can be learned from TEDs: 'the possibility of listening to experts and the possibility of developing your language skills', 'what I like in TED talks is the fact that these are speeches from which we can learn many new things', 'nice-to-listen-to English', 'different accents in English, learning public speaking techniques' or 'specialist vocabulary'. As students said, using TEDs in the lessons is 'a great way to transfer knowledge' and 'TEDs in lessons often make a given topic easier to understand and allow [us] to look at it differently'.
- Form of TED talks: clear, interesting, unconventional. Students stated: 'topics presented in a clear, approachable and interesting way; usually supported with experiences, facts, anecdotes', 'I really like this form of learning. Even more so, if the person presenting keeps joking and the whole TED talk is conducted in a relaxed way', 'often presented in a more approachable way than e.g., scientific or academic talks', 'they amuse'.
- Inspiration and motivation: TEDs inspire and motivate: 'the people who present inspire to take action, to change something.', 'TED talks are inspiring, they motivate to take action, they often help make aware of various phenomena'.
- Professionalism: TEDs are prepared and conducted in a professional way, and subtitles were appreciated: 'what I especially like is the structure of the presentation and the professionalism of the people presenting', 'there are usually subtitles, so, if anything is unclear, one can take a look and check', 'the script of the talk is very useful, and the scripts are available in different languages'.
- Ready incorporation of TEDs into lessons: 'What I like is that the content we watch is connected to the topic of the lesson and TEDs are very interesting, it would be rather difficult to find them myself in all this variety of material available'.

The second supplementary question, or sub-question was as follows:

- a) What are the criticisms and problems that students report of learning with TED talks?

Overall, there was not a lot of criticism of TEDs or using TEDs in lessons. Many students simply left this point blank, providing no answer.

One student wrote: 'there are no things that I dislike'. The criticisms stated concerned:

- Duration: recordings were too long (taking too much of the lesson time) or too short: 'sometimes they are too long, thus it is difficult to concentrate'. One student described them as 'too short'.
- TEDs were considered repetitive, boring, similar, or there were too many of them: 'some speakers speak in a boring way but most TEDs I have seen were not like that', 'similar patterns, repeatability', 'sometimes it happens that we get from the lecturer too many tasks to do in connection with a TED or we sacrifice too much time to discuss it, which discourages from further work'.
- Technical issues, e.g., 'frequently bad quality of the sound', 'it happens that there is no option of turning on the subtitles in English and it is then difficult to understand some guests (their accent or pronunciation)'.

The third sub-question asked was:

- b) What are the student perceptions of the benefits of using TED talks in teaching and learning?

In relation to developing listening skills, 26 (twenty-six) students responded to the question on developing listening skills and all of them agreed that watching TED talks recordings in lessons helped them develop their listening skills. 10 students simply replied 'yes' to the question. 7 students wrote 'yes, of course' or 'definitely yes'. 9 students wrote 'yes' plus some additional comments, e.g., 'yes, it allows me to get used to the English, different accents, idioms, etc.'

In relation to developing speaking skills, the opinions differed. From 27 surveys 21 students replied 'yes', 'rather yes', and 'definitely yes'. 5 students replied 'no' or 'rather not'. Some additional comments were: 'it depends on the recording but certainly it plays a role in developing speaking skills in English', 'yes, I have observed all (memorizing and then using certain phrases, words, observation and imitation of the ways of interacting with the audience, or using presentation techniques observed)', 'when it comes to applying vocabulary, definitely', 'surely it helps me acquire skills to do with successful presentations in a given language, I can assess if a speaker sounds natural or artificial and how I would behave giving a speech like that'.

In relation to spoken interaction skills, 25 responses were obtained to this question in the questionnaires returned by all 27 students. 21 people answered 'yes', 'rather yes' or 'yes and/ but'. 3 people answered 'no'. One answered 'yes and no'. Among those who answered 'yes' there were some additional comments, e.g. 'it is helpful, but not the best solution to develop interaction skills', 'if

the TED is understood by the viewer and interesting to him or her, it surely contributes to a better discussion in English'. One student from among those 3 who thought that discussions around TEDs do not contribute to developing interaction speaking skills wrote: 'not necessarily, I am more interested in translation than discussion'.

Are TEDs inspirational? 23 responses were obtained to this question. 20 students replied 'yes', 'rather yes', 'definitely yes' or 'yes but/ and...'. Nobody answered 'no', there were 3 other answers: 'it depends on the topic and how the presenter presents it', 'in very few cases', 'some of them can be inspiring, mainly it depends on the topic discussed'. Some additional comments of those who believed TEDs were inspirational: 'some of them yes, because I remember them well', 'maybe not all of them, but the majority definitely yes', 'yes, they inspire to reflect'.

24 students answered the question on the use of TEDs in their spare time. 10 answered 'yes', 8 people said 'sometimes'. Comments: 'yes, I have watched TED talks outside of the lessons many times', 'definitely yes, I also watch TED talks in my free time', 'sometimes after watching a TED I search for more information related to the topic online. TEDs are sometimes the topic of my conversations with other students or my friends and family'.

There were more positive reflections overall on the use of TEDs in other lessons than criticisms. The positive comments concerned: making the lessons more varied, e.g., 'there is a plethora of topics, so you can use the TEDs in different lessons', being of use especially in the public speaking classes, e.g., 'most useful in the public speaking lessons in both languages because they additionally show the way of acting while speaking publicly and also the vocabulary', being generally well received, e.g. 'I only have positive experiences'. Criticisms and suggestions: 'often the teachers ask about details that it is hard to get out from a recording of several minutes without previously knowing the questions, thus we do not pay attention to specific things' or 'difficult to watch it in full concentration from the start to finish'.

3.2. Teacher questionnaire results

The results of the teacher questionnaire show that:

- In the teachers' perceptions TED talks are engaging, inspiring and motivating to students, prompting them to listen, watch, discuss and interact with each other, e.g., 'students report on the content of the TED viewed with interest, they engage in a discussion on a TED afterwards, exchange ideas, sometimes disagree', 'I once observed their notes in the collaboration space... they were really engaged, involved, active, it was a moment of great satisfaction for me'.

- TEDs are most useful if incorporated into the lesson in a structured, purposeful way, e.g. 'I use TED talks with all students, as a supplementary resource, every now and then, mainly as part of a listening comprehension exercise, as a basis of conversations, and sometimes to learn additional vocabulary (in which case I specify the sections from which I want the students to learn the vocabulary from)', 'TEDs [as prepared as part of the Keynote course (<https://bre.eltkeynote.com/>)] always follow the same structure, the same pattern, to which the students get used. There is some safety in that', 'I use TEDs to teach phonetics, e.g., the students need to transcribe a section of the speech'.
- TEDs work because they are real, authentic presentations: 'TED talks contain new and relevant language which the students may have learnt but not necessarily heard used in a real context. Therefore, I may use some talks to introduce new concepts and to familiarise the students with the grammar', 'as opposed to the standard listening, the students have to see that, they can pay attention to the speaker, appreciate the presentation, what someone looked like and what someone sounded like, how they involved the audience'.
- TEDs are useful as recordings of speeches given to an audience : 'in some cases I have used at least one talk which is specifically about body language, to assist students in developing their presentation and public speaking skills.'
- TED talks can help the students understand a topic better, e.g., 'where I find TED talks particularly useful is that the speakers are usually talking to a mixed audience and are aware that some people won't be knowledgeable about the subject, so the speakers often explain things well.'
- TED talks' subtitles are well prepared: 'that TED is an international thing is very useful as there are usually professionally prepared subtitles. With many other films, e.g., on YouTube, it is often necessary to use „auto-generated” subtitles, which can be very inaccurate.'

3.3. Summary of results

Summing up, the student perceptions of the TED recordings used in the lessons were predominantly positive. Students believe in the educational value of TEDs and their use in lessons. A number of students stressed that it is the unconventional, relaxed, non-academic tone that they like. Students also believe in their inspirational and motivational value. The professionalism of TED experts was also mentioned. Students appreciate the fact that the TEDs are part of an organized lesson. On the critical side students do not like when TEDs are too long, some find

them boring or repetitive, and sometimes technical issues are reported. However, the positives reported definitely outweighed the negatives mentioned.

The majority of students surveyed believe that the TEDs enhance the development of their listening, speaking and interaction skills. Some students watch TEDs outside of the classroom. Many students value TEDs overall, also when they are used in other classes. Listening to TEDs is valuable because of making it possible during a lesson to listen to different people, both native speakers and non-native speakers, speaking English, with different accents or pronunciation. . One student even preferred listening to non-standard accents as an exercise more valuable than listening to 'perfect' English. A couple of students mentioned the value of hearing the talks in understanding idioms and vocabulary in new contexts, and one mentioned that understanding can be problematic if the topic is difficult.

Three quarters of those who responded believed in the value of TEDs in enhancing speaking skills, although some stressed that this is 'to a lesser extent than ...[developing] listening skills'. Students reported TEDs useful in acquiring public speaking techniques. A few reported remembering specific words and phrases, and also focusing on the problem and the content. The majority also believed that discussions around TEDs help enhance interaction skills, especially if the talk is understandable to the student and the student finds it interesting. Someone observed that the discussions are more with the teacher than with other students, due to the online context, and there would be more student-to-student discussion in a face-to-face context.

Based on the teacher questionnaire, used in lessons TEDs enhance and support the students' listening/ watching comprehension skills, speaking (expressing opinions) and interaction (participating in discussions). TEDs appear to motivate, engage and inspire students, but their use in the lesson needs to be thought-through, and planned with a purpose. If planned well, the TED can help students understand a topic, and learn techniques of presenting and interacting with an audience. TEDs are real-life presentations rather than something staged, and can be used to enhance the learning of subject-specific vocabulary, language and grammar.

On the basis of the findings, the empirical study confirmed the hypothesis

4. Discussion, conclusions and further research

In the following section the findings are discussed based both on the literature reviewed to formulate the hypothesis and additional sources that were reviewed after conducting the study to enrich the interpretation of the results. Ideas for further research are also presented with references to relevant literature.

The participants' answers on the value of discussions around TED confirm the ideas of the communicative approach, based on which, when those learning are engaged in real communication, 'their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used' (British Council & BBC World Service, 2021). TEDs could also be perceived as 'substitutes' for contact with real-language, or perhaps not as substitutes but simply as materials making this contact possible. Thanks to the talks, as students themselves confirmed, there was a possibility of listening to native and non-native speakers of English in the lessons. Such contact is encouraged by the so-called conversational method, of which Komorowska (2009) speaks. Contact with non-native speakers can count as contact with the so-called Global Englishes (Rose, Galloway, 2019).

TEDs also emerged as resources that help students 'systematize' their knowledge, e.g., through discussing a topic. This is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) reflections that language helps conceptualize ideas, based on the socio-constructivist approach.

The value of discussions around TEDs emerged from the questionnaires with both students and their teachers, where the TEDs provided an 'opportunity to interact in the second language...[which is] central to developing second language proficiency' (Ellis, 2008:4).

Many students agreed that TEDs enhance their listening comprehension skills. According to the Natural Approach of Terrell and Krashen, students learn through listening, when the general meaning is clear, mediated by a specific situation (Komorowska, 2009:31). Some students mentioned that they liked the non-academic, relaxed, anecdote-filled form of TEDs, which makes one reflect on the value of TEDs in eliminating the stress or fear connected with speaking later, while discussing the recording. TEDs appear to facilitate the 'comprehensible input' of which Krashen speaks, defined as 'acquisition [which] happens when learners receive understandable messages in the target language, that is, understandable input. There are two forms of language input: listening and reading.' (Krashen, 1982: 20–29 in Patrick, 2019).

Students expressed their liking of different topics and speakers of TED and the variety provided in the lessons thanks to incorporating TEDs in them. This prompts some reflections on learning around meaning, not language, which is what the proponents of the so-called Task-Based Learning agree on, that 'instructed language learning should primarily involve 'natural' or 'naturalistic' language use, based on activities concerned with meaning rather than language' (Swan, 2005: 377).

The premise that TEDs are interesting and inspiring was confirmed. Most students thought TEDs were interesting and inspiring, and also that the lessons with TEDs were more interesting which was also confirmed by the

opinions of the teachers. This appears to confirm the theories of Lindeman (1926) and Knowles (1973) from the field of adult learning and andragogy, that interest, enjoyment and engagement are crucial in adult learning. This can also be interpreted in the context of Komorowska's principles of developing listening comprehension skills, where in Principle 2 Komorowska states that 'the texts should be interesting' (Komorowska, 2009: 186). TEDs could be interpreted as stimuli that 'elicit hence provoke' (Komorowska, 2009: 197) communication, where both image and word can be a stimulus. The fact that students find TEDs not just interesting but inspiring is also significant in the light of the 'compelling input' of which Krashen writes, when 'the input is so interesting you forget that it is in another language' (Krashen, 2013: 1), and further:

'An important conjecture is that listening to or reading compelling stories, watching compelling movies and having conversations with truly fascinating people is not simply another route, another option. It is possible that compelling input is not just optimal: It may be only way we truly acquire language' (Krashen, 2013:2).

It was confirmed that students' presentation skills can be developed thanks to watching TEDs. A number of students said that they liked observing presentation techniques, different ways of talking, interacting with the audience, etc., which confirms Bandura's (1971) theory of learning via modelling behaviour. It is also possible to interpret the results from the perspective of Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development Theory, where one develops and learns from a more skilled individual. Some of the teachers also expressed the value of watching real presentations in TEDs. The authenticity of the TED talks was also valued by students. This is not insignificant, as Richards and Rogers state: 'authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities' (2001: 173).

TEDs emerged as resources that enhance and support learning, mainly through being interesting and varied, through making lessons more interesting and varied, and also by helping develop important oral communication skills. This confirmed the results of research previously conducted by the author (Kozinska, 2013) on various OER, where their availability and the choice of topics and speakers made the resources particularly attractive to potential users. The value of TEDs lies in the fact that they can be used both in a flexible and independent, as well as in a structured way, as part of independent learning and as an element of organized lessons.

As the study was conducted on a relatively small sample, a possible direction for further research could be conducting a larger-scale study or a longitudinal

study on a larger sample of both students and educators, recruited perhaps from different universities or including students of different courses. The study could also be extended to video material other than just TED talks, such as educational videos of the Khan Academy (<https://www.khanacademy.org/>) or various resources on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com>), and focus on cognitive aspects of learning, such as memory. Paivio's (2006) Dual Coding Theory (DCT) could be used to form the hypothesis that learning is enhanced through a combination of visual and aural cues, as cognition entails 'the activity of two distinct subsystems[:] a verbal system specialized for dealing directly with language and a nonverbal (imagery) system specialized for dealing with non-linguistic objects and events' (Paivio, 2006:3). Another possible direction of research could be focusing more on the teacher perspective, perhaps also on the area of professional self-development, linking to the professionalism of teachers, as discussed by Jaworska (2020). Another study could be conducted with a more specific focus on the effectiveness of watching TEDs preceded by various 'techniques preceding listening' (Komorowska, 2009: 177), or on 'techniques after listening' (Komorowska, 2009: 183), both of which were not discussed in detail in this paper. One might consider some form of assessment of the extent to which the skills of listening, speaking and interacting are developed thanks to TEDs, focusing on evaluating 'educational attainment in language education', about which Komorowska (2019: 1) writes. Other methods of enquiry could also be considered, such as a case study of a particular community of learners using TEDs, or perhaps a community of educators, focusing on some reflections on the suitability of methods in researching foreign language teaching and learning, using the insights of Jaroszewska (2020). One could also focus more specifically on one skill, such as on developing speaking skills among students of foreign languages, referring to the research publication of Aleksandrak (2018). As interest is significant, one might further explore some 'interest-enhancing strategies of adolescent EFL learners' (Wisniewska, 2013: 210). One might also consider researching the development of various skills specifically in teaching and learning of Business English.

In conclusion, for the students and educators involved in this study the educational value of TED talks as an online resource which help to develop listening, speaking and interaction skills was confirmed, and therefore their use should continue to be fostered, helping to sustain motivation and engagement among both those learning and those teaching.

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