Investigating the Effectiveness of the BBC and the CNN in Enhancing the Sudanese University Students' Listening Comprehension: A Case Study of Some Sudanese Universities

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the BBC and the CNN in improving the listening comprehension of the Sudanese university students. The descriptive, analytical research approach was adopted. The study sample included 100 students both female and male representing the third- year undergraduate students. The respondents were selected from three Sudanese universities and a college: University of Khartoum, University of Sinnar, University of Al-Neelain and Al-Emarat College. A questionnaire was employed to collect the quantitative data. The findings of the study revealed that the BBC and the CNN could improve the students' listening comprehension by providing authentic pronunciation, native speaker's model and various types of language functions. The findings also suggested that the BBC and the CNN could assist in improving the students' listening comprehension via providing them with both the British and the American varieties of English and involving them in live discussion programmes.

Keywords: functions, undergraduate, native speaker, model, varieties

المستخلص :

هدفت هذه الدراسة الى تقصي تأثير قناتي هيئة التلفزيون البريطاني و شبكة الأخبار الأمريكية في تحسين الفهم الاستماعي لطلاب الجامعات السودانية. لقد نم استخدام منهج البحث الوصفي –التحليلي. تكونت عينة الدراسة ، و البالغ عددها مائة طالبا و طالبة ، من طلاب السنة الثالثة الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كتخصص رئيس تم اختيارهم من ثلاث جامعات سودانية و كلية : جامعة الخرطوم ، و جامعة سنار، و جامعة النيلين ، وكلية الإمارات . تم استخدام استبانة لجمع البيانات الكمية. أشارت نتائج الدراسة إلى أنه يمكن لشبكة ألخبار الأمريكية و هيئة التلفزيون البريطاني من تحسين الفهم الاستماعي لطلاب الجامعات السودانية وذلك لأنهما يزودان الطلاب بالنطق الصحيح، و لهجة الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية الأصليين ، و أنماطا مختلفة من الوظائف اللغوية. و قد أشارت النتائج أيضا إلى أنه يمكن لشبكة الأخبار الأمريكية و هيئة التلفزيون البريطاني من تحسين الفهم الاستماعي للطلاب عبر تزويدهم بالتنوع اللغوي المتعلق باللغتين البريطانية و الأمريكية و اشراكهم في برامج النقاش المباشرة .

كلمات مفتاحية: وظائف ، طلاب البكالريوس ، الناطقون الأصليون بالللغة ، نموذج ، أنواع.

Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) and the CNN (Cable News Network) play an indispensable role in learning and teaching English language. The paramount importance provided by these two channels is attributed to various factors. First, both the BBC and the CNN broadcast in English language which represents the official common of communication to the vast majority of world population. Second, both channels are widely viewed by a number of viewers around the globe because they are transmitted from various satellites such as Nilesat, Arabsat, Hotbird, Galaxy, Eurobird, Astra, Asia sat, Express, etc.

Some of these satellites transmitting the BBC and the CNN are illustrated in the following tables:

Table 1: Some of the satellites transmitting the BBC channel

Satellite	Orbital position	Frequency	Symbol Rate	Polarization	FEC(forward error correction)	Coverage zone
Hotbird	13^0 East	11727	27500	vertical	3/4	The whole of Europe
Intelsat 10	1^0 West	4025	7324	Left	2/3	Africa
Eutelsat8	13^0 East	11727	27500	vertical	3/4	North Africa
Nilesat	7^0 West	11996	27500	Horizontal	3/4	Middle Esat
Telestar 10	76.5^0 East	4124	3255	Vertical	1/2	Far east

Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, 2018

Table 2: Some of the satellites transmitting the CNN channel

Satellite	Orbital position	Frequency	Symbol Rate	Polarization	FEC(forward error correction)	Coverage zone
Astra	19.2 East	11627	22000	Vertical	5/6	Europe
Nilesat	7^0 West	12226	27500	Horizontal	3/4	Middle East
Hispasat	30^0 West	12476	27500	Horizontal	3/4	Spain and south Europe
Hellasat	39^0 East	12688	30000	Vertical	7/8	Middle East
Hotbird	13^0 East	12596	27500	Vertical	3/4	The whole of Europe
Turksat	42° East	12072	27500	Vertical	5/6	Asia and Middle East

Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, 2018

Thus, this wide zone coverage of transmission enables roughly all the people on earth to watch these two channels. The third factor is associated with the variety of English being used in transmission. For instance, the BBC uses the British variety whereas the CNN uses the American variety of English. So, involving the British and American varieties of English gives the viewers insight into learning and teaching English language. The fourth factor is represented in that both channels provide the viewers with authentic real life situations. For examples, viewers can make use of the language of news, live debates, learning programme, films, comedy, language of advertisement, reports, and documentary (Kaiser, 2011). Correspondingly, the importance role that is played by the BBC and the CNN in learning and teaching English is advocated by several researchers across the globe. For instance, Teng (2015) proved that since television provides a full audio-visual stimulation, it attains a high degree of realism.

In the same context, an increasing body of research has argued that TV can extend the language learning horizons concerned. This merit is attainable by showing language being used by several people for a number of different purposes in a wide range of contexts. For instance, people may ask the way to get to somewhere else; or express politeness and apology (Ybarra& Green, 2003). These authentic real life situations are, on the other hand, fundamental to understanding and handling a foreign language. The immediacy and impact of these examples could not be achieved in the pages of a book or within the confines of a classroom.Additionally, several researchers such as Bell (2003) and Chambers (1997) argued that TV assists in memorizing new vocabulary, new structures and language uses. The activities and events featured in such programmes can be made impressive and memorable through visual comedy, animated cartoons or a television series. Despite the merits that have been mentioned earlier, it is argued that satellite channels are possibly encountered by some obstacles in the learning and teaching process.

For instance, the learners are not fully involved in the learning or teaching process since TV does not provide an instant feedback to them.

All the aforementioned factors have driven the researcher to conduct this study to explore the effectiveness of TV (with a particular focus on BBC and CNN) in improving the listening comprehensions of the university students in the context of the Sudan.

Another possible factor for conducting this study is the researcher's own experience in the field of satellites. That is, the researcher has been a satellite technician since 2000. The researcher possesses full knowledge of the satellite reception system. Thus, it is necessary to make the maximum use of this experience in researching this domain.

This study seeks to answer the following question:

1- To what extent can the BBC and the CNN improve the listening comprehension of the Sudanese university students?

Study Hypothesis

1- The BBC and the CNN are expected to improve the listening comprehension of the Sudanese university students by providing them with proper pronunciation, English varieties, packages of language function and native speaker's model.

Literature Review

The literature in this section is addressed in terms of the conceptual framework of listening and the related previous studies conducted on the effectiveness of satellite channels**.**

Part One:

Conceptual Framework

This part addresses the concept of listening, levels of listening, types of listening activities and listening situations.

Listening

Comprehension Listening is defined as the process of identifying and understanding the speech of the speaker of a language. It is the language comprehension that is used frequently. It involves understanding the speaker's accent or pronunciation, speaker's grammar and vocabulary, and comprehension of meaning (Saricoban1999).

Only a good listener can be a good speaker. So, listening comprehension is crucially important that students must acquire. It is a natural behavioral activity in our everyday life. The more we expose to the target language, the more we will be successful to command it.

On the other hand, there is a difference between listening and hearing. When we listen to something, we pay full attention to it. Also we have a purpose for listening, i.e., we listen to something to get information from it. So, this claim is proved by the fact that children acquire their mother tongue language via listening to it. Similarly, learning a foreign language requires listening to it. It is worth mentioning that listening comprehension can be achieved via training and regular practice. Learners can listen to a number of things everyday: music, lectures, news, announcement, weather forecast, dialogues and reports.

Levels of Listening

Recognition

Learners should be assisted to recognize the distinctive sound features represented by different spelling. For example, the difference in vowel and consonant sounds in the following minimal pairs should be clear to them.

Table 3: Difference in vowel sounds

ship	sheep
live	leave
pull	pool

Table 4: Difference in consonant sounds

zoo	Jew
major	measure
sun	sugar

• *Prediction*Prediction is a crucial part of listening comprehension. A good listener will always predict what the speaker is going to say next, So, students should be given an idea about what is going to listen to so that they have insight into the listening material.

Types of Listening Activities In order to help learners develop their listening comprehension, we should give them specific task; otherwise their listening would go unfocussed. The following are some of the tasks that the learners can practice to improve their listening comprehension:

- Listen and recognize
- Listen and write
- Listen and repeat
- Listen and answer
- Listen and decide true or false
- Listen

Furthermore, some scholars such as Berber (1997) and Bell (2003) have suggested some listening situations that are projected in the following:

- Instructions
- Loudspeaker announcement
- Radio and television news
- Talk shows
- Interviews
- Telephone chats
- Group discussion
- Lectures and speeches
- Conversations
- Weather forecast

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Part Two: Review of Previous Related Studies

With regard to the proficiency of television and radio news in foreign language learning, Berber (1997) indicated that these two merits could be achieved via exposure to television and radio which eventually enhance the students' listening comprehension. This was attributed to the fact that TV could provide the viewers with a wide spectrum of language functions and forms. Correspondingly, Bell (2003) proved the pivotal role played by TV news in enhancing the students' listening comprehensions. He found that TV was of paramount importance to enhancing the students' fluency of speech and listening through the use of appropriate pausing, rhythm, intonation, stress, rate of speaking, and the use of interjections and interruptions.

In investigating the effectiveness of listening to TV and radio, Brinton and Ga (1978) argued that listening to TV news could improve the EFL students listening comprehension. This argument was supported by Poon (1992) who found that TV could enhance the listening comprehension of the students because it provided them with native speaker's model projecting in both the British and the American English. As the pedagogical value as concern, Baker (1996) argued that TV news could help the EFL students improve their pronunciation. In addition, Bahrani and Tam (2012) revealed that TV programs could assist the students to improve their listening comprehension as they actively took part in the discussion programs that were presented by the TV channels. In conclusion, it could be said that the previous studies have revealed the usefulness of TV in enhancing the listening comprehension of the students. All the researchers have generally indicated the importance of TV. Nevertheless, the current study has greatly focused on the usefulness of two reputable satellite channels – the BBC and the CNN. This specificity has made this study more distinct compared to the studies that have been reviewed earlier.

Materials and Methods

In the current study, the descriptive, analytic research approach was adopted. The quantitative data were collected via a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 6 items. All the items were associated with the role played by the BBC and the CNN in enhancing the listening comprehension of the Sudanese university students. These items are projected in the following table:

Table 5: Respondents' questionnaire matrix (listening comprehension)

| Item	Variable measured
1	Authentic pronunciation
2	Various language functions and usages
3	Proper use of stress, pitch and intonation
4	Both British and American English varieties are provided
5	Providing the learners with the native speaker's model
6	Participating via phone on debate programmes such as ''Hard Talk''

Furthermore**,** the questionnaire was formulated in accordance with Likert 5-point Scale. Thus, five choices were given. Participants were asked to choose one of the five choices (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree , and strongly disagree) by ticking the box that suits their actual agreement to the item that enhances listening comprehensions. On the other hand, the population of the current study were the Sudanese university students. The sample size was 100 students chosen from various universities. For instance, 25 students were chosen from the Faculty of Arts, Khartoum University. Another 20 students were chosen from the Faculty of Education, Sinnar University. 30 students were chosen from the Faculty of Arts. Al-Neelain University and finally 25 students were chosen from Elemarat College. All the participants were in the third level. They were majoring English. They were all Sudanese. Their ages were between 18 to 20. After ensuring the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, data collection started. Some of the scripts of the questionnaire were completed via emails. Others were completed via whatsApp. What was left of the questionnaire scripts were distributed to students at their university premises. The respondents were given a week to answer the questionnaire questions. After finishing responding to the questionnaire, the scripts were coded and statistically analysed via Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results of the Questionnaire Analysis

With regard to the outputs of the questionnaire analysis, the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) has provided the following figures:
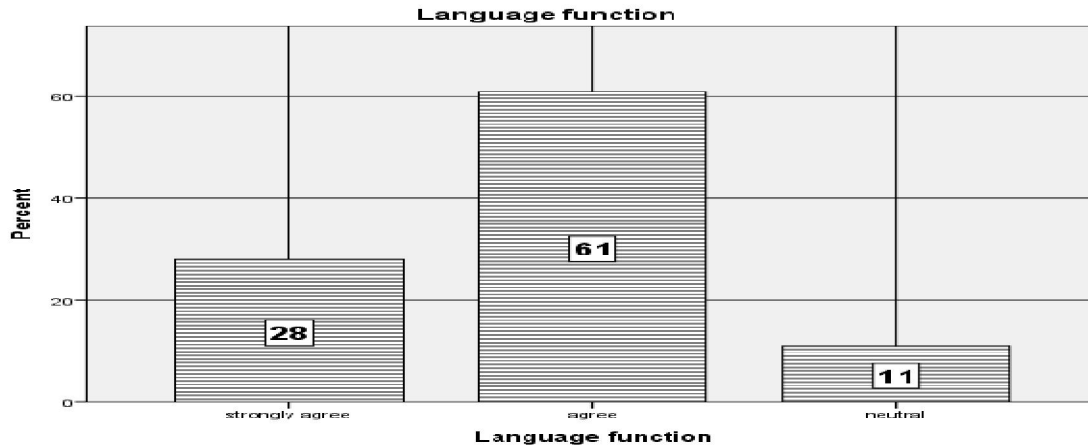
Figure 1: Respondents' reported choice of the variable (authentic pronunciation provided by the BBC and CNN)
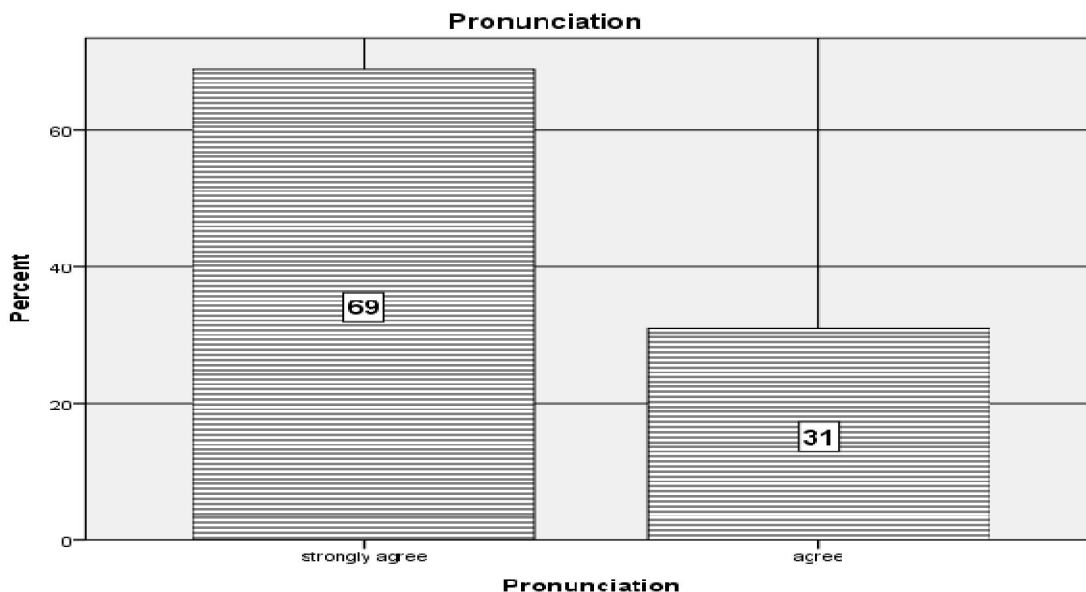
The figure shown above indicates that 69% of the respondents have strongly agreed that the BBC and the CNN can improve the listening comprehension of the students. 31% of the respondents have similarly supported this idea. This shows that all the respondents agree with the claim that both the BBC and the CNN could enhance the students' listening comprehension.
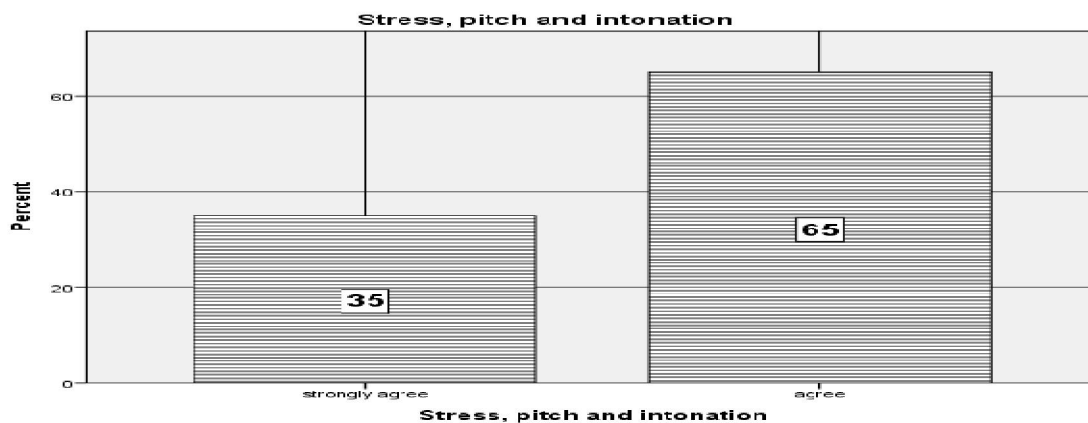
Figure 2: Respondents' reported choice of the variable (the language functions provided by the BBC and the CNN)

It is clear that 28% of the respondents have strongly agreed that both the BBC and the CNN provide the students with a wide range of language functions. This choice is supported by 61% of the respondents. In contrast to this support, 11% of the respondents have remained neutral. This choice indicates that 89% of the respondents are for the claim that the BBC and the CNN are helpful in providing the students with packages of language functions that might improve their listening comprehensions.

Figure 3: Respondents' reported choice of the variable (suprasegmental features provided by the CNN and BBC)

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The figure shown above indicates that 35% of the respondents have strongly agreed that the suprasegemental features presented by the CNN and the BBC are of paramount importance to enhance the students' listening comprehension. This notion is supported by the agreement of 65% of the respondents. So, there is a general consensus among the respondents about the usefulness of the BBC and the CNN in enhancing students' listening comprehension.
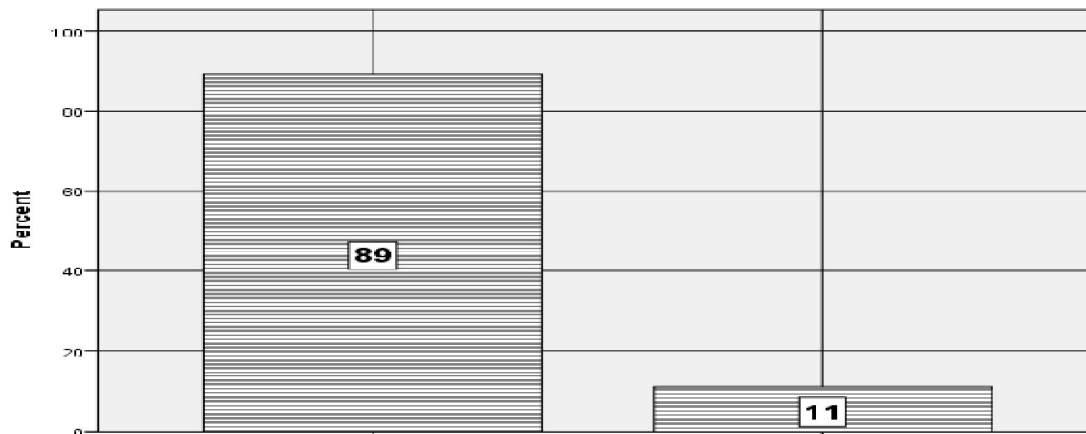
Figure 4: Respondents' reported choice of the variable (language varieties provided by the BBC and the CNN)
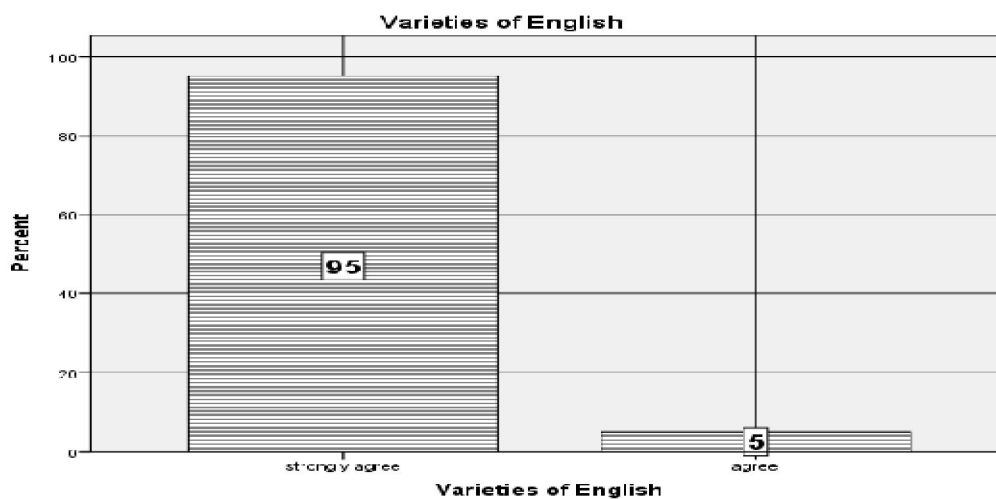
It is obvious that nearly all the respondents have strongly agreed with the central role played by CNN and the BBC in providing students with British and American English. The claim is backed up with 5% of the respondents. Thus, It could be inferred that the BBC and the CNN are indispensable tools to enhancing students' listening comprehensions since they give them insight into English language varieties and use.

Figure 5: Respondents' reported choice of the variable (native speaker's model provided by the CNN and the BBC)

It is clear that 89% of the respondents have strongly agreed that the BBC and the CNN play a pivotal role in enhancing the students' listening comprehension because they provide students with the native speaker's model which might rarely be found at their universities. This claim is supported by the agreement of the 11% of the respondents. So, these statistics reveal that both the CNN and the BBC are instrumental in enhancing the students' listening comprehension.

Figure 6: Respondents' reported choice of the variable (participation in discussion programs presented by the BBC and the CNN)
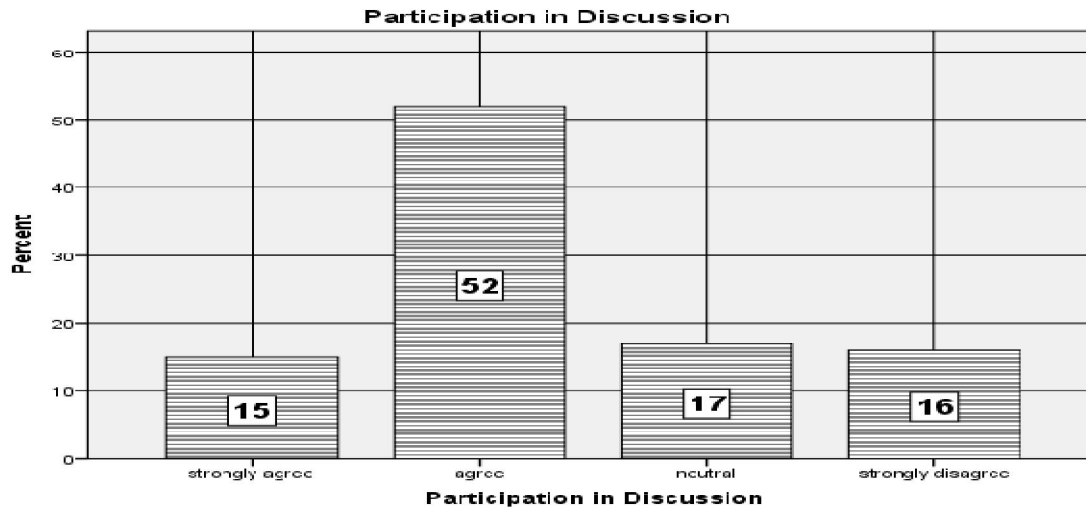
It is clear that 15% of the respondents have strongly agreed with the possibility of enhancing the listening comprehension via participating in the live discussion programs presented by both channels. This claim is supported by the agreement of 52% of the respondents. Adversary, 17% of the respondents have been neutral and 16% have strongly disagreed with this notion. In light of these statistics, it could be inferred that67% , representing the vast majority , have agreed with this claim.

Discussion

The current study aims at exploring the effectiveness of the BBC and the CNN in enhancing the students' listening comprehension. A questionnaire was utilized to explore the respondents' views. So, one hypothesis has been suggested:

- The BBC and the CNN are expected to improve the listening comprehension of the Sudanese university students by providing them with proper pronunciation, English varieties, packages of language function and native speaker's model.

Regarding the hypothesis

(The BBC and the CNN are expected to improve the listening comprehension of the Sudanese university students by providing them with proper pronunciation, English varieties, packages of language function and native speaker's model), the results of the questionnaire have revealed that nearly all the respondents have agreed with this claim. This result could be justified by the fact that the BBC and the CNN are considered as the information landmark for both Britain and America. Thus, these two channels have to present the most refined language which is characterized with the high level of formality. This result is congruent with the results that have been reached by some scholars such as Bell (2003) and Baker (1996). With regard to the substantial role played by both the BBC and the CNN in enhancing the listening comprehension of the students via providing them with a wide range of language functions and forms, 89% of the respondents have agreed with this claim. Only 11% have been neutral. This agreement is attributed to the various news genres presented by the two channels. This result is congruent with the

result of Berber (1997). Providing the students with the British and American English, on the other hand, has remarkably been supported by all the respondents. One major justification for this is that the BBC uses the British English which is believed to be the origin of Englishes spread across the globe, and the CNN uses the American English which has currently become a real rivalry to the British one. The same finding has been reached by Poon (1992). On the other hand, all the respondents have agreed that the BBC and the CNN can provide the students with native speaker's model. This clam is, by definition, logical because both channels employ native speakers from all over the world as news presenters, news reporters or discussion promoters. Similarly, Poon (1992) has backed up this claim. Regarding involving the students in the live discussion programmes presented by both channels, 67% of the respondents have agreed with this idea. However, this claim is strongly rejected by 16% of the respondents. This rejection could be attributed to the lack of respondents' knowledge about the possibility of participating in live discussion programmes via phones, or the respondents do not have any idea about the discussion programmes presented by the two channels. This finding has also been arrived at by Bahrani and Tam (2012).

Verification of the Study Hypothesis

In light of the discussion held above, it could be said that the hypothesis (The BBC and the CNN are expected to improve the listening comprehension of the Sudanese university students by providing them with proper pronunciation, English varieties, packages of language function and native speaker's model) is verified.

This due to the fact that most of the respondents (with exception to 16% who strongly rejected the participation of students in discussion programmes) have unanimously supported the instrumental role played by both the BBC and the CNN in enhancing the students' listening comprehension.

Findings

In light of the data analysis hold above, it is clear that both the BBC and the CNN are capable of enhancing the students' listening comprehension because they provide the students with:

1. authentic pronunciation.
2. Proper use of sound pitch, intonation and stress.
3. native speaker's model.
4. live discussion via phone
5. the American and the British varieties of English.
6. a wide range of language functions and forms

Conclusion

The current study aims at exploring the possible effectiveness of the satellite channels – the BBC and the CNN- in enhancing the Sudanese university students' listening comprehension. The findings have revealed that both the BBC and the CNN are central to enhancing the listening comprehension of the students. In a nutshell, the findings of the present research indicated that various audiovisual technologies can be incorporated in language learning and teaching particularly in countries where the chances of having exposure to social interaction in real contexts are limited or do not exist at all.

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