

THE EFFECTS OF ENGLISH LEARNING MAGAZINES
ON LISTENING AND READING ABILITIES
OF VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL EFL STUDENTS

英語學習雜誌的使用對於高職生

聽讀能力之效益研究

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摘要

本研究旨在探討英語學習雜誌對於高職生聽讀能力之影響，其研究重心在於不同年級學生的學習成效。除了年級的因素之外，本研究更進一步探討其他可能會影響學生利用英語學習雜誌來改善聽讀能力的變因。這些變因包括學生花在雜誌的時間長短、學生的語言學習策略，以及學校英文老師的協助。學生聽力以及閱讀能力的關連性也在研究探討的範圍內。

本研究以 312 位高雄高工電子科的學生為對象。其中一年級的學生有 103 位，二年級的 107 位，三年級的 102 位。三個年級的學生平時皆閱讀相同的英語學習雜誌，並在每個星期二和星期五早上透過學校的廣播系統收聽相同的英語學習節目。然後，所有的受試者必須在六個月的期間內接受三次聽力及閱讀測驗。第一次和第二次測驗在上學期舉行，最後一次測驗在下學期舉行。在第三次測驗結束後，這些學生必須再填寫一份問卷。

本研究結果摘要如下：

1. 英語學習雜誌的使用對於高職生的聽讀能力有正面影響。使用雜誌超過一年的學生在聽力及閱讀的表現上明顯優於使用雜誌不到一年的學生。
2. 收聽英語學習節目的時間長短對學生的聽力無顯著影響。至於閱讀英語雜誌的時間長短對學生的閱讀能力及聽力均有顯著影響。每禮拜花超過半小時閱讀的學生在閱讀及聽力的表現明顯比完全不讀的學生優異。
3. 大部分的學生希望老師在他們收聽完英語學習節目後講解雜誌內容，然而大部分的老師以單字小考的方式協助學生。因此，老師的協助對於學生的聽讀成績並無顯著的影響。此外，表明不需要老師幫助的學生表現得比需要老師協助的學生來得好。
4. 根據學生自我評鑑使用英語學習雜誌的效益，大部分的學生認為英語學習雜誌幫助他們增加單字量，加強閱讀能力，還有瞭解西方文化。
5. 三個年級學生的聽力和閱讀能力均呈現高度的相關性。

總括而言，本研究結果顯示：閱讀英語學習雜誌以及聽英語學習節目有助於高職生加強他們的聽讀能力。因此，老師們應該多鼓勵學生利用這個管道學英文。

關鍵詞：英語學習雜誌、英語學習節目、聽讀能力

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to find out the effects of English learning magazines on listening and reading abilities of vocational high school EFL students, with particular focus on the learning effects of the students in different year levels. In addition to the year level, other important variables likely to influence the improvement of the students' receptive abilities via English learning magazines were also investigated. These variables included the time spent on the magazines, the students' language learning strategies, and the assistance from the school English teachers. At last, the correlation between the students' listening and reading abilities was probed.

A total of 312 students from Department of Electronics, Kaohsiung Municipal Kaohsiung Industrial High School (KSVS) participated in the study. Among them, the number of the first-year students is 103, of the second year is 107, and of the third-year is 102. No matter which year the students were in, all of them were required to study the same copy of English learning magazines, to listen to the English learning programs through the broadcasting system at KSVS every Tuesday and Friday mornings, and then to take three listening and reading achievement tests held during six months. The first two listening and reading tests were conducted in the first semester; the last one was administered in the second semester. After finishing the third test, they were asked to fill in one questionnaire.

The major findings of this study are summarized as follows:

1. The use of English learning magazines had a positive effect on both the listening and reading abilities of the vocational high school students. The students who used the magazines for more than one year outperformed those who used the magazines for less than one year in both listening and reading.
2. The amount of time spent in listening to the English learning programs did not cast a significant influence on the subjects' listening performance. On the other hand, the amount of time spent in reading the English learning magazines produced a telling effect on the subjects' reading and listening performance. Those who read more than 0.5 hour per week scored significantly higher on both listening and reading tests than those who read 0 hour.
3. Most of the students expected their teachers to explain the content of the magazines after listening to the English learning programs, while most of the teachers assisted their students by giving the vocabulary tests. As a result, the teachers' assistance did not exert a discriminatory effect on the subjects' listening and reading scores. Moreover, the students who expressed no need for their teachers' help scored significantly higher than those who expressed the need.
4. According to the subjects' self-evaluation on the effects of using English learning magazines, the use of the English learning magazines helped most of the subjects gain lexical knowledge, improve reading abilities, and understand Western culture.
5. There was a high correlation between the students' listening scores and reading scores in every year level.

To sum up, the results of the study revealed that reading English learning magazines and listening to English learning programs cast beneficial effects on enhancing the vocational high school students' receptive skills. As a result, the teachers should encourage their students to learn English through this channel.

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Key words: English learning magazines; English learning programs; receptive skills

I. INTRODUCTION

Background and Motivation

As English has become one of the essential tools to enhance national competitiveness, helping all the citizens develop English ability takes priority in Taiwan government's language policy (Chang, 2003). The very first item mentioned in the "Challenge 2008— National Development Plan" is to cultivate E-generation talent (The Executive Yuan, 2002). Entrusted by the Ministry of Education (MOE), General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) was constructed by the Language Training & Testing Center (LTTC) in 1999 to "promote life-long learning" as well as to "encourage the general study of English" (LTTC, 2003). According to "Provisional Outline of the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum for Elementary and Junior High Schools" announced by the Ministry of Education, elementary school students in the fifth and sixth grades would start to receive English education from 2001 (Teng, 2003).

With the importance attached to English learning by Taiwan government, the vocational high schools have changed their attitude towards English. In the past, vocational high school students tended to treat English as a secondary subject compared to their major subjects because English competence was not prerequisite for employment as well as for admission to a prestigious technical university. Nowadays, high level of English proficiency benefits the students as much as the specialized skills taught in vocation high schools if they aspire to enter a technical university and get a decent job in the future. The technical universities have shown their preference for senior high school students, who are superior to vocational high school students in English, and have started to admit some senior high school graduates to their schools (Chung, 2003; MOE, 2003; Yang, 2002). In addition, the government has planned to transform vocational high schools into comprehensive high schools in a few years by reducing the subsidies distributed to the former (Peng, 2003). Under such a disadvantageous situation, vocational high schools are pushed to pay more attention to English education; otherwise, vocational high schools may eventually fade into history, just as Yuan Tseh Lee, President of Academia Sinica, predicted (Li, 2003).

With a view to promoting the status of English on campus, the administration in vocational high schools not only increase the time distributed to the basic school subject—English, but also adopt certain English learning magazines as the required outside learning material. It is believed that studying English learning magazines as well as listening to English learning programs will enhance the students' reading and listening abilities. According to my informal survey, several vocational high schools in Southern Taiwan such as Kaohsiung Municipal Kaohsiung Industrial

High School (KSVS), National Tainan Commercial Vocational Senior High School, San Min Vocational High School, and Kaohsiung Vocational High School of Commerce have adopted this English learning mechanism for a few years.

Among a variety of English learning materials, such as newspapers, books, video tapes, and so on, English learning magazines stand out to be chosen as a required outside learning material in high schools. Both Lin (2000) and Pan (2002) pointed out that English learning magazines contained four unique traits which attract the vast users. First, the content of the magazine is divided into small units for daily learning, which not only offers students constant exposure to English every day, but also reduces their learning burden (Pan, 2002). Second, more than one level of the magazines is edited to cater to different levels of users so that it is easier for English teachers to choose the suitable ones for their students (Lin, 2000; Pan, 2002). Take *AMC* (American Magazine Center) for example. The publisher issues four kinds of English learning magazines: *A⁺ English* is ideal for beginners, *English 4 U* for intermediate learners, *Landmark English* for high-intermediate learners, and *English Digest* for advanced learners. Third, the readings or the conversations in the magazines are closely related to students' daily lives and interests, made up of diverse topics ranging from technology, sports, culture, literature, medication, to entertainment (Lin, 2000; Pan, 2002). Last but not least, the appealing layout and the colorful photos put beside the texts not only stimulate students' desire to read along but also facilitate their comprehension of the texts (Pan, 2002).

As a vocational high school English teacher, I think there are two more important reasons that vocational high school English teachers select English learning magazines as their students' outside learning materials. First, the magazine publishers exclusively offer the teachers free test papers based on the content of the magazines. The tests including both the listening and reading parts save the teachers a lot of time preparing the assessment of students' achievement. Second, using English learning magazines is an economical way of learning English. The students at KSVS pay only seventy dollars for a back issue of a monthly magazine, but the benefit is not limited to the magazine itself. Besides reading the texts written by native speakers, students can acquire authentic and comprehensible spoken English by listening to the English learning programs. Through reading aloud after the native teachers or calling them every Sunday, students can also polish their pronunciation and improve oral proficiency. Furthermore, the exercises printed on the magazines or the chatting rooms on the websites provide students with writing practice. In this way, the applications of English learning magazines seem to involve all the four language skills.

Simultaneous presentation of the four language skills in language programs has been a trend to enhance language learners' communicative skills (Brown, 2001; Nunan, 1989; Shi, 2001; Swanson & Marquardt, 1974). But, in this study, I only focus on the effects of English learning magazines

on vocational high school students' listening and reading abilities because the receptive skills have been treated as the foundation of the productive skills (Chastain, 1971; Hadley, 1993; Krashen, 1982; Swaffar & Bacon, 1993). The fact that only the receptive skills are involved in the first stage of GEPT manifests the priority of listening and reading abilities. Moreover, Meyer and Wipf argued that "students can learn to comprehend language more rapidly than they learn to produce it" (as cited in Joiner, 1986, p. 53). The effects of the English learning magazines on students' receptive skills are expected to be more salient than those on their productive skills.

In the present study, I am interested not only in how English learning magazines influence listening and reading abilities of vocational high school students in different year levels, but also in how the students' performance in listening and reading correlate with each other after the use of the magazines. Although listening and reading involve different physical acts (hearing vs. seeing), the receptive skills have much in common (Hadley, 1993; Rost, 1990; Swanson & Marquardt, 1974; Thompson, 1971; Wolvin, 1986). Rost (1990) stated that the same "cognitive strategies" and "linguistic competence" underlined effective reading and listening. Lundsteen (1979) argued that "the two receptive processes of reading and listening should be mutually supportive" (p. 3). Wolvin (1986) concluded that teaching and learning any one of the two skills seemed to affect the other. Hence, the printed English learning magazines with aural-oral presentations aim to enhance students' listening and reading skills at the same time.

Research Questions

1. Are there any differences among the three year groups in listening achievement tests?
2. Are there any differences among the three year groups in reading achievement tests?
3. Does the amount of time the subjects spend in listening to English learning programs and reading English learning magazines affect their scores on the listening achievement tests?
Does the amount of the time the subjects spend in reading English learning magazines affect their scores on the reading achievement tests?
4. What impacts does the assistance from the school English teachers cast on the students' performance on the listening and reading achievement tests?
5. What is the subjects' self-evaluation on the effects of using English learning magazines in terms of ten aspects—listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation, lexical items, grammar, academic grades, Western culture, and interest in English?
6. Is there a significant correlation between the students' scores on the listening achievement tests and those on the reading achievement tests?

II. METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Subjects

The subjects involved in this study include nine classes of students from the Department of Electronics, Kaohsiung Municipal Kaohsiung Industrial High School (KSVS). Among all of the subjects, the number of first-year students is 103; the number of second-year is 107, and the number of third-year is 102. A total of 312 students participated in the study. No matter which year the students are in, they are required to study the same copy of English learning magazine and to listen to the English learning programs through the broadcasting system at KSVS every Tuesday and Friday mornings. That is, the third-year students have been exposed to the English learning magazines for more than two years; the second-year ones, for more than one year; the first-year ones, for a few months.

Instruments

Three types of instruments, including three listening achievement tests, three reading achievement tests, and one questionnaire (see the Appendix), were employed in this study. The first two listening and reading tests were conducted in the first semester; the last one was conducted in the second semester. All of the listening and reading tests were adapted from the test papers constructed by the magazine publishers. The content of these tests were based on that of the magazine. With a view to ensuring test validity, I had my advisor and two English teachers at KSVS validate all of the tests. Besides, test reliability was achieved because only multiple-choice questions were involved in all of the tests.

Procedure

There are eight steps involved in the procedure of the study. First, I prepared the first listening and reading achievement tests based on the content of the magazine. At the same time, I informed the homeroom teachers of the purpose as well as the procedure of the study, and asked for their help with administration of the tests. Second, the first listening and reading achievement tests were not held until the students had listened to and learned those pages. Third, after having students take the first listening and reading achievement tests, I started to construct the second tests. The second listening and reading achievement tests were related to the content of the magazine, too. The fourth step was to administer the second listening and reading achievement tests. Fifth, the third listening and reading achievement tests as well as a questionnaire were designed. Likewise, the third tests were not held until the students had listened to and learned those pages. Sixth, after taking the third listening and reading achievement tests, the subjects were asked to fill out the questionnaires. In order to ease their anxiety, I told them that there were no correct or wrong

answers to the questions on the questionnaire and that the results of the survey which was developed for private research would not influence their academic grades. I gave them fifteen minutes to finish the questionnaire. The seventh step was to grade the test papers and check the subjects' responses on the questionnaires. At last, the data were analyzed with statistical methods.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effects of English Learning Magazines on Listening Ability

Research Question 1: Are there any differences among the three year groups in listening achievement tests?

This section compares the effects of the English learning magazines on listening ability of the subjects in different year levels. I analyzed the subject's total scores of the three listening achievement tests by the year level. One-way ANOVA was applied to see if the differences among the three year groups reached the significant level. If yes, Scheffé post-hoc test was employed to examine the significance of difference between any two groups (see Table 1).

Table 1
Effects of English Learning Magazines on Listening Ability

Groups	n	Mean	SD	F
First-year	103	14.34	5.26	25.173****
Second-year	107	19.72	5.99	
Third-year	102	17.83	5.37	
Post-hoc	Second-year > First-year***			
	Third-year > First-year***			

Note. ****p < .001

As demonstrated in Table 1, the second-year students got the highest mean scores (M = 19.72), the third-year students the second (M = 17.83), and the first-year the lowest (M = 14.34). After one-way ANOVA was used, the differences among the three year groups reached the significant level (F = 25.173, p < .001). Then, the Scheffé post-hoc test was applied. The results reveal that both the third-year and second-year students scored significantly higher than the first-year students (p < .001), but there was no significant difference between the second-year and the third-year

groups.

The findings suggest that the use of the English learning magazines has a positive effect on the listening ability of the vocational high school students. The students who listened to the English learning programs for more than one year did perform better in listening than those who listened to the programs for less than a year. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that the third-year students' listening ability did not steadily go up. Two reasons might account for this phenomenon. First, the second-year students had three 50-minute English classes per week, while the third-year students had two 50-minute English classes per week. As a result, the time allocated to the English learning magazines might be lessened. Second, for the third-year students, preparing for the college entrance exam was the most crucial task at this moment. So they might sacrifice the time and efforts spent on the English learning magazines to study their major subjects such as electronics.

Effects of English Learning Magazines on Reading Ability

Research Question 2: Are there any differences among the three year groups in reading achievement tests?

The effects of the English learning magazines on reading ability among the three year groups will be discussed in this section. The mean scores and the results of one-way ANOVA and the Scheffé post-hoc tests are tabulated in Table 2.

Table 2

Effects of English Learning Magazines on Reading Ability

Groups	n	Mean	SD	F
First-year	103	14.46	5.50	13.185***
Second-year	107	18.23	5.51	
Third-year	102	17.79	6.32	
Post-hoc	Second-year > First-year***			
	Third-year > First-year***			

Note. *** $p < .001$

As demonstrated in Table 2, the mean scores of the first-year, second-year, and third-year students are 14.46, 18.23, and 17.79 respectively. There was a significance difference among the three mean scores ($F = 13.185$, $p < .001$). The Scheffé post-hoc test indicates that the second-year

students scored significantly higher than the first-year students ($p < .001$), and so did the third-year students ($p < .001$). But, there was no significant difference between the second-year and the third-year groups.

The results, which correspond with those in listening ability, support the positive effects of the English learning magazines on the reading ability of the vocational high school students. In other words, the students who read the English learning magazines for more than one year outperformed those who read the magazines for less than a year in reading. As for the nonsignificant difference between the second-year group and the third-year group, the decrease in the hours of English instruction and the shift in the studying goal onto the college entrance exam may well explain it.

The Amount of Time Spent in English Learning Magazines

Research Question 3: Does the amount of time that the subjects spend in listening to English learning programs affect their scores on the listening achievement tests?
Does the amount of time the subjects spend in reading English learning magazines affect their scores on the reading achievement tests?

Oxford (1990) stated that reaching acceptable language proficiency required hundreds or even thousands of hours of practice. Therefore, the subjects' responses to Questions 7 and 8 in the questionnaire, along with their test scores, were computed and analyzed by one-way ANOVA and Scheffé post-hoc to see whether the time factor affects their performance on the tests.

Effects of the Time Spent in Listening to English Learning Programs on Listening

In Question 7, the subjects were asked if they bought a CD-ROM to gain additional exposure to the English learning programs. And the same question also investigated the amount of time the subjects spent in listening to English learning programs through the CD-ROM per week. The percentage is listed in Table 3. The mean scores as well as the results of one-way ANOVA and post-hoc tests are tabulated in Table 4.

Before the discussion about Table 3 is presented, it needs clarifying that I assume that the subjects who did not buy the CD-ROM were unable to get access to the English learning programs outside school. Although it was possible that these students could borrow the CD-ROM from the others, the possibility was low. Based on the observation of the English teachers at KSVS, the reason that most of the students did not want to buy the CD-ROM was that they were reluctant to spare extra time listening to the programs at home. Therefore, they might not bother to borrow the CD-ROM from their classmates.

According to Table 3, 89.4% of the subjects did not buy the CD-ROM for additional listening practice. That is, only when the English learning program was broadcast at KSVS every Tuesday and Friday mornings, one hour in total per week, did the majority of the subjects listen to it. Therefore, the total listening time spent by those who did not buy the CD-ROM was around an hour

per week. Among the rest of the subjects, who bought the CD-ROM, 4.5% of them never listened to the CD-ROM they bought, so their listening time was one hour per week as well. As for the subjects who bought CD-ROM and listened to it, 3.2% of them spent no more than half hour every week at home, which means that their total listening time per week was no more than 1.5 hour. Last, 2.9% of the subjects spent more than 0.5 hour a week listening to the CD-ROM. In other words, they spent more than 1.5 hour every week listening to the English learning programs.

Table 3

The Amount of Time Spent in Listening to English Learning Programs Per Week

Groups	Amount of time		Total time ^b	n	%
	School	Home			
Not buy the CD-ROM	1 hr	0 hr	1 hr	279	89.4
Never listen to the CD-ROM	1 hr	0 hr	1 hr	14	4.5
Listen to the CD-ROM within 0.5 hour	1 hr	< 0.5 hr	< 1.5 hr	10	3.2
Listen to the CD-ROM over 0.5 hour ^a	1 hr	> 0.5 hr	> 1.5 hr	9	2.9

Note. ^aFive subgroups (over 0.5 hour, but within 1 hour; over 1 hour, but within 2 hours; over 2 hours, but within 3 hours; over 3 hours, but within 4 hours; over 4 hours) make up of this group because the sample size of each subgroup is too small (n = 1~ 4).

^bTotal time includes the time the subjects spent listening to the programs at school through the broadcast system as well as at home through the CD-ROM.

The above-mentioned statistical figures reveal that the majority of the students (89.4% + 4.5% = 93.9%) did not develop a habit of listening to English outside the school, which was consonant with Lin's (2000), Chen's (2002), and Huang's (2004) findings. Lin (2000) discovered that 55.4% of the subjects listened to the English learning programs only when they had free time, which implied that most of her subjects were not active in training listening abilities by the programs. Chen (2002) reported that only 2.9% of the subjects in the low proficiency group, 1.8% in the middle proficiency group, and 19.6% in the high proficiency group spent more than 1.5 hours per week listening to English. That is, most of the students did not spend sufficient time listening to English on their own. According to Huang's (2004) investigations into the listening frequency of 118 students in Chung-Cheng Senior Higher School, she found that 20% of the students did not form the habit of listening to the English learning programs and 35% of them did not have fixed time for listening to the programs. It is concluded that most of the senior high school students in Taiwan do not make it a rule to listen to the English learning programs at home.

Although it is hypothesized that the more time the subjects spent in listening to the English

learning programs, the higher scores they would get in the listening exams, Table 4 demonstrated that the mean scores did not become higher with the increase of the time spent on listening. After tested by one-way ANOVA, the mean scores of the four groups showed no significant difference. The possible reason for the non-significant results may be that those who bought the CD-ROM did not listen to it often enough to result in significantly high scores. In addition, as Table 4 shows, the sample size in the group of listening to the CD-ROM within 0.5 hour ($n = 10$) and in the group of listening to the CD-ROM over 0.5 hour ($n = 9$) was too small to make any statistical difference.

Table 4

Effects of the Time Spent in Listening to English Learning Programs on Listening Ability

Groups	n	Mean	SD	F
Not buy the CD-ROM	279	17.16	5.85	1.311
Never listen to the CD-ROM	14	20.07	6.38	
Listen to the CD-ROM within 0.5 hour	10	18.80	7.30	
Listen to the CD-ROM over 0.5 hour	9	16.56	7.47	

Effects of the Time Spent in Reading English Learning Magazines on Reading

From Question 8, the subjects' frequency in reading the English learning magazines was found. The subjects' responses to Question 8 as well as the reading scores were analyzed by one-way ANOVA and post-hoc test (see Table 5).

Although over one-third of the subjects (39.7%) admitted never reading the English learning magazines at all, 33% of them had the habit of reading the magazines no more than 0.5 hour per week and 27.3% of them spent more than 0.5 hour per week in reading the magazines (see Table 5). That is, more than half of the subjects spared time reading the English learning magazines after class. This may result from the fact that the school English teachers would test the vocabulary, phrases, and the readings contained in the magazines in every monthly exam. The motivation chosen by most of the subjects, "Prepare for the school tests," just supports the speculation.

Concerning the effects of the reading time on the subjects' reading performance, Table 5 manifests an affirmative answer: the mean scores increase with the reading time added. Those who read the magazines more than 0.5 hour per week got the highest scores ($M = 18.65$), those who read no more than 0.5 hour the second ($M = 17.12$), and those who did not read at all the lowest ($M = 15.39$). Besides, the differences among the three groups' mean scores reached the significant level ($F = 7.931, p \leq .001$). The Scheffé post-hoc test further indicates that only the subjects who

spent more than 0.5 hour every week reading the English learning magazines performed significantly better in reading than those who did not spend any time on it ($p \leq .001$). This suggests that spending more than 0.5 hour per week reading the English learning magazines is good for enhancing the vocational high school students' reading abilities.

Table 5

Effects of the Time Spent in Reading English Learning Magazines on Reading Ability

Groups	n	%	Mean	SD	F
Read 0 hour	124	39.7	15.39	5.58	7.931***
Read within 0.5 hour	103	33.0	17.12	5.28	
Read over 0.5 hour ^a	85	27.3	18.65	6.88	
Post-hoc	Read over 0.5 hour > Read 0 hour***				

Note. The subjects were grouped on the basis of the time spent in reading English learning magazines per week.

^aFive subgroups (over 0.5 hours, but within 1 hour; over 1 hour, but within 2 hours; over 2 hours, but within 3 hours; over 3 hours, but within 4 hours; over 4 hours) make up of this group because 63.5% of the 85 subjects fall in the subgroup of "over 0.5 hours, but within 1 hour."

*** $p \leq .001$

Table 6

Effects of the Time Spent in Reading English Learning Magazines on Listening Ability

Groups	n	%	Mean	SD	F
Read 0 hour	124	39.7	15.98	5.65	7.100***
Read within 0.5 hour	103	33.0	17.50	5.20	
Read over 0.5 hour	85	27.3	19.08	6.85	
Post-hoc	Read over 0.5 hour > Read 0 hour***				

Note. *** $p \leq .001$

As for the relationship between reading time and listening scores, it is surprising to find that the more time the subjects spent in reading the magazines, the better they performed in the listening tests (see Table 6). The mean scores of the three groups were significantly different as tested by one-way ANOVA ($F = 7.100, p \leq .001$). The Scheffé post-hoc test verified the significant

difference between the group of reading more than 0.5 hour and that of reading 0 hour ($p \leq .001$), which implied that reading more than 0.5 hour per week produced a telling influence on the vocational high school students' listening abilities. The findings in Table 5 and Table 6 were in agreement with Juel's (1988) that the more frequent reading experience helped the students improve both their reading and listening proficiency. To sum up, spending sufficient time reading the English learning magazines made a great impact on the students' reading as well as listening abilities.

The Assistance from the School English Teachers

Research Question 4: What impacts does the assistance from the school English teachers cast on the students' performance on the listening and reading achievement tests?

English learning magazines have been viewed as learning materials that can be learned by students on their own, for the recorded English learning programs are provided to help students understand the content of the magazines. However, both Lin's (2000) and Huang's (2004) findings showed that the students needed their teachers' assistance to make learning English by the magazines more effective. Consequently, Question 9 in the questionnaire asked about whether the subjects needed the assistance from the school teachers, and what kinds of assistance they needed the most. Question 10 investigated if the subjects had received the assistance from their English teachers at KSVS, and what kinds of assistance they were. The subjects' responses to the two questions are compared and listed in Tables 7, 8, and 9.

Table 7

The Number of the Subjects Who Needed Their Teachers' Help and Who Had Received It

		First-year		Second-year		Third-year		Total		χ^2
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Need help	Yes	70	22.4	59	18.9	40	12.8	169	54.2	
	No	33	10.6	48	15.4	62	19.9	143	45.8	
Receive help	Yes	73	23.4	70	22.4	53	17.0	196	62.8	8.320*
	No	30	9.6	37	11.9	49	15.7	116	37.2	

Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

As Table 7 indicates, over half of the subjects (54.2%) thought that the school English teachers' help was necessary for them to comprehend the content of the English learning magazines.

Among them, 22.4% were the first-year students, 18.9% the second-year, and 12.8% the third-year. The chi-square results suggest that there was a significant difference among the three year groups ($\chi^2 = 17.119, p < .001$). That is, as the subjects' year level increased, the demand for help from the school teachers was diminishing. The decreasing dependence on the teachers with the year level increasing may not be beyond expectation, since the upper-year students had used the magazines for a longer time. They not only got used to this English learning mechanism but also gradually improved their English proficiency through it. Naturally, they relied not so much on their teachers' assistance, but on their own linguistic competence and background knowledge to comprehend the content of the magazines.

In addition that the subjects' demand for their teachers' help decreased as their year level increased, Table 7 also shows that there was a linear decline with the increase of year level in the percentage of those who had been assisted (23.4% of the first-year, 22.4% of the second-year, and 17% of the third-year). The chi-square test reveals that the difference among the three year groups also reached the significant level ($\chi^2 = 8.32, p < .05$). In short, the help the subjects had actually received was reduced with the increase of year level. However, no matter which year level the subjects were in, the number of those who had received their teachers' assistance was larger than that of those who needed it. This means that the students at KSVS had got more assistance from their teachers than they actually asked for.

The discrepancy between the percentage of "need help" and that of "receive help" may not imply that the teachers should desperately lessen their assistance, especially for those upper-year students, because they seemed competent enough to understand the magazines. Instead, the teachers were supposed to take the students' real needs into consideration. As shown in Table 8, the kinds of assistance the teachers often offered did not go well with those of assistance the students expected to have. More than half of the subjects (66.5%) hoped that their teachers would explain the content of the magazines after listening to the English learning programs, whereas only about one third of them (35.2 %) had received this kind of assistance. The contrastive figures suggest that the English learning programs may not be comprehensible enough for the students, and the English learning magazines may be beyond their proficiency level. Therefore, they needed their teachers' illustrations even after they had received instruction in both English and Chinese from the programs.

Besides, the students' expectation of their teachers' assistance may also be caused by the students' inattentiveness while they were listening to the programs. Underwood (1989) argued that even the shortest break in attention could severely hinder listening comprehension. According to the subjects' responses to Q 6.3 in the questionnaire, 67.5 % of the subjects admitted that they seldom concentrated on the programs while the programs were broadcast at school. As a result,

they had to resort to their teachers' help. Nevertheless, as Huang (2004) pointed out, the tight teaching schedule hardly allowed the English teachers to teach the English learning magazines explicitly in class. What the teachers could do was give their students a large number of tests to make sure that the students would study the magazines or listen to the programs. After all, the test as a means of motivating students to learn better would work with many of them (Mersand, 1958). Based on Table 8, the vocabulary tests were the kind of assistance that the majority of the subjects (66.3%) had received from their teachers even though only 38.8% of the subjects expressed the need for it.

Table 8
The Kinds of English Teachers' Assistance Needed and Received

Assistance from school English teachers	Needed		Received	
	n	%	n	%
Test the vocabulary	66	38.8	128	66.3
Test the texts	29	17.1	47	24.4
Explain the content of the magazine before listening to the program	67	39.4	11	5.7
Explain the content of the magazine during the program	40	23.5	12	6.2
Explain the content of the magazine after listening to the program	113	66.5	68	35.2
Replaying the program	36	21.2	4	2.1

Note. The subjects were allowed to choose more than one answer to this question.

As far as the effects of the school English teachers' assistance on listening and reading are concerned, Table 9 demonstrates that the subjects who needed their teachers' help scored lower in both listening and reading tests than those who did not. The differences of means both in listening and in reading reached the significant level, but the difference was more significant in listening ($p < .01$) than in reading ($p < .05$). The results may imply that those who expressed no need for their teachers' assistance might either have higher proficiency or might actively resort to the English learning programs for explicit illustrations. On account of the regular listening training, they

performed significantly better in both listening and reading than those who paid little attention to the programs but waited for their teachers' instruction.

According to Table 9, the difference between the mean scores of the subjects who had received help and those of the subjects who had not did not reach the significant level. In other words, the teachers' assistance which the subjects had received did not make a difference in their listening and reading performance. The nonsignificant effects of the teachers' assistance were probably related to what was revealed in Table 8: most of the school English teachers at KSVS tended to assist their students by testing the vocabulary. Hadley (1993) stated that comprehensible input did not equate with recognition and recall of vocabulary. He further pointed out that "other factors such as topic familiarity, listener or reader focus, and cognitive strategies also play a decisive role in rendering a text comprehensible" (p. 145). That is to say, vocabulary is not the only factor that influences listening and reading comprehension. As Berne's (1995) findings showed, "studying a vocabulary list prior to listening may not be a particularly effective means of improving listening comprehension performance" (p. 324). Huang (2004) found in her study that the vocabulary tests did not improve the students' listening and reading abilities, but highlighted the importance of memorizing the vocabulary. To sum up, teachers should try to understand their students' weaknesses and offer the appropriate assistance. The vocabulary tests are not adequate in improving students' listening and reading abilities.

Table 9

Effects of School English Teachers' Assistance on Listening and Reading Scores

		Listening Score				Reading Score		
		n	Mean	SD	t	Mean	SD	t
Need help	Yes	169	16.44	5.12	-2.869**	16.22	5.40	-1.997*
	No	143	18.37	6.73		17.58	6.58	
Receive help	Yes	196	17.06	5.86	-1.020	16.57	5.80	-1.051
	No	116	17.78	6.18		17.31	6.33	

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Subjects' Self-evaluation on the Effects of Using English Learning Magazines

Research Question 5: What is the subjects' self-evaluation on the effects of using English learning magazines in terms of ten aspects—listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation, lexical items, grammar, academic grades, Western culture, and interest in English?

Oxford (1990) included "evaluating your learning" as one category of metacognitive strategies and considered self-evaluation an essential factor for successful language learning. Hence, this section aims to investigate how the subjects evaluated the effects of learning English by the English learning magazines based on ten aspects—listening (Q15.1), speaking, (Q15.2), reading (Q15.3), writing (Q15.4), pronunciation (Q15.5), lexical items (Q15.6), grammar (Q15.7), academic grades (Q15.8), Western culture (Q15.9), and interest in English (Q15.10). The quantitative data are demonstrated in Table 10.

Table 10

The Subjects' Self-evaluation of the Effects of Using English Learning Magazines

Q	R		SA		A		N		D		SD	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Q15.1 (listening)	18	5.8	102	32.7	143	45.8	28	9.0	21	6.7		
Q15.2 (speaking)	11	3.5	63	20.2	171	54.8	43	13.8	24	7.7		
Q15.3 (reading)	21	6.7	130	41.7	115	36.9	24	7.7	22	7.1		
Q15.4 (writing)	9	2.9	45	14.4	165	52.9	58	18.6	35	11.2		
Q15.5 (pronunciation)	20	6.4	93	29.8	148	47.4	24	7.7	27	8.7		
Q15.6 (lexis)	61	19.6	171	54.8	63	20.2	11	3.5	6	1.9		
Q15.7 (grammar)	16	5.1	83	26.6	153	49.0	36	11.5	24	7.7		
Q15.8 (grades)	10	3.2	41	13.1	170	54.5	54	17.3	37	11.9		
Q15.9 (culture)	35	11.2	115	36.9	115	36.9	28	9.0	19	6.1		
Q15.10 (interest)	20	6.4	63	20.2	153	49.0	42	13.5	34	10.9		

Note. Q = questions, R = responses

SA = strongly agree, A = agree, N = neutral, D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree

Presented from the highest percentage to the lowest, the figures from Q15.1 to Q15.4 in Table 10 show that among the four language skills around half of the subjects (6.7%+ 41.7%= 48.4%) agreed their reading abilities improved after using the English learning magazines, over one-third of them (5.8%+ 32.7%= 38.5%) recognized their improvement in listening, and 23.7% (3.5%+ 20.2%= 23.7%) as well as 17.3% (2.9%+ 14.4%= 17.3%) agreed that they benefited from the magazines in terms of speaking and writing respectively. In a word, more subjects thought that

using the magazines improved their receptive skills than those who recognized their improvement in productive skills. The finding may result from the fact that the oral practice and the writing exercises provided in the magazines were limited, while the subjects could be exposed to a large amount of aural and written input by listening to the programs and reading the magazines. In terms of the receptive skills, more subjects perceived their improvement in reading than in listening. This is probably because the subjects had more confidence in their reading abilities than in their listening abilities. Although the use of the English learning magazines had a positive effect on their listening ability (see Table 1), fewer subjects perceived it.

Based on Q15.5, 36.2% (6.4%+ 29.8%) of the subjects agreed that their English pronunciation had improved, probably because of the constant exposure to the native accent via the English learning programs. As for Q15.6 and Q15.7, as high as 74.4% (19.6%+ 54.8%) of the subjects acknowledged gains in lexical knowledge, while about one third of the subjects (5.1%+ 26.6%= 31.7%) were aware of increasing grammatical knowledge. The subjects' responses to these two questions were much related to the assistance they got from their teachers (see Table 8). Because the English teachers at KSVS often tested their students the vocabulary appearing in the magazines, the students noted the importance of the lexical items and found themselves memorizing more words and phrases. As far as the subjects' academic grades (Q15.8) are concerned, only 16.3% (3.2%+ 13.1%) of the subjects thought that they got higher scores in English in the monthly exams. The low percentage is probably caused by the fact that only 10% to 15% of the test items in the monthly exam were given based on the magazines; the rest of the test items were associated with the lessons in the textbooks. Therefore, the subjects could not depend on the magazines only to get better academic grades.

According to Q15.9, almost half of the subjects (11.2%+ 36.9%= 48.1%) agreed that they understood Western culture more due to the use of the magazines. Brown (2000) argued that second language learning involved the acquisition of second culture. It is pleasant news to find the subjects acquiring the language as well as the culture in the meantime. However, it is a pity to discover that using the magazines did not raise the subjects' interest in English much. Based on Q15.10, 24.4% (13.5%+ 10.9%) of the subjects disagreed that they were more interested in English although almost the same percentage of the subjects (6.4%+ 20.2%= 26.6%) agreed to it.

To sum up, the use of the English learning magazines helped most of the subjects gain lexical knowledge, improve reading abilities, and understand Western culture. However, it cannot be ignored that for each question some subjects chose "neutral" instead of expressing a definite response. Oxford (1990) observed that foreign language students often failed to accurately evaluate their progress. Obviously, the students at KSVS need to learn to evaluate their own progress in English.

Correlation Between Listening and Reading

Research Question 6: Is there a significant correlation between the students' scores on the listening achievement tests and those on the reading achievement tests?

As mentioned in Part I, listening and reading have a lot in common. A cluster of specific abilities needed in a listening task are also required in a reading task (Lundsteen, 1979; Rost, 1990; Ruddell, 1966; Thompson, 1996). Thus, in this section Pearson Correlation was adopted to test whether the subjects' listening scores correlated with their reading scores (see Table 11).

The results in Table 11 show that there was a high correlation between the students' listening scores and reading scores in every year level. The correlation result for each cell revealed a significant level ($p < .001$), which means that the subject who performed well in the listening tests did well in the reading tests, and vice versa. The findings correspond with Thompson's (1996) and Lin's (2003). Thompson (2001) recognized a high correlation between listening comprehension and reading comprehension for the early school pupils. Lin (2003), recruiting 83 senior high school students, 81 college students, and 97 graduate students as her subjects, found a significant correlation between each group's listening and reading performance. In conclusion, learning English via the two learning channels—the English learning magazines and the English learning programs—is an economical way to enhance EFL students' receptive skills at the same time, because the improvement of one skill strongly influences that of the other.

Table 11

The Correlation Between the Listening Scores and the Reading Scores

RS \ LS	First-year	Second-year	Third-year	All
First-year	.632***	-----	-----	-----
Second-year	-----	.621***	-----	-----
Third-year	-----	-----	.654***	-----
All	-----	-----	-----	.665***

Note. LS = listening scores, RS = reading scores

*** $p < .001$

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the present study have been presented and discussed in detail in Part III. In this section, the major findings will be summarized in terms of the following five aspects based on the eight research questions addressed in Part I.

First, the study finds that the use of English learning magazines had a positive effect on both the listening and reading abilities of the vocational high school students. The students who used the magazines for more than one year outperformed those who used the magazines for less than one year in both listening and reading.

Second, with regard to the effects of the amount of time spent in listening to English learning programs on listening, the differences did not reach a significant level. This may be because the majority of the subjects listened to the program only when it was broadcast at school. Most of them did not cultivate the habit of listening to the programs at home. On the other hand, the results show that more than half of the students spared time reading the magazines after class. Therefore, the amount of time spent in reading English learning magazines produced a significant effect on the subjects' receptive abilities. It is found that spending more than 0.5 hour per week reading the magazines was helpful for enhancing the students' reading ability as well as listening ability.

Third, as far as the effects of the school English teachers' assistance is concerned, the results demonstrate that most of the students expected their teachers to explain the content of the magazines after listening to the English learning programs. This need may be caused by the students' low English proficiency and inattentiveness to listening to the programs broadcast at school. Therefore, it is understandable that those who needed their teachers' help scored significantly lower in both listening and reading achievement tests than those who did not. Despite the students' expectation of their teachers' illustrations, most of the teachers assisted their students by giving the vocabulary tests. The findings of the present study suggest that this kind of assistance did not make a difference in their students' listening and reading performances. Several researchers (Berne, 1995; Hadley, 1993; Huang, 2004) revealed that vocabulary tests were inadequate in improving students' listening and reading abilities.

Four, according to the subjects' self-evaluation of the effects of using English learning magazines, the use of the English learning magazines helped most of the subjects gain lexical knowledge, improve reading abilities, and understand Western culture.

Finally, via Pearson Correlation analysis, there was a high correlation between the students' listening scores and reading scores in every year level. That is, those who did well on the listening tests got high grades in the reading tests, and vice versa. Therefore, learning English through the English learning magazines and the English learning programs is an economical learning channel to strengthen EFL students' receptive skills simultaneously.

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Appendix

The Questionnaire on the Use of the English Learning Magazines

英語學習雜誌 English 4 U 使用現況調查問卷

親愛的同學：

這是一份關於英語學習雜誌的研究，其目的在於瞭解雄工學生利用英語學習雜誌 English 4 U 之現況，以作為日後改進英語教學的參考。你的答案僅供學術研究之用，無所謂對錯，也不會影響你在校的成績。請你依據實際的情況「誠實地」回答每一個問題。非常感謝你的合作。

作答說明：請就每一個問題所列的選項中，勾選最合適的答案，若勾選「其他」，請在劃線處填寫你的答案，除了標明「可複選」的題目外，一律為單選題。**每題都要作答，請勿漏答。**

年級：_____ 班級：_____ 姓名：_____ 座號：_____

第一部分：英語學習背景

1. 你認為英文**聽、說、讀、寫**四項能力的**重要性**為何？從最重要的排到最不重要的。

_____ > _____ > _____ > _____

2. 你在英文**聽、說、讀、寫**的**能力**為何？從最好的排到最差的。

_____ > _____ > _____ > _____

3. 除了學校老師規定，你使用英語學習雜誌的動機為何？（可複選）

- 對學習英語有興趣 對雜誌內容有興趣 為加強英語聽力 為加強英語閱讀能力
為應付學校考試 為升大學所需 為通過全民英檢 為吸收新資訊 純粹消遣
其他 _____

4. **國中時**，你是否使用過英語學習雜誌？

- 是 否（若勾「否」，請跳至第二部分）

如果勾「是」，你**國中時**使用過哪些英語學習雜誌？（可複選）

- 大家說英語 Live ABC 初學空中美語 EZ Basic
其他 _____

第二部分：英語學習雜誌 English 4 U 使用現況

5. 你是否知道雄工在每個星期二、星期五早自修均會播放英語學習雜誌的廣播節目？

- 是 否

總是 通常 有時候 從未

6. 在教室聽廣播節目的概況。

- (1) 你記得在星期二、星期五早上收聽廣播
- (2) 收聽廣播的時候，你會記得帶雜誌
- (3) 收聽廣播節目的時候，你會專心聽講，不做別的事
- (4) 星期二、星期五早自修時，你的導師會陪同你們收聽廣播
- (5) 收聽廣播時，或廣播結束後，你的導師會跟你們
講解雜誌或廣播內容
- (6) 在廣播結束後，你的導師會立刻幫你們小考雜誌內容

7. 你是否有另外購買一片 30 元的雜誌廣播節目 CD-ROM / MP3?

是 否 (若勾「否」，請跳至第 8 題)

如果勾「是」，你**平常**從 CD-ROM / MP3 **收聽**雜誌廣播節目的頻率為何？

- 從來沒聽過 一週 1/2 小時以內 一週超過 1/2 小時至 1 小時以內
- 一週超過 1 小時至 2 小時以內 一週超過 2 小時至 3 小時以內
- 一週超過 3 小時至 4 小時以內 一週超過 4 小時

8. 你**平常**閱讀英語學習雜誌的頻率為何？

- 完全不讀 一週 1/2 小時以內 一週超過 1/2 小時至 1 小時以內
- 一週超過 1 小時至 2 小時以內 一週超過 2 小時至 3 小時以內
- 一週超過 3 小時至 4 小時以內 一週超過 4 小時

第三部份：學校英文老師的協助

9. 你是否需要**學校英文老師**協助你瞭解英語學習雜誌的內容？

是 否 (若勾「否」，請跳至第 10 題)

如果勾「是」，你需要**學校英文老師**提供哪方面的協助？(勾選三個最需要的協助)

- 定期小考單字 定期小考雜誌課文 收聽雜誌廣播節目之前，先講解雜誌內容
- 收聽時，當場講解雜誌內容 收聽後，課堂上講解雜誌內容
- 課堂上重新播放雜誌廣播節目 其他 _____

10. 現在或以前曾教過你的**雄工**英文老師是否有提供以上的協助？

是 否 (若勾「否」，請跳至第四部分作答)

如果勾「是」，有哪些？(可複選)

- 定期小考單字 定期小考雜誌課文 收聽雜誌廣播節目之前，先講解雜誌內容
- 收聽時，當場講解雜誌內容 收聽後，課堂上講解雜誌內容
- 課堂上重新播放雜誌廣播節目 其他 _____

第四部份：英語學習雜誌 English 4 U 使用策略

11. 你**收聽**雜誌講解「**之前**」，是否會**先預習**雜誌內容？
是 否 (若勾「否」，請跳至第 12 題)
如果勾「是」，你會閱讀哪些部份？(可複選)
看單字 看單字例句 看英文本文 看文章翻譯 看圖片或照片 其他 _____
12. 你**收聽**雜誌講解「**之後**」(包括考試前)，是否會**複習**雜誌內容？
是 否 (若勾「否」，請跳至第 13 題)
如果勾「是」，你會閱讀哪些部份？(可複選)
看單字 看單字例句 看英文本文 看文章翻譯 看圖片或照片
只看聽不懂的地方 其他 _____
13. 你若**聽**到不懂的地方，你會如何解決？(勾選三個最常用的方式)
不管它 查看雜誌英文課文 查看雜誌課文翻譯 查字典 等中文講解
聽上下文判斷 請教別人 其他 _____
14. 你若**讀**到不懂的地方，你會如何解決？(勾選三個最常用的方式)
不管它 聽雜誌廣播節目講解 看課文翻譯 查字典 看上下文判斷 請教別人
其他 _____

第五部份：英語學習雜誌使用成效

15. 你覺得使用英語學習雜誌對你在英語能力上有何幫助？
- | | 非常同意 | 同意 | 不確定 | 不同意 | 非常不同意 |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| (1) 我的英語聽力有進步 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (2) 我的英語口語能力有進步 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (3) 我的英語閱讀能力有進步 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (4) 我的英語寫作能力有進步 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (5) 我的英文發音有進步 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (6) 我認識更多英文單字和片語 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (7) 我的英文文法知識有進步 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (8) 我的段考成績有進步 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (9) 我對英美文化有進一步的了解 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (10)我對英文比較有興趣了 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

☺ 謝謝你的合作 ☺