

The Effect of Pre-Listening Activities on Listening Comprehension of EFL Learners

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Abstract

In many language classrooms, teaching listening receives the least attention. In the current digital era, listening comprehension is essential for both effective learning and communication. According to studies, pre-listening activities can have a substantial impact on the development of listening comprehension abilities in EFL learners. This article examines the impact of pre-listening activities on listening comprehension. For this quantitative study, 20 students with the same proficiency level were randomly selected from a population of 40 female high school students in Zabol. Random sampling was used in the study. Students in both experimental and control groups participated in a listening pre-test. Over the course of twelve sessions, the control group received no pre-listening activities as part of the instruction, while the experimental group received pre-listening activities as part of the instruction. During the treatment period, both groups were administered a listening post-test. A paired samples t-test was used to assess if there was a statistically significant difference between the participants' pre- and post-test means. The data and conclusions were analyzed using SPSS version 27.0 software for this purpose. The study's findings, which show that the learning processes of the experimental and control groups were significantly different, imply that the treatment was effective.

Key Words: Pre-listening Activities, Listening Comprehension

1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, English has become the predominant language for international communication and serves as the gateway to global knowledge, culture, and technology. Although English does not boast the largest number of native speakers, it is utilized in more regions worldwide than any other language. (Kurniasih, 2016). In foreign language education and training, there is four fundamental language skills: speaking, reading, writing, and listening. The development and reinforcement of these four fundamental language abilities must be tailored to the demands and proficiency levels of the students to provide successful and efficient instruction and training in foreign language courses (Darancik, 2018). The most used language skill is listening. Listening is essential to learning a language. The aural input that forms the basis of language acquisition is obtained by listening (Chalak & Biria, 2019).

Successful communication depends on the ability to listen. Underwood (1989) proposed a three-stage method for teaching listening that includes pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. Pre-listening is a type of preparatory work that should clarify the objectives, define responsibilities, methods, and listening goals, as well as make the information explicit (Ehsanjou & Khodareza, 2014). Language acquisition happens when learners can interpret messages in the target language, according to the Natural Approach. This is because the main goal of language learning is to use the language to understand what other speakers saying (Kasimi & Höl, 2023).

For language learners, listening comprehension is regarded as a necessary skill (Hasan & Nomnian, 2021). Additionally, research, pedagogy, and theory development related to second language learning view listening comprehension as a guide (Emami & Lashkarian, 2014). Even though listening is a crucial skill, it is sometimes disregarded when learning, teaching, and acquiring a language. However, in the field of language acquisition, several pre-listening activities recommended by language teaching professionals can be utilized as a support in the teaching process to help learners overcome the challenges they have when learning a foreign language (Sarhan & Tawfeeq, 2022). Teachers have long used the assignment of having students listen to a recorded text and respond to questions while doing so in order to improve listening comprehension. One language competence skill that can directly impact other abilities and be influenced by a variety of other methods or approaches is listening (Ehsanjou & Khodareza, 2014). According to L2 experts, pre-reading activities make texts easier for students to understand (Grab & Stoller, 2001; Holmes & Roser, 1987; Taglieber, Johnson, & Yarbrough, 1988).

1.1 Listening skill

The most used language skill is listening. Listening is essential to learning a language. The aural input that forms the basis of language acquisition is obtained by listening (Krashen, 1985, 1996; Rost, 1990; Vandergrift, 1999). One of the most crucial language learning skills is listening, and numerous academics working in English as a foreign language (EFL) settings have consistently highlighted the value of listening comprehension abilities in the English language learning and teaching process (Cheung, 2010; Solak & Altay, 2014; Ulum, 2015). The ability to listen helps students anticipate what will be spoken, which can help them understand what is being said (Sarhan & Tawfeeq, 2022). Without appropriate listening, verbal communication cannot advance because listening is such a crucial skill. Communicators must pay attention to and participate in the active act of listening. When someone pays close attention to what is being said and interprets it, they are said to be listening. To understand phrases, they have heard, listeners use their pragmatic, phonetic, phonological, syntactic, and semantic skills in conjunction with active listening (Datta & Roy, 2024).

1.2 Importance of Listening in Language Learning

The most commonly used language skill is listening. Listening is essential to learning a language. The aural input that forms the foundation for language acquisition is obtained by listening (Krashen, 1985, 1996; Rost, 1990; Vandergrift, 1999). An essential part of communication is listening. It is crucial for English language instruction. It gives students input. The process of learning a language cannot begin if students are unable to comprehend the information (Yén & Waring, 2022). More than half of the time spent studying a language must be spent listening to speakers of other languages (Datta & Roy, 2024).

Even though teaching listening comprehension correctly is essential for achieving target language proficiency and is a crucial ability for learning second and foreign languages, listening comprehension was mostly disregarded in language classrooms until the late 1960s. Speaking and listening were not as important as reading and grammar at the time. Researchers and educators did not agree that teaching listening skills was a crucial part of teaching languages (Bakhsh & Gilakjani, 2021).

1.2.1 Stages of Teaching Listening Skill

1.2.1.1 Pre-Listening Stage:

Definition of Pre-Listening Stage:

Pre-listening is the phase in which the listening process is warmed up and ready to go. It falls under the category of "preparatory work" (Underwood, 1989). It makes it possible for the students to respond intelligently to the subsequent hearing text. Thus, pre-listening exercises are crucial to helping students perform better when it comes to L2 listening comprehension. The pre-listening stage is the initial phase of the listening process that students encounter before hearing the speech; it gets them ready and encourages them to pay attention so they can understand the material (Sarhan & Tawfeeq, 2022).

Aims of the Pre-Listening Stage

The pre-listening stage's objective is to comprehend the basic idea behind the content. to see the content that will be listened to before actually doing so. should be aware of the topic of the listening material before engaging with it. In the classroom, teachers are required to educate students on how to listen. Playing a recording and giving pupils a task to complete while listening is not a method of teaching listening. Thus, this does not instruct students in listening skills. There are methods that educators can employ to help pupils learn how to listen. Pre-teaching keywords, unstructured discussion on the listening text's subject, topical picture description and discourse, picture-based tale prediction, and topical lexis brainstorming are some examples of these techniques (Al Bloushi, 2024).

Pre-listening encourages students to listen by providing a purpose for the listening process. Introducing students to "the while listening stage" increases their comfort level and self-assurance. Additionally, it gets pupils ready for listening. Preparing students to get the most out of the listening passage is known as the pre-listening stage. It gives the learner a reason for listening and stimulates their schemata (Al Bloushi, 2024).

Pre –Listening Activities

Before engaging in a listening task, students engage in pre-listening activities to get ready for the listening. These exercises serve a variety of functions, such as the teacher introducing the subject, providing context-based background information, fostering discussion on the subject, elucidating complex language, and assisting students in understanding the meaning. Pre-listening activities are the most crucial part of any listening phase because they set the stage for subsequent activities to succeed by allowing the teacher to help the student recall prior knowledge and understand the goal of listening (Sarhan & Tawfeeq, 2022).

Pre-listening activities involve getting the learner mentally and physically ready for the text they will be listening to. Ince and Boztilkı (2016) define the pre-listening process as the phase in a modern approach where the instructor tries to motivate the students to listen to the piece and explains what kind of exercise they will be doing, or informs them about the content of the text they will be reading. Pre-listening activities, according to Rost (2013), are a step intended to assist students get ready for listening. They can include a quick exercise focusing on the discourse frames, concepts, or vocabulary in the text to help students focus on the listening text (Kahtali & Aslan, 2021).

Types of Pre –Listening Activities (Kord, 2022):

- 1. Brainstorming:** The most effective method for getting students to generate a ton of ideas before they start listening is brainstorming. Before starting to listen, students are invited to openly discuss the background to produce a lot of thoughts (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). The teacher should explain the subject matter to the students before they start listening and encourage them to come up with several thoughts that are related to the main theme (Sarhan & Tawfeeq, 2022).
- 2. Visuals:** As Rourke (2012) claims, visuals are used in pre-listening activities and have many advantages: they are immediate and reminiscent. Moreover, several students have a visible learning style.
- 3. Realia:** How can Realia assist college students with their listening? Objects in general, carry with them memories and associations that can spark student's ideas. These memories and associations are components of our prior knowledge. All students can take advantage of the use of realia. It should be kept in mind that younger students usually like to deal with real objects.
- 4. Texts and words:** texts may give us some important information or motivate us to investigate a topic further. Short reading texts can also be useful as an introduction to the topic to highlight any controversial themes or to pose a question that gets students thinking.
- 5. Situations:** certain situations- booking a hotel or answering the phone are familiar to most students in different countries, and this familiarity can be used to help predict the listening content.
- 6. Opinion, ideas, and facts:** using the student's views and opinions both activates and broadens their prior knowledge. Asking them to grapple with ideas or concept, do their research, or train other students is a good way to contain them earlier than they listen.

1.2.1.2 While listening

While-listening activities are tasks that students engage in while listening to a text. Regarding listening comprehension (i.e., listening for meaning), the aim of these activities is to aid learners in developing the skill of extracting messages from spoken language (Al Bloushi, 2024). Students participate in a range of tasks during the listening activity, including making predictions, understanding the message, and revising their predictions. During this phase, the children's ability to comprehend spoken language is developed (Siregar, 2017). Identifying the main concept, paying close attention, drawing conclusions, guessing and pausing, listening and drawing conclusions, transferring information, taking notes, dictating, and copying (Kahtali & Aslan, 2021).

1.2.1.3 Post listening

The work is expanded from the while-listening stage and is much more in the post-listening stages. This step, which includes the follow-up task, is crucial since it demonstrates if the student grasped the assignment well. "There are several justifications for include follow-up exercises in the lesson plans. One of them may be determining if the students comprehended the listening passage or whether they successfully completed the assignment (Al Bloushi, 2024). During post-listening, students can assess and track their comprehension by having a little talk with their peers. Next, in order to engage with the listening material, students are asked to express their ideas and offer justifications or different conclusions (Madarbakus-Ring, 2020). Reflecting on, verifying, and summarizing the content, engaging in discussion, providing creative answers, offering critical responses, exchanging information, solving problems, finding a unified solution for the listening text, and reconstructing the listening text (Kahtali & Aslan, 2021).

2. Listening comprehension

An essential component of learning a language is listening comprehension (Khajavy & Aghaee, 2023). According to Buck (2001), listening is a sophisticated process that involves the following abilities:

- a) processing lengthy samples of naturally occurring spoken language automatically and in real-time;
- b) comprehending the linguistic information that is unmistakably included in the text;
- c) drawing any conclusions that are implied by the passage's content.

Too frequently, listening has been viewed as a frightening aspect of the English language learning process for EFL students. Nevertheless, because it gives the learner input, it is an essential ability for acquiring a second language (Nunan, 2002). Comprehension something is the capacity to do so, which indicates an intelligent system or human's capacity for thought and reasoning (Bakhsh & Gilakjani, 2021).

Up until the late 1960s, listening comprehension was one of the most undervalued skills in language classrooms. However, it is now a crucial ability for learning second and foreign languages, and effective instruction of listening comprehension is essential for target language mastery. Speaking and listening were not as important as reading and grammar at the time. Researchers and educators did not agree that teaching listening skills was a crucial part of teaching languages (Bakhsh & Gilakjani, 2021).

One way to conceptualize listening comprehension is as a process of speech understanding that relies on students' abilities to decipher the meaning and purpose of the speakers. The study of listening comprehension involves paying attention to the function of particular language units (such as words, phonemes, and grammatical structures), as well as the expectations of listeners, their grasp of the context and subject matter, and their prior knowledge (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). Research, education, and theory development in second language acquisition all view listening comprehension as a foundational skill (Emami & Lashkarian, 2014).

As this definition implies, for learners to increase their English proficiency, they must strengthen their listening skills (Gowhary et al., 2015). This claim also highlights how difficult it is to listen when one does not comprehend relevant input (Krashen, 1994). Thus, listening instruction is crucial in English classes, and teachers' primary goal should be to improve their students' comprehension. However, compared to other language skills, listening skills seem to be given less importance in English classes, even though they, like those of the first language, are crucial for learning a second language and communicating with others in it (Baumert et al., 2020; De Wilde et al., 2020; Farrokhi & Modarres, 2012; Rao, 2019; Wallace, 2022).

The aim of this study is to explore the impact of pre-listening activities on the listening comprehension of EFL learners because listening skills, despite being essential for effective communication and learning, are often neglected in language instruction. Although existing research indicates that pre-listening activities can significantly improve listening comprehension, there is a need for further empirical evidence to validate their

specific effects and effectiveness. By analyzing different pre-listening techniques and their impact on listening skills, this study aims to offer practical insights for educators to enhance their teaching methods and better support their students' language acquisition.

3. Statement of the problem

Listening comprehension plays a crucial role in language acquisition, yet it often receives insufficient attention in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) instruction. It is vital for effective communication and learning, particularly in the digital age. However, structured methods to enhance this skill are frequently overlooked in many language classrooms. Although previous research indicates that pre-listening activities can greatly enhance EFL learners' listening comprehension, more empirical studies are needed to evaluate the specific impacts and effectiveness of these activities. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the effect of pre-listening activities on the listening comprehension of high school EFL learners, providing valuable insights into practical strategies for improving listening skills in language education.

4. Research question

To what extent do pre-listening activity's affect EFL learners' listening comprehension?

5. Research hypothesis

H0: there is no relationship between pre-listening activities and listening comprehension.

6. Methodology

This research was done utilizing the quantitative method to gather all the necessary data and provide the response to the hypothesis question. To ascertain participant homogeneity, the research used two control and experimental groups, each of which was given a pre-test at the start of the procedure. The groups then took a post-test to ascertain the outcome. The design of the study was quasi-experimental.

6.1 Participants

The research study is analyzed quantitative. This study selected 40 EFL female students from Sharaf high school in Zabol, based on random sampling. To evaluate the validity of the study and to ensure the homogeneity. And at the end, these participants divided into two groups: a control group and an experimental group.

6.2 instrument

6.2.1 IELTS based listening test

In this research, the IELTS test is used for designing pre-test and post-test to evaluate student's mastery of listening. The designed tests, both include 20 multiple-choice questions. For the post-test, the same questions used in the pre-test. The reason was that the purpose of the study was to evaluate the progress of participants from the pre-test to the post-test. To increase the probability of external variables by using similar tests, the pre-test and post-test questions were considered the same.

6.2.2 treatment

for treatment, the textbook was the resource for both groups. The control group was taught without using pre-listening activities and the experimental group was taught using pre-listening activities.

6.3 Data collection

This study was conducted during the last semester of high school education and the data collection took about two months. For collecting the data, the researcher distributed a proficiency test to ensure the students would be on the same level of proficiency. Selected students were divided into two groups randomly; the control group and the experimental group. A listening test was taken from both groups as a pre-test. The experimental group was educated with pre-listening activities, while the other group was educated whiteout the pre-listening activities. After two months, a standard listening test was administered as a post-test. It tested the listening comprehension to consider the pre-listening activities effects.

6.4 Data analysis

To arrive at a compelling conclusion about the research topic, it is necessary to compare the post-test performance of the control and experimental groups in this quantitative study that assesses the impact of pre-listening activities on listening comprehension. As a result, it is necessary to do the t-test and compare the group means. The data and post-test scores were entered into SPSS version 27.0 software for this purpose. This allowed the program to compute the paired sample T-test and ascertain the impact of use of pre-listening activities on listening comprehension.

7. Results

Table 1- Descriptive statics for control and experimental group in pre and post-test

Group Statistics

	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
pre-test	control group	10	6.1750	2.23933
	experimental group	10	6.0250	2.29265
post-test	control group	10	6.2250	2.71173
	experimental group	10	7.8500	2.02141

The results from the data in Table 1 have shown that the mean of the control group and the experimental group in the pre-test are very close to each other, and the mean difference between these two groups is reported to be about 0.2. which indicates the existence of homogeneity and similar levels in the listening comprehension of the students of the two groups. Also, the difference in standard deviation in the two groups is low (0.15), which indicates similar levels of consistency or reliability in the data set. Also, it can be included according Table 1, that the situation in the post-test is different. The mean of the experimental group increased a lot compared to their performance in the pre-test, while there was no significant difference in the performance of the control group. This has brought the difference between their mean in the post-test to (1.63), and even between their maximum and minimum scores, no significant difference can be seen, which indicates the effectiveness of the treatment on the experimental group.

According to these findings and statistics, it can be said that the scores of the control group did not change significantly, but the scores of the experimental group increased significantly. It can be concluded that this increase in the amount of students' performance may highly be attributed to the effect of the treatment. To determine whether the distinction among subjects' means of the pre-test and post-tests is statistically significant, a Paired Samples T-test was employed. Table 2 below represents the paired samples T-test and the difference between the means of the pre-test and post-test.

Table 2. Paired samples test

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences							
		Std. Deviation		95% Confidence Interval				t	df
		Mean	n	Mean	Lower	Upper	of the Difference		
Pair 1	pre-test	-.93750	1.22441	.27379	-1.51054	-.36446		-3.424	19
	post-test								

In addition to the statistical information reviewed so far, the results of the table 2 (paired samples test) also have shown that since the value of 0.03 has been obtained, the difference between the mean of the two groups in the post-test is significant. (df=19, t=3.42) it implies that the null hypothesis is rejected; the two samples are from the same population and there is a significant difference between the two groups before and after receiving treatment. This result implies that the experimental and control groups are different in terms of their ability after treatment.

8. Conclusion

This research sought to explore the impact of pre-listening activities on the listening comprehension of EFL learners. The data analysis revealed that the experimental group, which engaged in pre-listening activities, exhibited a significant enhancement in listening comprehension skills compared to the control group, which did not participate in such activities. The results showed a substantial increase in the mean scores of the experimental group from the pre-test to the post-test, whereas the control group displayed no notable improvement.

The statistical analysis conducted using the paired samples t-test verified a statistically significant difference in performance between the two groups. This indicates that the pre-listening activities were essential in enhancing the listening comprehension of the experimental group. These activities likely aided students in activating prior knowledge, establishing a purpose for listening and increasing their engagement and focus during the listening tasks. This study reinforces the idea that pre-listening activities are a valuable teaching method in the EFL environment. These activities, which mentally and contextually prepare students for listening tasks, can greatly enhance their comprehension abilities. Educators should incorporate diverse pre-listening strategies, including brainstorming, using visuals, realia, and contextual discussions, to effectively support their students' listening skill development. Overall, the results highlight the significance of incorporating pre-listening activities into language teaching to enhance the frequently neglected skill of listening comprehension. Future studies could investigate various types of pre-listening activities and their distinct effects on different learner groups to further refine EFL teaching practices.

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