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The Impact of Recursive Listening Activities on Comprehension

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Abstract

The objective of the present study is to investigate how recursive listening activities improve pupils' ability to understand spoken English in various contexts. To achieve the aim of the study, it hypothesizes that there is a statistically significant difference among the mean scores of Iraqi EFL pupils who participate in recursive listening activities will demonstrate better comprehension of spoken English in various contexts. The study's sample comprises sixty (60) pupils who have been chosen at random from the second grade at Umm Al-Mu'minin School for Girls in Tikrit Center for the academic year 2024-2025. The sample divides into two groups, one for the experimental group and the other for the control group, with 30 pupils in each group. The two groups are equalized in their ages, the parents' academic attainment, and scores in the pretest. Three post-tests with five

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questions each are designed to gather information. The data collected from the results of the three posttests have been analyzed statistically by using a t-test for measuring the pupils' comprehension. The Alpha-Cronbach formula is used to measure the reliability of the posttest. The result shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the posttests, which indicates that recursive listening activities are more efficient than the recommended method of teaching. According to this study's findings and conclusions, suitable recommendations and suggestions for future research are presented.

Keywords: Recursive Listening Activities, Comprehension, language learning

أثر أنشطة الاستماع المتكررة على الفهم

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المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف كيفية تحسين أنشطة الاستماع التكرارية لقدرة التلاميذ على فهم اللغة الإنجليزية المنطوقة في سياقات مختلفة. ولتحقيق هدف الدراسة، تفترض الدراسة وجود فرق ذي دلالة إحصائية بين متوسط درجات تلاميذ اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية العراقيين الذين يشاركون في أنشطة الاستماع التكرارية سيظهرون فهمًا أفضل للغة الإنجليزية المنطوقة في سياقات مختلفة. تتكون عينة الدراسة من ستين (60) تلميذة تم اختيارهن عشوائيًا من الصف الثاني في مدرسة أم المؤمنين للبنات في مركز تكريت للعام الدراسي 2024-2025. تنقسم العينة إلى مجموعتين، واحدة للمجموعة التجريبية والأخرى للمجموعة الضابطة، مع 30 تلميذة في كل مجموعة. المجموعتان متساويتان في الأعمار، والتحصيل الدراسي للوالدين، والدرجات في الاختبار القبلي. صُممت ثلاثة اختبارات لاحقة، كل منها بخمسة أسئلة، لجمع المعلومات. حُللت البيانات المُجمعة من نتائج الاختبارات الثلاثة اللاحقة إحصائيًا باستخدام اختبار "ت" لقياس فهم التلاميذ. واستُخدمت معادلة ألفا-كرونباخ لقياس موثوقية الاختبار البعدي. تُظهر النتيجة وجود فرق ذي دلالة إحصائية بين متوسط درجات المجموعة التجريبية والمجموعة الضابطة في الاختبارات البعدية، مما يشير إلى أن أنشطة الاستماع التكرارية أكثر فعالية من طريقة التدريس الموصي بها. بناءً على نتائج هذه الدراسة واستنتاجاتها، تُقدم توصيات ومقترحات مناسبة لأبحاث مستقبلية.

الكلمات الأساسية: أنشطة الاستماع المتكررة، الفهم، تعلم اللغة.

1.Introduction

The English language is considered the international language, and its learning is very crucial and essential for effective communication between people all over the world. Therefore, there are many challenges that affect language learning when teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Iraq. Traditional methods frequently fail to enhance pupils' language skill development, particularly in the area of receptive skills or listening skills (Brown, 2007).

Several barriers to effective listening have been identified. According to Underwood (1989) These include the inability to control the speed of speech, lack of repetition, limited vocabulary knowledge, and insufficient contextual understanding. These difficulties can hinder pupils' ability to follow and process spoken input.

To address these issues, teachers are encouraged to implement effective listening activities, such as recursive listening activities. These activities involve repeated exposure to listening texts and are designed to enhance comprehension, raise awareness of linguistic features, and build pupil confidence. Vandergrift (1997) emphasizes that teachers should begin with global understanding before moving to detailed analysis, introduce vocabulary in context, and encourage prediction and critical thinking to support overall language development.

Although, the problem of the current study is best expressed by answering the following question: How do recursive listening activities influence Iraqi EFL learners' ability to understand spoken English across various context.

The research aims at :

1-Investigating how recursive listening activities improve pupils' ability to understand spoken English in various contexts.

The research hypothesizes that:

1-There is a statistically significant difference among the mean score of Iraqi EFL pupils who participate in recursive listening activities will demonstrate better comprehension of spoken English in various contexts compared to those who do not engage in such activities.

2.Theoretical Background and Previous Studies

2.1 Concept of Recursive Listening Activities

One of the most important language learning skills that pupils should learn first is listening. To improve their ability to comprehend spoken language, interpret, organize meaning, receive and communicate, interact, learn new vocabulary, attend, perceive, remember, and retain information in long-term memory, pupils should listen to English recursively(Purdy & Borishoff,1997).

Recursive is a powerful process, according to Chomsky (1957), who states that it must be an essential, perhaps natural, component of language learning. Recursive listening is also defined by Kindt as "listening to the same content but with a wider knowledge that helps to store information in short-term memory, then process and organize it to link with the previous knowledge of the individual so that the information can be transferred into long-term memory." (2004, p. 15).

Morley (1972) supports the idea that recursive listening is a component of language learning; thus, teachers design different activities and give their pupils chances to engage in recursive listening activities.

Scrivener (2011) identified a number of activities and goals associated with listening stages, such as discussing the main idea, writing down words they hear and attempting to define or use them in sentences, repeating after the speaker to improve pronunciation, reconstructing the new text from the original text, organizing and summarizing the idea, focusing on the speaker's attitude and feelings, predicting the meaning of the content, and expressing their opinions critically.

2.2 Types of Recursive Listening Activities

Language schools teach recursive listening because it is essential to language learning. Pupils in the English education department are therefore required to acquire this language skill. Thus, by involving students in various language learning activities, such as recursive listening activities that improve pupil's ability to understand the spoken language (Nunan, 1985) So, there are some types of Recursive Listening Activities such as:

1-Listening to Gist: It is one among many types of recursive listening activities and is also known as listening for global or general understanding. It considers listening comprehension an important skill, often opposed to the competence of listening for specific information. In other words, it is not a mechanical process in which someone listens for each and every word. But rather it involves listening selectively and processing the information in an oral passage at a holistic level, with the listener

establishing the topic, the purpose, the main points, or the overall message of that oral passage (Siegel, 2018).

2-Listening for specific information: This listening activity is known as listening for specific information, where pupils just need to pay close attention to a very specific aspect of the recorded text rather than trying to grasp everything. In other words, they ignore everything else that is unnecessary and listen selectively to the specific information that they just need to listen to and understand. (Spack, 1988).

2.3 Benefits of Recursive Listening Activities

Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) present several of benefits that help students to overcome some of their recursive listening activities difficulties. They are as follows:

1. Recursive listening activities are prepared based on the pupils' interests and teachers' role provide authentic listening activities for learners in order to assist them comprehend better the natural speech uttered by native speakers.

2. Instructors present their instructions to pupils about the rules of pronunciation in order to assist them listen to different types of rapid natural speech and require them to imitate and repeat native speakers' pronunciation in order to improve speaking skills with listening.

3. In order to help them to correct their mistakes, enhance their motivation and acquire their confidence in recursive listening skills, teachers provide them with the necessary feedback on their performance.

4. Teacher creates various tasks and activities at different levels that assists their pupils to improve recursive listening activities such as listening for general ideas, listening for specific information, vocabulary, prediction, pronunciation, listening for structure, implicit meaning, summarizing, Dictogloss and finally listening for critical thinking.

5. Teachers enhance recursive listening activities by using body language in the classroom like pointing, acting and facial expressions, for instance, pupils listen to a short story and after they understand general idea, they represent short play between them in class in order to develop oral messages this activities and also they feel in happy and active while performance this activities.

6. Instructors give a chance to their pupils in order to promote top-down and bottom-up processing skills. Top-down activities encourage learners to explain what they know about a subject and bottom-up activities increase confidence in the understanding of the components of the language like sounds, words, intonation, and grammatical structures.

2.4 General Principles in Teaching Recursive Listening Activities

Morley and Lawrence (1995) put some principles for teaching recursive listening activities that language teachers need to use in the classroom to help students on language learning:

- 1- Recursive listening activities clearly express specific goals. Teachers should meticulously plan these activities, ensuring each step is clear. Teachers present listening activities from easy to hard, and students should be told what, when, and how to listen. This activity structure requires an active overt learner participant. That is, in order to keep students' interest and motivation, the most active student participant involves his predicting what he will hear during listening activities and prompt performance feedback.
- 2- Recursive listening activities are emphasized the importance of communication and active engagement that assists students in remembering how to focus on listening activities in which teachers give their students the predictive task before they listen to the passage. Also, short- and long-term memory assert in recursive listening activities because they help learners to remember and retention information and recall it easily. The main objective of repeated listening is to strengthen students' immediate recall and increase their memory spans. It indicates that there is no way to separate repeated listening, thinking, and remembering. Listening is receiving; receiving requires thinking, and thinking requires memory.
- 3- It is a crucial for recursive listening activities to be taught rather than tested. There is no pass or fail attitude related to the correction of the activities. It looks like a student's responses should be viewed only as feedback that allows the learners to comprehend how they do and how they progress in these activities.

2.5 Vandergrift's model (2003)

Vandergrift is a key figure in the field of second language learning. He says that students learn a new language more effectively if they focus on developing language skills, especially listening skills, through practicing recursive listening activities(Coh,2018).

Vandergrift (2004) refers to students repeatedly listening to recorded materials in order to enhance their understanding of spoken language, learn a new vocabulary, and retain it in their memory. This method assists learners to concentrate on various parts of the language in each listening stage, such as vocabulary acquisition, prediction, and pronunciation, leading to increased comprehension of the content and building their confidence in listening skills.

Vandergrift (2002) emphasizes the importance of listening strategies like the importance of metacognitive awareness in successful listening, where learners participate in listening activities through engaging in prediction, communication, monitoring, problem-solving, organizing the ideas, and evaluation that work together in pairs or groups.

Also, Vandergrift (1999) identifies two types of processes that increase listening comprehension. Teaching listeners how to use these processes effectively. After that, Jack and Willy(2002) develop this processing and mention that Top-down processing relies on listeners. Pupil recalls previous knowledge of the context and the subject, the kinds of text, and the language and related it with new information. This prior information activates a number of ideas that assists the listener interpret what they have heard and predict what will come next. This processing involves: listening for Gist, predictive, Inference meaning, summarizing and listening. While, bottom-up processing depends on text; the learner relies on the language in the content, through the combination of sounds, vocabulary, and grammar that construct meaning that includes: listening for specific information, recognizing cognates, recognizing word-order patterns

Subsequently, Vandergrift (2007) originally introduces a recursive listening activities model consisting of three stages:

1. Pre-listening: This stage includes a number of activities that encourage learners for the listening lesson. It involves activating background knowledge, predicting, presenting key vocabulary, or discussing the subject to set the context.
2. While listening, it is considered the main stage because it includes all listening activities where students listen to the audio text repeatedly in this stage. Recursive listening activities include taking notes, answering questions, understanding the main idea, or focusing on specific information.
3. Post-listening: It is finally a stage that involves activities that assist learners in thinking critically about what they have heard. It encourages discussions, summarizing, organizing the ideas, or further analysis of the content.

2.6 Previous Studies

Yusuf(2019)

This study is entitled "The Effectiveness of Recursive Listening to English News on Students' Listening Comprehension" aims to know whether or not recursive listening is effective to improve students listening comprehension.

The sample of this study is all of the students of third grade in a state junior high school in Tuban in academic year 2018/2019, which consists of six classes. Each class consists of 28 to 35 students. The total sample is 196 students. The t-test is used to analyze data as a post-test.

The result shows that the students' score on the post-test is better than the students' score on the pre-test. The t count was 3.074, and the t table with a significance value of 5% and df 29 is 1.699. Hence, the t count is greater than the t table. So, the null hypothesis, which states there is no significant difference between the students' listening ability before and after being taught by using the recursive listening technique, is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis, which states there is a significant difference between the students' listening ability before and after being taught by using the recursive listening technique, is accepted.

3.Methodology

3.1 Experimental design

The experimental design is a systematic method that is employed to plan and conduct experiments to investigate the effects of one or more independent variables on a dependent variable. It involves the selection of appropriate procedures for collecting data and analyzing results to ensure that conclusions drawn from the experiment are valid and reliable (Seltman, 2012). In this present study, aims and hypotheses demand the Non-Randomized Experiment Group Pretest-Posttest Design. Finally, the research chooses the study's sample from second intermediate pupils, as shown in Table(3.1):

Table (3.1)

The Experimental Design of the study

Groups	The test	Independent variables		The test
Experimental Group	Pre-Test	Recursive Activities	Listening	Post recursive listening test
Control Group	Pre-Test	Prescribed methods	teaching	Post recursive listening test

3.2 The Population

According to Polit and Beck (1999), the population is the sum of all items, pupils, or subjects that meet a set of criteria. The pupils who pique the interest of the researchers in

extrapolating the research's findings are referred to as the population. The total number of units (people, groups, activities, things, or things) from which samples are taken for measurement is another definition of the population (Kindy, Shah& Jusoh, 2016).

The population of the present study consists of (80) EFL Iraqi intermediate pupils from the second-year pupils in Tikrit, Salah Al-Din Governorate. The total number of second-class pupils' population is (80), according to Adam (2020).

3.3 The Sample

According to Bluman (2007), the sample is a subset of the population that interests a group of individuals who participate in the main characteristics of the population. Additionally, Adam (2020) determines the sample size based on the population size for both continuous and categorical data.

The researcher chooses the study's sample from second grade at Umm Al-Mu'minin School for Girls in Tikrit center. He determined (60) pupils and divided them into two groups (A and B). The experiment group chooses (30) pupils, while the control group chooses (30) pupils, as shown in Table (3.2):

Table (3.2)

Sample of the study

Groups	Section	Number	Total
Experimental Group	A	30	60
Control Group	B	30	

3.4 Equivalence of the Two Groups

Stock, Haupt, Mach & Micheli(2018)state that certain variables that may affect the testees' learning should be considered; otherwise, the study's outcomes may be influenced. Before starting the experiment, the two groups should be equalized according to the following variables: father's educational level variables, mother's educational level variables, the pupil's age, pupils' scores in the English language in the previous year, and pupils' scores in the pretest.

3.5 Post Recursive Listening Tests Construction

Post-test is considered as a formative assessment that has an important part in language learning process by preparing significant feedback for educator and pupils as well (Popham,2001).

Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) indicate that "the tests are used to measure the pupils improvement within a classroom lesson, unit, and material covered in the curriculum in a particular time frame by focusing on the objectives of a particular course." It assists to identify the effectiveness of the independent variable on the experimental group and helps the pupils to determine the features that they need to work on in the future. The most important role of the test is to refer that the course goals are achieved at the end of a period of instruction (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012). In the current study, post-tests divide into five questions, each question involves repeatedly listening to the same audio material with specific tasks or goals.

3.6 Behavioral Objectives of Post Test

Al-Mutawa and Kaliani (1989) mention that "the English syllabus delineates behavioral objectives for each learning stage, grouped based on the cognitive domain. These objectives outline the receptive skills (listening and reading) and the productive skills (speaking and writing), which are structured and leveled according to this taxonomy." (p.26). The behavioral objectives are to enable pupils to:

1-Reinforce language learning through repeated exposure and identify and use new vocabulary and grammatical structures from audio material that are appropriate to various situations and social contexts.

2-Speak fluently and intelligibly with correct pronunciation, using vocabulary and expressions learned from both listening and conversation practice.

3-Develop their oral performance through activities that connect listening with speaking and writing, including note-taking, summarizing, and responding to spoken content.

4-Understand and apply the norms, strategies, and rules of both conversation and recursive listening methods, recognizing how they support effective communication.

5-Select appropriate topics for both conversation and listening tasks, and engage in interaction that is coherent, cohesive, and contextually appropriate.

6-Comprehend spoken language deeply, including identifying main ideas, specific details, and organizational patterns of spoken texts, and analyze and evaluate audio material critically.

7-Reflect on their listening experiences, self-assess their progress, and express their thoughts and opinions based on audio content.

8-Integrate listening with other language skills, especially speaking and writing, to encourage active engagement, anticipation, and communication fluency.

3.7 Validity

According to Shaughnessy (2007), validity is the extent to which a measurement or research tool aligns with the necessary concept or phenomenon, supporting the precision and dependability of study findings. As Lokesh and Ramya Devi(2019) says, a measure of test construction deems a test lacking validity questionable. The validity coefficient, which is the connection between test results and external criteria, offers a measure of the level of validity. To ensure test validity, the test must present pertinent information and be free of errors. Furthermore, internal critique is referred to as the process of proving the content's validity, while external criticism is considered the process of establishing authenticity.

3.8 Reliability

According to Jope (2000), reliability is the degree to which findings hold up over time and provide a true picture of the entire group being studied. A research tool is deemed dependable if the study's findings may be obtained by using a comparable technique. When multiple researchers can use a test under steady conditions and obtain consistent results without any variation, the test is considered dependable. Consistency and reproducibility across time are characteristics of reliability.

Reliability is defined by Drost (2011) as "the extent to which measurements are repeatable when different people perform the measurement on different occasions, under different conditions, supposedly with alternative instruments that measure skill."(p.34). In the current study, the Cronbach's Alpha formula is used to measure the reliability of the posttest. The coefficient is found to be 0.83, which is considered acceptable.

3.9 Item Analysis

The test items need to be analyzed to identify two key features: difficulty level and discrimination power. The analysis will be according to the results of the first posttest, as outlined below:

1.Difficulty Level

According to Rosa's (2000), difficulty level is defined as the proportion of pupils who responded correctly to each item. It indicates the extent to which an item appears to be complicated or facilitated for a given number of tests. The most suitable test item will have an item difficulty varying between 0.15 and 0.85 (Brown, 2010). The DL of the present test items varies from 0.30 to 0.72.

2.Discriminating Power

Arikunto (2006) stated that "it is the degree to which a given item distinguishes between pupils of high and low ability. Test items will be more reliable if they can discriminate more, which is why discrimination is necessary. It can also be described as a test's capacity to distinguish between intelligent and indolent pupils." A pupil who scores higher on an exam is considered bright, and a pupil who scores lower is considered lazy. Like the word "level of difficulty," discrimination also has an index. It serves as an indicator of how well an item distinguishes between strong and weak candidates (Hughes, 2005). This index evaluates a test's ability to distinguish between higher and lower groups of pupils.

Item discrimination refers to the degree to which an object makes a difference between good and poor testers. An object has a good power of discrimination if it collects the right answers from the good students and the wrong answers from the bad students. It is worth noting that the high power of discrimination will be close to 1.0, and no power of discrimination will be nil at all (Brown, 2010). The test item DP was found to have a range of 0.33 to 0.71.

4.The Results

4.1Results related to the first hypothesis

The first aim in the current study aims at investigating how recursive listening activities improve pupils' ability to understand spoken English in various contexts. To do this, a t-test for two independent samples is employed.

The results show a consistent improvement in the mean scores of both groups across the three post-tests, with the experimental group outperforming the control group in each instance. In Post-test 1, the experimental group has a mean score of 68.03 (SD = 11.35), while the control group scores 46.23 (SD = 11.57). In Post-test 2, the experimental group's mean increases to 79.26 (SD = 10.94), compared to the control group's mean of 54.16 (SD = 10.36). Finally, in Post-test 3, the experimental group achieves a mean score of 84.70 (SD = 10.00), whereas the control group scores 60.00 (SD = 13.59). These results indicate a significant and consistent difference in pupils' ability to understand spoken English in various contexts between the two groups over time, favoring the experimental group. Thus, the first hypothesis which states that "There is statistical significant difference among the mean score of Iraqi EFL pupils who participate in recursive listening activities will demonstrate better comprehension of spoken English in various contexts compared to those who do not engage in such activities" is verified.

4.2 Discussion of Results

The goal of the current study is investigating how recursive listening activities improve pupils' ability to understand spoken English in various contexts. The study's

results refer that language learning of the experimental group, who is taught by employing recursive listening activities, is higher and better than the control group, who is taught by applying the traditional strategies. The study's results refer that language learning of the experimental group, who is taught by employing recursive listening activities, is higher and better than the control group, who is taught by applying the traditional methods.

The following elements may be associated to the significant differences in pupils' English language learning when recursive listening activities are used in the classroom:

1.The experimental group increases their comprehension when they are exposed to recursive listening activities and took higher scores on the post-test than the control group that uses the traditional technique because these activities help pupils to understand spoken language through repeated listening, in addition, it assists to reduce worry and build their confidence in listening skills.

2.Recursive listening activities emphasize the critical thinking of the pupil.

3.Teacher seeks to enhance listening skills through helping their Pupils to interact between them and exchange their ideas in order to learn new vocabulary and concepts by using recursive listening activities.

4. Recursive listening makes the pupils able to keep the new words in their long and short term memory.

5.Collaborative learning will stimulate pupils to work in pairs groups with their friends and check information.

6.The use of non-linguistic forms such as diagrams and pictures raise pupils comprehension.

5.Conclusions

In the light of the findings of the current study, the following points have been concluded:

1.Recursive listening activities prove advantageous, suitable, and successful in improving listening skills.

2.Recursive listening activities are used in the classroom in order to help pupils to exchange knowledge freely, learn a new vocabulary through repeated listening and use it in various contexts.

3.Engaging in recursive listening activities broadens pupils' comprehension, notice linguistic features and build their confidence in listening skill.

4.The results of the study indicate that employ recursive listening activities to teach is a beneficial teaching strategy for improving pupils' learning. The teacher creates a dynamic and interactive environment that encourage pupils to active engagement in order to improve their comprehension.

5.Educators are used different instruments like MP3, videos and image to understand the message's meaning that increase learners' interest and attention to learn new information through recursive listening activities.

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