

The Effect of Listening Activities on Students' Listening Comprehension

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Moreover, listening skill becomes more important in a multi-cultural society. From a grammar-based teaching methodology, greater attention has been given to communicative approaches to language acquisition. In order to get the most out of the communicative learning process, the students must have effective listening skill. That's why, this study focus on which of the activities among pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening will be effective for the English listening comprehension participated by the students in the University of Computer Studies, Mandalay. At Computer University, all the courses are taught in English and IELTS training books are used in developing English language skills. In addition, according to Moore (2005), due to a large number of students wish to study in English speaking countries, the need for learning the IELTS test is apparently inevitable. Then, the questions have to be raised: what kinds of activities can be applied in teaching listening? How do the teachers train students the IELTS listening tests for the correct answer? With these questions in mind as the driving force, this study is carried out in order to find out some activities to improve the students' listening comprehension in the IELTS listening tests.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Listening plays a significant role as the foundation to acquire the language. According to Howatt and Dakin (1974), listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, the speaker's grammar and vocabulary and

ABSTRACT

Listening skill competency is one of the challenges of all four English skills for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. This study investigates the correlation and the influence between listening strategies and listening comprehension. The objective of the study is to find out whether pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities are the most effective activities to students' listening comprehension. Thirty students in the University of Computer Studies, Mandalay in 2018-2019 academic years participated in this study. The research data was collected by using IELTS test. It was found that while-listening activities for improving listening skill had a very positive impact on the students.

KEYWORDS: *listening comprehension, listening strategies, pre-listening activities, while-listening activities, post-listening activities, IELTS listening test*

I. INTRODUCTION

In Myanmar, the English language is being learnt as a compulsory foreign language from the kindergarten to high school life. However, although students have exposure to English language, only reading and writing are emphasized mostly. Most of the students are weak at speaking and listening skills. It is true that though they were good readers, they had many problems with listening skill which is not only for communication purposes but also the basis for learning speaking, writing and reading skills. Listening can also help students build vocabulary, develop language proficiency, and improve language usage (Barker, 1971).

comprehension of meaning. An able listener is capable of doing these four things simultaneously. Ronald and Roskelly (1985) define listening as an active process requiring the same skills of prediction, hypothesizing, checking, revising, and generalizing that writing and reading demand. Listening is an interactive, not a passive skill, to which the students need to apply much effort and practice. Also, he states that listening involves actively perceiving and constructing from a stream of sound.

In order to do well in listening, the listener must have sufficient knowledge of the language he or she is listening to. Listening comprehension, according to Vandergrift (2002), is an interactive process where listeners use both prior knowledge and linguistic knowledge in understanding messages. In other words, both "top-down" and "bottom-up" processes are at work in the listening activity.

Furthermore, listening activities can support students in interpretation of the listening text. Students through some listening activities can develop their understanding level. Karakas (2002) states listening activities such as pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening that can enhance comprehension of listening texts.

A. Pre-listening Activities

Pre-listening activities are the first step of the listening process and this stage help students make decisions what to listen for and to put the emphasis on the content meaning

while listening. For instance, teacher can start the pre-listening stage with a short discussion concerned with the topic to know the students' views to the listening text which they are going to listen. In this way, students' background knowledge of the topic will be activated. By using all the available information, students can predict what they will hear, and their comprehension of the text will be facilitated.

Mary Underwood (1989) states that pre-listening work can consist of a whole range of activities, including:

- giving background information from the teacher;
- reading something relevant and looking at pictures by students;
- discussion and answer session;
- written exercises;
- following instructions for the while-listening activity;
- consideration of how the while-listening activity will be done.

In addition, Buck (2001) describes that listening is a complex process in which the listener takes the incoming data and interprets it based on a wide variety of linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge. Briefly, the linguistic knowledge includes knowledge of phonology, lexis, syntax, semantics, discourse structure, pragmatics and sociolinguistics. The non-linguistic knowledge included knowledge of the topic, the context and general knowledge about the world and how it works. Thus, vocabulary and grammar knowledge are important issues in listening comprehension. Learning new words and grammatical structures in pre-listening activities will lead students to better listening comprehension by recognizing them in the listening text. According to Yagang (1993 in Kral ed. 1994) this knowledge not only provides encouragement but also develops students' confidence in their ability to deal with listening problems.

B. While-listening Activities

While-listening activities can be defined as all tasks that students are asked to do during the time of listening to the text. As far as listening comprehension is concerned, the purpose of while-listening activities is to assist students develop the skill of eliciting messages from spoken language. It is the moment where students are actually exposed to the recorded text. In some cases, students will need to listen more than once to complete the activity. Rixon (1986) indicates that at the while-listening stage, students should concentrate on comprehension, whether they have understood important information from the text rather than interpreting long questions or giving full answers. The aim of the while-listening stage for students is to understand the message of the text, not catching every word. Therefore, during this stage, most of the while-listening activities focus on listening for the gist, listening for specific information, and listening for speaker's attitude or opinion related to language knowledge and cultural information students had in pre-listening activities to get listening comprehension.

C. Post-listening Activities

According to Rixon (1986) and Underwood (1989), post-listening activities allow the students to reflect on the language from the text; on sound, grammar and vocabulary as they last longer than while-listening activities so the students have time to think, discuss or write. Some of the post-listening activities may be the extensions of all the exercises carried out at pre-listening and while-listening

work, but some may not be related to them at all and present a totally independent part of the listening session. Besides, students in post-listening activities have chance to assess how much they have understood in a listening task. On the other hand, teachers can integrate listening skills with other skills, for example, communicative skill. They can allow students to make discussion on an issue about the listening task. Students in the discussion try to use the words and structures they have learnt in the listening task and they promote their communicative competence to their listening comprehension.

III. METHOD

Quantitative approach was used to analyse the scores of students in listening in test. In this study, students had to answer 10 questions. Different listening activities such as pre-listening activities, while-listening activities and post-listening activities were applied to reveal which of these activities are more useful for students in developing listening comprehension. Collected data has been used to generate statistics to demonstrate the difference between pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities in the listening process.

A. Data Collection

The participants of this study were 30 students from computer science major at the University of Computer Studies, Mandalay. The listening test which was used in the text was a conversation between a man and a woman. Pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities were prepared for students in the groups.

In the first group, pre-listening activities were introduced by discussing prior knowledge of the topic between teacher and students, and they made predictions to the answers in the IELTS listening test before they listened to the recording. Students in the next group listened to the text and then they were given the questions and they listened to the text again (while-listening activities). Thirdly, students in the group were given the questions after they listened to the text (post-listening activities), and students were allowed to take notes if they wished. The results were analysed and showed in tables.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to the quantitative data, the first group students who were given pre-listening activities like discussion of the background knowledge to the topic and prediction about the answer before they listened to the text had a test and it was found that their average was 8.2. In the second group, students listened to the text first and after seeing the questions, they listened again to emphasize the gist, specific information and the speaker's attitude. The data was found that their average score was 9.2. Students in the third group were given the questions after they listened to the text and they were allowed to take notes while listening. Then, their average finding was 7.8. The test scores of the students are presented in table 1.

The collected data showed that both pre-listening activities and post-listening activities almost equally affected listening comprehension of students whereas while-listening activities played an important role in listening comprehension. The reason for the first group students is that they had some ideas about the listening text beforehand,

and so they did not concentrate on the other points. For the third group, as they were not given any questions beforehand, they listened to all points carefully and answered the test with the help of note-taking. With while-listening activities, the students were given the second chance to understand the detail information which gave them the opportunity to better listening comprehension.

Table 1 Listening Test Scores

Students	Pre-listening activities	While-listening activities	Post-listening activities
Student 1	9	10	9
Student 2	9	10	9
Student 3	9	10	9
Student 4	9	10	8
Student 5	9	10	8
Student 6	8	9	8
Student 7	8	9	7
Student 8	7	8	7
Student 9	7	8	7
Student 10	7	8	6

Table 2: Mean, Median and Sample Standard Deviation

	Mean	Median	Sample Standard Deviation
Pre-listening activities	8.2	8.5	0.918
While-listening activities	9.2	9.5	0.978
Post-listening activities	7.8	8	1.033

Standard deviation is directly related to accuracy. If the data spread is small, then the mean is more accurate. Small standard deviation results in better predictions. In table 1, it is seen that the standard deviations are low so there is a low possibility of having errors in the statistical predictions.

V. CONCLUSION

In learning a foreign language, students have to improve all the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among them, listening skill is fundamental to

upgrade the language skill. This study highlights some effective activities in developing listening comprehension. These activities, pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening, have been suggested by various scholars around the world and it is believed that these activities will also work well with the students of Myanmar. Finally, it is hoped that this study will give some help and benefits for both the teachers and learners of English as a foreign language.

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