

Research Article

A STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IRANIAN EFL LEARNER'S AWARENESS OF FORM CLASS AND LISTENING COMPREHENSION AT INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

***Maryam Amiri, Shahrokh Jahandar and Morteza Khodabandehlou**

Department of English Language, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Guilan, Iran

**Author for Correspondence*

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the relationship and the impact of awareness of form class on Iranian EFL learner's listening comprehension at KISH central branch institute, Tehran, Iran. This study focused on intermediate learners. For this purpose, 232 adult EFL learners who expressed a willingness to participate in this research as volunteers. Therefore, 70 learners were selected randomly for this study and they were divided into experimental and control groups, each group with 35 learners. Then, having being homogenized by an OPT (Oxford Placement Test) after that both groups sat for a pre-test which was TOEFL listening comprehension test. The purpose of this test was to measure the learner's initial knowledge of listening comprehension ability. After listening comprehension pre-test the learners prepared for the awareness structural linguistic test, in order to estimate their awareness knowledge level. After pretest listening both control and experimental groups sat for awareness test in order to estimate their linguistic structure levels. Afterwards, the experimental group received treatment based on linguistic structure test awareness (verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs). However, the control group received no treatment. The treatment was within 8 weeks, and each session 30 minutes were specified for teaching syntactic structures. Finally, at the end of the course both groups sat for the post –test of listening comprehension. Then the statistical analysis was through ANCOVA. It was explored from the study that learner's awareness (verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs) of form class improved listening ability. So, the experimental group did better than the control group according to the post-test observation.

Key Words: *Awareness, Listening Comprehension, EFL learners, Form Class, Intermediate Level*

INTRODUCTION

Most research regarding language learning strategies has been devoted to reading, writing and speaking; however, empirical studies from the past decade have begun to focus more on listening comprehension in language acquisition comprehension plays a role in language acquisition. Listening has been neglected not only in research, but also in awareness of the language classroom because listening is viewed as an implicit, or passive, language skill. Buck (2001) emphasized that numerous interacting strategies are involved in the process of listening comprehension. In his opinion there is a direct relationship between listening process and what speakers have in their minds which affect the interpretation of the information"

Significant and Purpose of the Study

Listening plays a vital role in daily life. People listen for different purposes like communication, information, academic purposes, and entertainment. In addition, without listening skill, no communication can be achieved. So in this research the aim is to reveal that if Iranian intermediate EFL learners aware of English language elements and features about language, they can improve their listening skills. The study also gains significance aim that it may shed some lights for the teachers/tutors dealing with classes with students having different language proficiencies, as part of the problem may be related to the individual differences among the learners to encourage intermediate EFL learners to practice good listening skills in the class form by working on their awareness. In general, the main purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship between Iranian EFL learner's awareness of form class and

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listening comprehension at intermediate level. In accordance with the methodological phases of this study, the specific objectives of this research are as follow:

1. To determine the degree of Iranian EFL intermediate learner's awareness and their listening comprehension in the class form.
2. To identify the learners to become awareness enough, if they improve their listening comprehension.

Statement of the Problem

Iranian students usually study the English language for seven years, Iranian high schools and pre-university centers, and also they spend most of the time classes in different institute's in order to understand, learn and speak English, but very few of them leave the system with the ability to use it communicatively. Famous Iranian language testing and teaching specialists, such as Farhady *et al.*, (1994), have already confirmed that even Iranian students at the university level are not able to use the English language for communicative purposes as they are expected to. Listening comprehension skill is ways of help intermediate EFL learners listen to something more effective. Listening is a very important skill, especially for tutors. Many teachers/tutors tend to talk too much during a tutorial session. This defeats the purpose of tutoring, which is to allow students to learn by discussion. Rather than turning the session into a mini-lecture, tutors must actively listen and encourage their students to become active learners. Giving a student your full attention is sometimes difficult because you start to run out of time, or you find yourself thinking about your next question; however, the time you spend actively listening to your student will result in a quality tutoring session. A similar experiment was conducted on the relationship between EFL learners in the form class and reading comprehension by Jahandar (1996). The result indicated that awareness or recognition of grammatical units of a word (morphology) plays an important role in comprehending texts. The result also suggested that EFL learners pick up graphic cues and make a guess about what appears on the printed page. Language Awareness can be defined as explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use. For example, Language Awareness issues include exploring the benefits that can be derived from developing a good knowledge about language, a conscious understanding of how languages work, of how people learn them and use them. Language awareness is fundamental to knowing who our learners are: In getting to know our students and how best to support their learning, we need to understand what language(s) they bring with them to school. It cannot be assumed, particularly in Queensland, that all learners come through the classroom door speaking the same language as their teachers.

Research Questions

In this study, the researcher will focus on the relationship between Iranian EFL learner's awareness of form class and listening comprehension. Considering the problem stated and the purpose of the study the following research questions could be developed:

- Q1. Is there any significant relationship between the degree of Iranian EFL intermediate learner's awareness of form class and their listening comprehension?
- Q2. If the learners become aware enough, they can improve their listening comprehension?

Research Hypotheses

Due to the aforementioned discussion and research questions cited above, the following null hypotheses could be formulated:

1. H₀: There is no significant relationship between the degree of Iranian EFL intermediate learner's awareness of class form and their listening comprehension.
2. H₀: If the learners become aware enough, they cannot improve their listening comprehension.

Review of Literature

In modern language teaching today, relating individually with the students on academic basis and trying to learn more about the student profile provides further advantages for the language learner and the teacher to meet the program goals and objectives. The study of affect and personality factors such as awareness, self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, determination, anxiety, extroversion, character types and

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motivation is one of the most recent trends in second language acquisition (SLA) research. There is a noticeable shift in research focus from behavioral questions, to the cognitive realm, and, more recently, to the emotional domain. Listening comprehension is an important language skill that language learners need to develop. Furthermore, the development of all other language skills is interwoven with listening skills, it is said to be at the heart of both first and second language learning (Vandergrift, 2007). Language learning relies greatly on listening and it plays a fundamental role in language acquisition and makes it possible for the learners to interact orally. "It provides the foundation for all facets of language learning/acquisition, and plays a life-long role in the processes of communication (Guo and Wills, 2005)". Listening is believed that listening comprehension is a highly integrative skill and is vital in learning/acquiring a language and, also, is of great help to get other language skills (Vandergrift 1999; Holden 2004). Most research regarding language learning strategies has been devoted to reading, writing and speaking; however, empirical studies from the past decade have begun to focus more on listening comprehension in language acquisition comprehension plays a role in language acquisition. Then, in the late 1940s James Brown, one of the fathers of listening comprehension studies, were the first to identify the role of listening in language acquisition. About this same time, Charles Frie's (1945) Oral Approach was very popular, and it emphasized the goal of —receptive understanding of the language when it is spoken" (p. 8). Listening has been neglected not only in research, but also in awareness of the language classroom because listening is viewed as an implicit, or passive, language skill. Buck (2001) emphasized that numerous interacting strategies are involved in the process of listening comprehension. In his opinion there is a direct relationship between listening process and what speakers have in their minds which affect the interpretation of the information. "Understanding is continually modified as incoming stimuli interact with previous input and other existing contextual information (Gary, 2007)". Vandergrift (2007) asserted that "Research into L2 listening is important because a better understanding of the process will inform pedagogy. Students who learn to control their listening processes can enhance their comprehension. This, in turn, affects the development of other skills and overall success in L2 learning". Studies (Gruba, 2004; Smidt and Hegelheimer, 2004) have revealed that authentic digital video programming is a significant instrument that helps achieve higher levels of input which will lead to higher output, in turn."With the appearance of new technologies, especially in the education realm, teachers should take advantages of them to help individuals develop their skills/sub-skills in learning a new language. With the increased awareness of the need to help second language learners develop effective listening skills and with the greater availability of technology, nowadays, teachers are able to explore more creative ways of teaching listening in and out of the class using authentic materials. To address the roles of attention and awareness in L2 development, it is important that listening skill investigations include and operationalize these constructs. Recently, several studies have employed either post-exposure questionnaires (e.g., Robinson, 1997) or think-aloud protocols (e.g., Leow, 2001; Rosa and O'Neill, 1999). The latter studies methodologically established that reported attention was paid to targeted morphological and syntactic forms/structures in the L2 data before analyses were conducted to address the effects of attention and awareness. For example, Leow (2001) requested participants to think aloud while performing an experimental task. Subsequent coding of these non-metalinguistic protocols revealed three levels of awareness: noticing, reporting, and rule formation. Studies employing concurrent data elicitation procedures found positive support for the role of awareness in L2 development. More specifically, these studies reported that (a) awareness at the levels of noticing and understanding contributed substantially to a significant increase in learner's ability to take in (Leow, 2001; Rosa and O'Neill, 1999) and produce in writing (Leow, 2001) the targeted form or structure, (b) awareness at the level of understanding led to significant more intake (Leow, 2001; Rosa and O'Neill, 1999) and written production (Leow, 2001) when compared to awareness at the level of noticing, (c) there appears to be a correlation between awareness at the level of understanding and usage of hypothesis testing and rule formation (Leow, 2001; Rosa and O'Neill, 1999), and (d) there appears to be a correlation between level of awareness and formal

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instruction or directions to search for a rule (Rosa and O'Neill, 1999). In other words, more awareness appeared to translate into more intakes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants of the Study

The participants were 232 Iranian EFL learners between the ages of 17 and 31 in KISH institute of Tehran, Iran. In this study, the population included all couples, referred to the researchers within a space of two months. Purposive sampling with random assignment method was used in the research. The study was conducted on 70 respondents. The sample size comprised of 35 (for experimental group) and 35 (for control group). The sample was randomly assigned to treatment and control groups based on odd and even numbers.

Table 1: Sample Size

Group	Number of Respondent
Experimental Group	35
Control Group	35
Total	70

Materials

All the instruments were administered in the English language, as the respondents were all English language learners. As to the purpose of the study, four types of tests were prepared. They included: (1) OPT for matching the participants on their levels of proficiency in each group; (2) awareness test; (3) a pre-test on listening comprehension; (4) a post-test on listening comprehension to measure the participant's achievement as a result of the treatment. More information about these instruments will be provided in the following order.

Procedure

As it was already noted, the participants were being homogenized by OPT test and randomly assigned into two groups. Each group embraced 35 students. After that the learners sat for awareness test in order to homogenize their linguistic structures knowledge. Then, the two other tests were administrated listening comprehension pre-tests and post-tests. After the period of eight weeks, which was the second stage, the experimental group (those who would be training in the next term by the teaching structural linguistics (verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs) and the control group took the same tests in the class.

Statistical Analysis

The quantitative data collected from this study were coded and entered into the SPSS version 16 (package for the social sciences software) for Windows Seven; a statistics computer program which was employed to process, analyze and interpret the row data.

RESULTS AND DISSCUSSION

Introduction

This part represents the result and analysis of the data.

Restatement of Hypotheses

In this step, the researcher checked some variables that would be investigated, to find the difference between the experimental and control groups. The frequency of both the experimental and control groups were employed to test for differences across the program. The findings revealed that the mean, standard deviation and variance across the group program for experimental and control groups in pre and post-test. With reference to the following Table, it can be concluded that there is significant difference between the score of experimental and control groups in post-test in comparison of the pre-test results. For mean comparison, the assumption of equal variance for the experimental and control groups was explored.

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Equality of variances was examined prior to running the differences. Write one kind of test for this part because it is ANCOVA.

Table 2: The learner’s Performance in Pre-Test and Post-Test

group	Pre-Test		Post-Test		N
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Experimental	56.4000	12.21426	74.7429	14.12412	35
Control	57.0857	12.70334	58.3143	11.94786	35
Total	56.7429	12.37539	66.5286	15.39784	70

In accord with the above table, the total average scale is improved form pre-test to post-test. It can be concluded that this type of treatment can be cause to enhance the language learner’s performance in terms of mean and standard deviation of pre-test and post-test performance of language learners. Similarly, the value of partial eta squared in pre-test was equal .588 (refer to following table). That is to say, that this value can affected 51% of pre-test can cause to enhance the results of leaner’s performance. Therefore, It can be concluded that this type of treatment can be cause to enhance the language learner’s performance in terms of pre-test and post-test performance of language learners ($p < 0.001$).

Table 3: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power ^b
Corrected Model	11568.294 ^a	2	5784.147	80.886	.000	.707	1.000
Intercept	1360.854	1	1360.854	19.030	.000	.221	.990
Pre	6845.080	1	6845.080	95.722	.000	.588	1.000
Gro	5042.077	1	5042.077	70.509	.000	.513	1.000
Error	4791.149	67	71.510				
Total	326183.000	70					
Corrected Total	16359.443	69					

a. R Squared = .707 (Adjusted R Squared = .698) Dependent Variable: post-test

b. Computed using alpha = .05

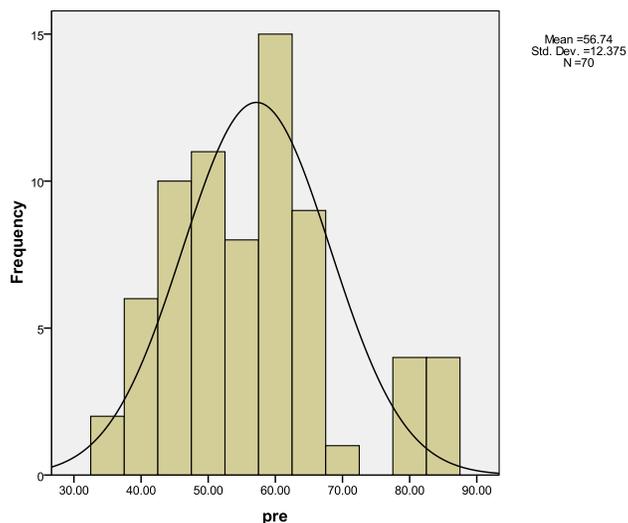


Figure 1: Test of normality

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In response to the relationship between Iranian EFL learner's awareness of form class and listening comprehension, Figure 1 demonstrated the obvious increase of learners performance from the pre-test group to post-test group. The plots of the mean detected a simple main effect or interaction effect of differences between the groups of the indicated groups of respondents, respectively. It is noticed here that L2 learners at the intermediate proficiency levels scored poorer at the pre-test and also the performance of the L2 learners in post-test was increased after training and short interval time.

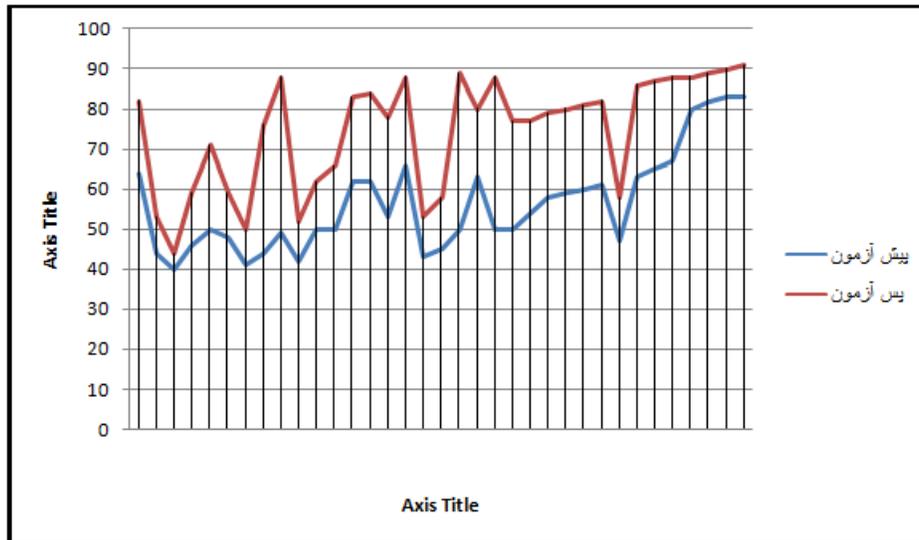


Figure 2: The Experimental Performance in Pre-Test and Post-Test

Based on the data above, the results indicated the pre-test and post-test of experimental group were significantly higher enhanced. Therefore, the finding once again indicated that the training was effective in improving among Iranian EFL learners, so there is positively significant difference in achieved scores by experimental group.

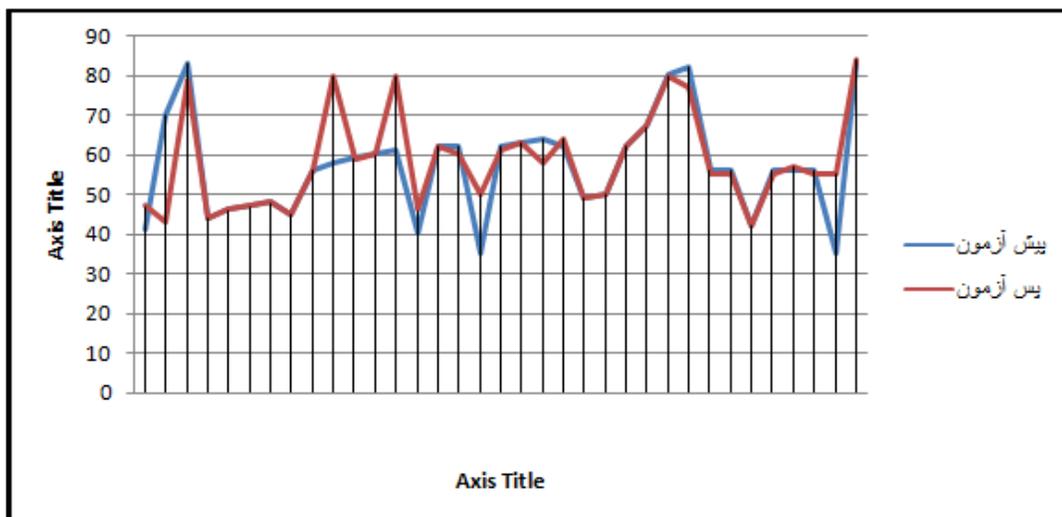


Figure 3: The Control Performance in Pre-Test and Post-Test

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With reference with the above table, there is no significant difference in achieved scores by control group. The presented results depict that there were main effect differences amongst the performance of English language learner's control group in pre-test and post-test stages.

Conclusion

By this conclusion, the results of data analysis in this study were confirmed. As a result the null hypotheses "There is no significant relationship between the degree of Iranian EFL intermediate learner's awareness of class form and their listening comprehension", "If the learners become aware enough, they cannot improve their listening comprehension" are rejected so it can be concluded that awareness feedbacks have a significant effect on the Iranian EFL learner's listening comprehension. The learner's who were taught and aware by structural linguistics such as verbs; noun, adjectives and adverbs are superior to the learners who weren't aware of these structures.

Implication

The findings in this study involve some implications for researchers, educators and task designers. On the basis of, the outcomes of the research, our recommendation for educators should be to raise learner's awareness about different listening micro-skills within their listening classes. Hence, they could take advantage of these findings and pay more awareness of the significance of consciousness raising about different features of structural linguistic and thereby boost the listening comprehension of these learners in the listening courses. As EFL teachers, they have experienced that after learners arrived at university and have a listening course they are very confused about this and do not understand how to perform listening tasks and once the teacher cannot teach these skills, they lose their motivation for learning and this introduces serious consequences. To prevent these issues, it is preferred that educators in the field raise awareness of these learners about different listening micro-skills, which constitute the aspects of listening comprehension.

Suggestions for Further Study

During the course of this study several interesting areas emerged that were also linked with the effects of Iranian EFL learners awareness on the listening comprehension. These areas were, however, outside the scope of this thesis. The researcher believes that these are fertile areas for future research:

1. The other domain of language (grammar, reading and writing) skill can be investigated through the Iranian EFL learner's awareness.
2. The impact of other types features instead of awareness (such as anxiety) on listening comprehension need to be investigated.
3. The relationship between gender and awareness and listening comprehension: This is a relatively new area of study and one which could provide very interesting results on the impact that gender differences have on Iranian EFL learner's awareness on the listening comprehension.
4. The other levels of EFL learners in form classes also should have some interesting impacts on the learner's awareness, pre intermediate, advanced, etc for illustration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my gratitude firstly to the grate and merciful God, and then to Dr. Shahrokh Jahandar, Dr. Morteza Khodabandehlou, who helped me in planning statistical analysis and I am also thanks to the Iranian EFL learners for their assistance in collecting the data for this study, Most of all, Thanks are also due to my family especially my sister who encouraged me during this research.

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