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THE IMPACT OF NOTE TAKING STRATEGY ON IRANIAN EFL AT INTERMEDIATE LEVEL OF LISTENING ABILITY

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ABSTRACT

Listening in language teaching refers to a complex process that allows us to understand spoken language. The current study, conducted in Iran with an experimental design, investigated the effectiveness of teaching listening strategies delivered in L1 (Persian) and its effect on listening comprehension in L2. One listening strategy: note-taking was taught over 6 sessions during a semester. The participants in this study are 100 learners in Ariana's institute in Bandar Anzali. First an OPT will be administered between them. Then 60 learners are chosen. Their score is one standard deviation below the mean. After that, the researcher divides them into two groups, experimental and control groups randomly. A pre listening test (10 questions are selected from Jack. C. Richard's book, 1986) was administered to both groups, and their scores were recorded. Then just the experimental group went under 6 sessions of treatment on listening. After the treatment, again both groups sat for the same test, but this time as a post-test. All the recorded scores were evaluated. Results gathered on the post intervention listening test revealed that listening strategies delivered in L1 led to a statistically significant improvement in their discrete listening scores.

Keywords: *Note Taking; EFL Learner; Intermediate; Listening; Teaching Note Taking*

INTRODUCTION

Short-term memory alone cannot possibly keep all the necessary details and fulfill the intermediate process of decoding in the act of interpreting (Mahmoodzadeh, 1992). Notes are therefore suggested as a means of an aid to assist the interpreter in retaining and retrieving the information. Note-taking, especially in long interpretation, is a skill employed in the process of conducting consecutive interpreting to better the quality of the interpretation. Note-taking skill has the direct, consequential effect of the interpreter's rendition. Qualified Interpreters are expected to be proficient in taking notes in order to carry out consecutive interpreting efficiently and effectively. As note-taking is a must-have skill for interpreters to acquire in performing consecutive interpreting, it is necessary for an interpreter to be well versed in the skills.

It is generally believed that note-taking has a facilitative effect on listening comprehension. Note taking is perceived by examinees as a strategy that facilitates remembering the listening content.

Statement of Problem

Listening skills are very important in everyday life. One must understand what people are saying and what is happening around them. In order for this to be done effectively, one must be an active listener. This is achieved when the listener is listening for meaning; when the listener checks if the statement has been heard and understood correctly.

According to Farhadi *et al.*, (2000) listening comprehension is one of the most fundamental language skills and also the most complicated one. Primarily, communication is feasible only when the two parties involved are able to comprehend each other. Though one can make himself understood by various means (e.g., dramatizing).

Many of Iranian EFL learners worry that they pass different courses like speaking and listening ones in the institute; however, they fail to listen in a real situation of a language exam. This claim has the evident support of a pilot study done on a group of Iranian intermediate FEL learners in which their listening ability was tested and traces of failure were proved to exist. Some of the problems in listening ability can be the following:

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1. They don't have any concentration on listening.
2. Their ears are not attuned to what they hear.
3. They don't have enough time to fix materials in their mind so they forgot them
4. They forgot subject easily

The nature of the problem stated makes Iranian English teachers try to utilize various methods with the purpose of facilitating learning the listening skill in the classroom, but such methodologies most often lead to failure. Among the techniques used to improve the listening ability, perhaps, the position of note taking seems to be ignored. It is widely accepted by educators that note taking is valuable tools that can help increase the retention of information (Carrier & Titus, 1981). According to Ornstein (1994), note taking is one of many "cognitive processes that students need in order to facilitate their own learning and to improve their academic performance.

Research Question and Hypothesis

This study will answer the following question:

RQ: Does Note Taking strategy have an impact on Iranian at intermediate level of EFL listening ability?

H0: Applying Note Taking strategy does not lead to more acceptable listening proficiency.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methodology

At the beginning, a t-test was carried out to identify the two groups' language proficiency levels and to ensure that two groups are comparable. During this test, both groups were allowed to take notes and to review their notes. They listened to each passage twice, and were given approximately 5 minutes (more than adequate based on the author's actual experience) to finish all the multiple choice questions. The mean score of the total scores of all subjects in the test was 63.58 (full score 100). Therefore, their proficiency level was measured as lower-intermediate. The t-test value was 0.243, much higher than the critical point of 0.05, showing that there was no significant difference between the proficiency levels of the two groups. In other words, the test performances of the two groups were comparable.

In the following tests, the experimental group was allowed to take notes and review their own notes during the tests, while the control group was asked not to take notes at all. Right after the t-test that is conducted to determine the subjects' levels, the detail test was administered on the same day. The two groups listened to the passage for the detail test twice and were asked to answer five questions concerning detailed information in the passage. Immediately after that, the two groups listened to the passage for the summary test twice, and then were asked to write down a summary in 15 minutes. The answer sheets and the notes of the experimental group were collected for later analysis after the tests, the subjects were asked to finish a questionnaire, which was designed to investigate the subjects' perception on note-taking, their attitudes towards it as well as their note-taking strategies in general. The questions set in the questionnaire pointed directly to the concerns of this study. The original version of the questionnaire consisted of 10 questions. After a pilot study of ten subjects, it was revised and contained ten key questions. The subjects were instructed to answer the multiple choice questions honestly so as to ensure the validity of the study.

Subject

The subjects of the study are Iranian EFL learners in Ariana's institute in Anzali branch, Iran. First an OPT is administered to 100 learners. Then 60 learners whose scores are one standard deviation below the mean are selected. Next, they are divided into groups, experimental and control group. A pretest of listening is administered to both groups. It is a listening test that learners should answer 10 questions the learner's score are objective.

Instrument

OPT Test

The students who participated in this study were assigned as intermediate level students, but in order to make sure of the homogeneity of the selected groups, a test of OPT was administered. The Oxford Placement Test measures a test taker's ability to communicate in English. It gives the information

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needed to find out about a person's language level. The results approved that there was little difference in the performance of the students.

Pre-test Post-test

After assigning the homogenized participants into experimental and control groups, both groups took a pre-test in which each of the students should answer 10 questions from Jack. C. Richard's book (1986). After 6 sessions of the treatment for the experimental group, again both groups sat for the post-test which was the same test that had been used as the pre-test. This time their scores were recorded again.

Procedure

Step one the first step was to homogenize a sample of intermediate female Iranian EFL learners. In order to do this, an OPT test was administrated to the students. The participants in the OPT test were 100 male learners, 60 students among those who are scoring are one standard deviation below the mean is selected.

Step two: the selected subjects were randomly assigned to two groups of 30 students as the experimental and control groups, and since this study was based on quasi-experimental design, a pretest was administrated to both groups before the application of instruction.

In the pre-test each of the students in both groups was asked to answer to 10 listening questions from Jack. C. Richard's book (1986).

Step three: the control group went under the usual instruction of ILI, in which they were learning English as a foreign language. The experimental group, in addition to the usual instruction in the institute, received 6 sessions of treatment, each lasting for 20 minutes and twice a week, on how to take Note correctly. In the process of the treatment, they listened to native speakers, they took note, words, and phrases containing listening parts after the teacher or the native speaker on CD, trying to take note and keep the key sentences.

Step four: after the treatment, the same test that was used as the pre-test was administrated to both groups, but this time as the post-test. Again the scores were recorded by the teacher.

Step five: the recorded scores both in the pre-test and in the post-test were evaluated by the teacher.

Step six: the results were compared using the SPSS software in order to find the effectiveness of Note taking strategy on Iranian EFL at intermediate level of listening ability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings showed that there was a significant difference in scores for experimental group and control groups (t value = 10.083). This result implied that note taking strategy on listening for the experimental group has been effective in helping the language learners in the experimental group perform better in the listening test. Practicing note taking strategy improved the listening ability of the participants in the experimental group.

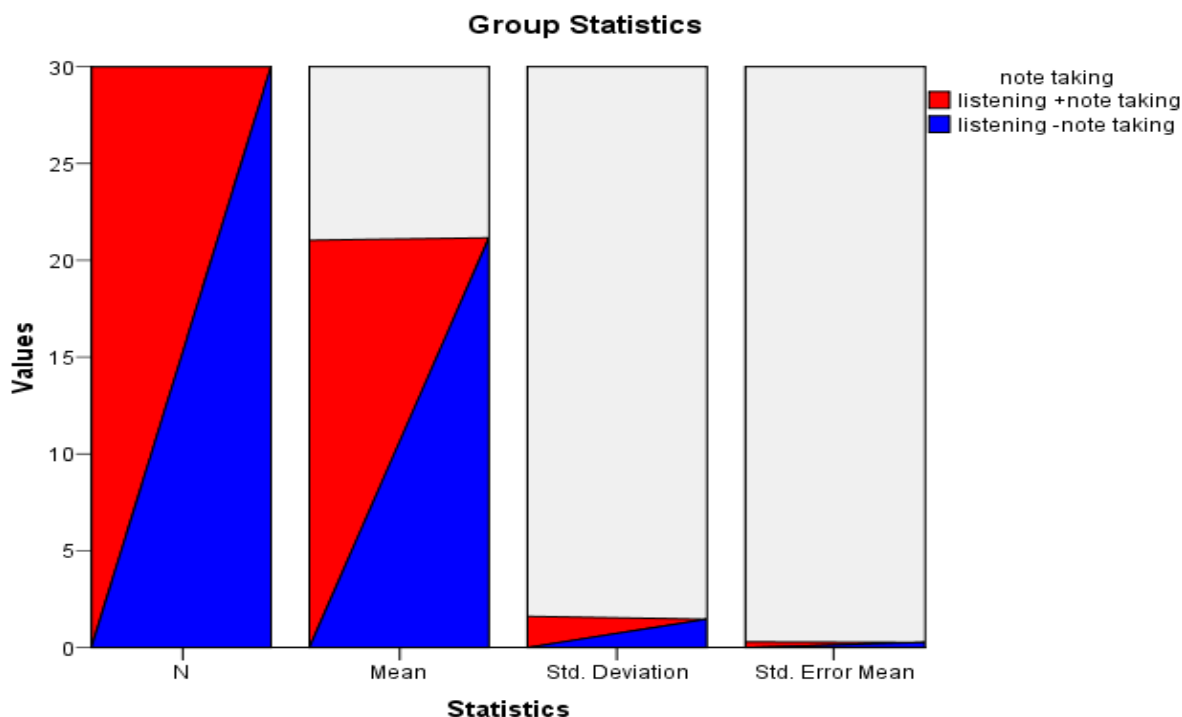
Group Statistics

Data Analysis

The data of the current study were analyzed via applying the following statistical methods: a t value (t -test) was calculated between the posttest scores of listening in the two participant groups to show the effect in the first hypothesis of the study. Two separate ANCOVAs were calculated between the scores of pretest and posttest of the experimental group as well as the pretest and the posttest of the control group.

Note taking	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Listening	+note taking 30	23.6333	1.37674	.25136
	30	21.6000	1.65258	.30172
	-note taking			

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The summary of the descriptive analysis of the data in this study has been illustrated in table (1) below:

Table 1: The summary of the descriptive analysis for the data related to the posttest of the experimental and the control group of the study

Groups	N	Mean	S.D.
Listening + Note taking	30	23.63	1.34
Listening -Note taking	30	21.03	1.62

As table (1) indicates, the mean of the +role-play group (the experimental group) is higher than that of the –role-play group (the control group). Accordingly, the number of participants in each group was 30 ($N_{+RP}=30$; $N_{-RP}=30$); in addition, the amount of the standard deviation was lower in the experimental group as compared to the control group of the study which indicates that the experimental group posttest scores are more homogenous than those of the control group.

The summary of the inferential analysis of the data in this study has been illustrated in tables (2) and (3) below:

Table 2: The summary of the t-test between the posttest scores of the experimental and the control group of the study

Variance	t	Mean Difference
Equal variances not assumed	4.64758	2.60000

According to table (2), the result of applying the t-test of the study was an observed t of 4.64758 ($t_{obs}=4.64758$). The obtained t-observed is higher than the critical value of t in the t-Student table with the degree of freedom of 56 ($df = 56$) and the level of significance of 0.05 ($Sig. = 0.05$) for the two-tailed (null) hypothesis as to be 2.000 ($t_{crit} = 2.000$). Such a result ($t_{obs}>t_{crit}$) rejects the null hypothesis of the current study.

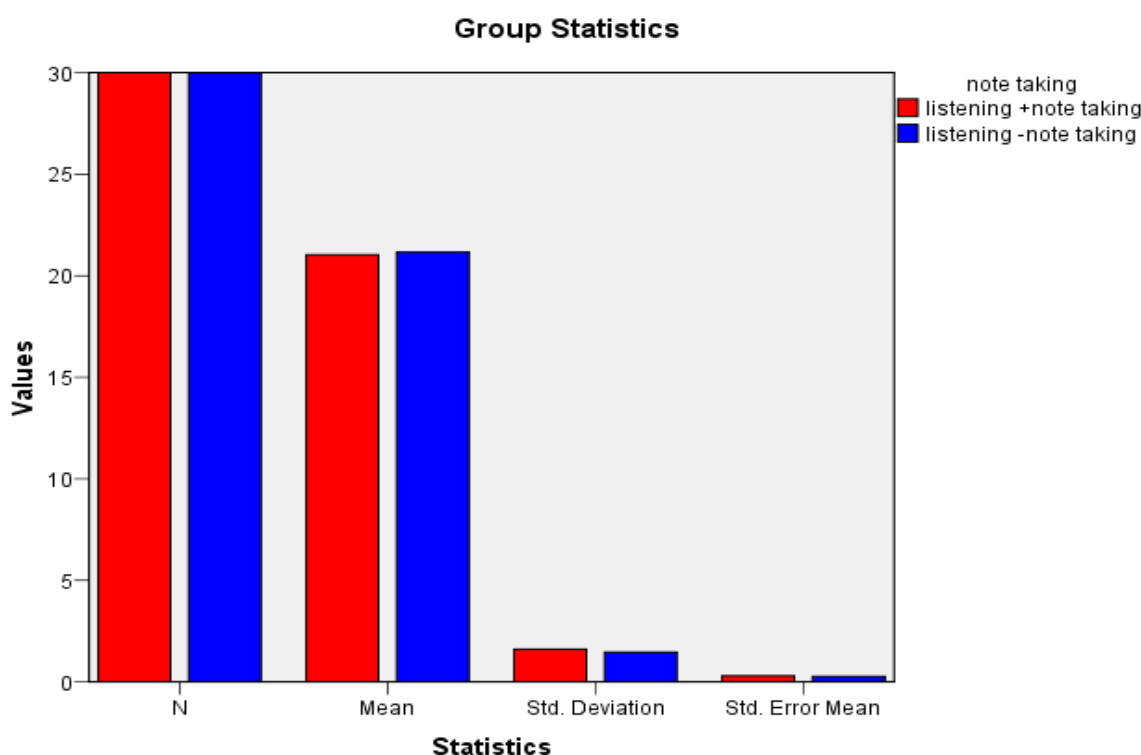
Table (3) below represents the results of two ANCOVA coefficients calculated separately between the pretest and the posttest of the experimental and the control group of the study:

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Table 3: The covariance matrix between the pretest and the posttest scores of the experimental and the control group of the study

Group	Covariance
Experimental	1.13
Control	2.06

Table (3) indicates that the coefficient of ANCOVA for the experimental group is lower than that of the control group. This means that the pretest and the posttest scores in the control group are closer to each other as compared to those in the experimental group, which represents that treating the experimental group with role-play activities has resulted in increasing the range of their speaking scores in the posttest.



Independent Samples Test

Levene's Test for t-test for Equality of Means												
		Equality of Variances	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	Upper
Listening	Equal variances assumed		.049	.826	-.336	58	.738	-.13333	.39702	-.92805		.66139
	Equal variances not assumed				-.336	57.499	.738	-.13333	.39702	-.92820		.66154

The results in tables (2) and (3) indicated that the null hypothesis of the study was rejected. This rejection means that the independent variable of the study affected the dependent variable; thus, it can be

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concluded that using note-taking strategy as classroom activities enhance, in Iranian EFL learners, a better performance in a test of listening.

Based on the obtained results, certain justifications regarding the effectiveness of using note-taking strategy on Iranian EFL learners' listening ability can be made. Accordingly, the participant experimental group seemed to succeed because they provide the student with a record of information that she may review. From this perspective, notes are valuable because they 1) help the learner rehearse important content, and 2) can serve as a mnemonic device that can help the student to remember parts of the content that were not included in the notes themselves.

The second category suggests that the act of taking notes is important because it 1) increases attention and concentration, 2) encourages students to process the material at a deeper level, and 3) provides a means of connecting new learning with prior knowledge (Carrier & Titus). These two categories imply that note taking can boost achievement by acting as a product (the former category) or as a process (the latter category).

As a future perspective regarding the present study, researcher are advised to expand the scope of this research study from 3 limited participant intermediate classes to more classes with different levels of language proficiency. Additionally, the experiment of the study can be replicable to different other geographical areas and different institutes as well as different linguistic situations; English is not the only language to which the experimentation of this study is implementable. The study can be repeated across genders (male and female) in terms of student participants and teacher participants. Also, the sample size in this research study (N = 60) may be converted into a larger size of Iranian (non-Iranian) EFL participants to find out whether or not the results can be the same.

Hypothesis Analysis: As mentioned earlier, there was a noticeable improvement in the performance of participants in the experimental group, who went under the treatment. As a result, the null hypothesis that note taking strategy have an impact on Iranian at intermediate level of EFL listening ability was rejected.

Conclusion

In the present approach to teach a foreign language, Communicative Approach, comprehension is one of the most important areas to teach since the purpose of teaching a language is to make the learners prepared to communicate effectively.

The research findings on whether note-taking promotes encoding have been mixed. Hult *et al.*, (1984), for example, found that note-taking does involve semantic encoding; but Henk and Stahl (1985) found that the process of taking notes in itself does little to enhance recall. They found, however, that reviewing notes clearly results in superior recall. Their conclusions were dramatically different from those of Barnett *et al.*, (1981), who found "strong support" for the encoding function of note-taking but not for the value of using notes to review material.

Good listening skills depend on good comprehension. Demonstrate that you understand by restating what you think you have heard. Then ask if you, in fact, did hear correctly. Ask questions that request specific clarification on points that you are unsure about. Be cognizant of the length of time that you speak, making sure not to dominate or usurp the conversation

One of the cognitive strategies from which students greatly benefit while listening to recordings, especially mini-lectures is note-taking. Taking lecture notes is widely accepted as a useful strategy for augmenting student attention and retention of academic discourse (Carrell *et al.*, 2002). They also believe that note taking is intuitively appealing to the lecture-listener and is generally viewed as a way to facilitate the process of learning and remembering lecture material. According to Kiewra (1989, cited in Carrell, 2007), note-taking is beneficial for at least two reasons. First, note-taking aids lecture learning by activating attentional mechanisms and engaging the learner's cognitive processes of coding, integrating, synthesizing, and transforming aurally received input into a personally meaningful form. Second, note-taking is seen as beneficial because the notes taken serve as an external repository of information that permits later revision and review to stimulate recall of the information heard. Dunkel (1988) maintains that note taking is perceived by examinees as a strategy that facilitates remembering the lecture content.

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In conclusion, even in countries like Iran where there is no opportunity for students to have contact with native speakers of English in order to improve their pronunciation, there are quick, simple, and efficient ways to teach pronunciation, and as the results of this present study indicate, the participants in the experimental group who received the instruction showed noticeable improvement.

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