

Effect of Narrow Listening Strategies on the Second Language Learners of Grade 5 in

Private Schools of Pakistan

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Abstract

Listening is the gateway of learning a second language. However, listening carries along many anxiety factors which hamper the acquisition among learners. The importance of listening to acquire any second language makes it mandatory for teachers to incorporate it in their lessons. Therefore, many researches and discussions had been carried out to lessen the factors of anxiety by using strategies such as narrow listening. In this current era, anxiety while listening comprehension classes is a key hindrance to the second language acquisition. The study of all those successful strategies to curb anxiety can open up future vistas for young learners. The practice of narrow listening strategies is almost non-existent in Pakistani classrooms. Currently, some English medium schools have prescribed listening in their curriculum; still, it is not being taught and tested seriously and causes listening anxiety among students. The current research investigated the use of narrow listening strategies and its effectiveness in classroom to expedite the process of acquisition by using a quantitative method. Participants of this research were 120 students of grade 5 in a private school in Pakistan. A quasi-experimental strategy along with the pretest-posttest control group design was adopted for this study. Cambridge KEY for schools (sample test) was used as the instrument. A careful analysis of data findings showed that a high level of anxiety was lessened by the use of narrow listening strategies suggested by Krashen (1986). These findings may have some implications and suggestions for further future teaching of second language listening comprehension to L2 students.

Keywords: Second language acquisition, ESL, EL (Extensive Listening)

Introduction

Non-natives consider English a pathway towards success since it has gained the status of a global language. Gibbons (2003) and Vizconde (2006) claimed that all around the globe educationists are putting in efforts to resolve issues pertaining to the acquisition of English language because gaining mastery in other subjects is not possible without the proficiency in English language.

Educators and researchers have rightly identified that the foreign language listening anxiety is an area of concern for learners. Listening anxiety hinders the process of second language acquisition. Kimura (2008) revealed that listening anxiety effects considerably in foreign language learning classrooms. A pool of researchers for example, (Arslan, 2017; Sparks, Ganschow, & Javorsky, 2000) asserted that high levels of anxiety in listening comprehension classrooms result in low performance in language. Content and context which are complex and unfamiliar to the learners cause anxiety among learners (Arslan, 2017; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). Therefore, to lessen the levels of anxiety, it is suggested by Krashen (1986) to incorporate narrow listening strategies in second language classrooms.

As argued by Young (1992) listening skills in accordance with listening comprehension provoke anxiety can be handled by the teachers after using narrow listening strategies.

Texts of narrow listening which are discretely planned (Rodrigo, 2004) and are thematic make students deal with specific vocabulary set and linguistic features which enhance the learning of language by developing familiarity of text and context.

Vogely (1998) also took his stance that claimed when learners in second language classrooms deal with unfamiliar and varied text with in a given time frame, anxiety is experienced by them due to the input and instructions."

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Statement of Problem

In Pakistan all private schools aim for the best teaching and learning of English language, still students at the level from primary till O levels lack in English language skills, and the problem is that the entire focus is on learning English not acquiring English which is impossible without making listening activities a part of classroom routine.

Significance

The study carries a huge significance in Pakistani context as schools are trying hard to incorporate listening curriculum to expedite second language acquisition. Since listening is the first strep towards acquiring a second language, a study on narrow listening strategies can be very helpful for facilitators to support students in listening comprehension classes which resultantly will expedite the acquisition process.

The following objective guided this study:

Determining the impact of narrow listening strategies among the learners of Grade 5.

Research Questions:

- 1) Do narrow listening strategies have a positive impact on students' performance in an experimental group?
- 2) Do narrow listening strategies lower down anxiety among the learners of grade 5?

Literature Review

Listening comprehension gained its prominence in language skills after a long time. It is finally considered equally important like reading, writing, and speaking and is no more considered a passive skill. Consequently, various researches are focusing on different teaching approaches and factors affecting listening comprehension. Educationists have identified the presence of foreign language anxiety for a long time which has a significant influence on learning of language. In 1986, Horwitz & Horwitz and Cope clarified FLA as an intricate combination of personal observations, emotions, principles, and manners pertaining to teaching space language learning arising from the aspects that are unique in the process of language acquisition Gardner and Macintyre (1993). In 1966, Krashen developed the concept of Narrow Listening which was then a comparatively novice idea in studies focused on second language acquisition. Narrow listening holds great significance for developing listening skills. So is true for its significance in overcoming the anxieties associated with the second language acquisition. Vogely (1998) has played an important role in identifying the causes of listening anxiety by correlating these with the varieties of listening input and the process of listening being undergone. Hence, it is necessary to lower down the anxiety filter which is identified as the third condition of input hypothesis. This research has adopted the strategies of "Narrow Listening" which were purported by Krashen (2000). Narrow listening is one among these. The operational definitions of the concepts being used in this study are in the following:

Input

In the frame work of second language, input carries a huge importance which cannot be neglected at any point. Keeping a pool of researches in view, it can be agreed upon without any further questioning that in the realm of "Second Language Acquisition" input is the sole factor and the only driving force which allows linguistic features to go deep down and become a part of acquisition procedure. According to researchers (Bahrani & Soltani, 2012) it is registered that 'SLA" cannot take place if children do not experience any intake. There are three major types of input. These categories are named as: "pre modified, interactionally modified, and modified". The absence of any type makes language incomprehensible; hence these are essential in the learning of a second language. In fact, in order to decode the meaning of listening structures, attention is a major prerequisite, according to Underwood (1998).

Listening as a Receptive Skill

Out of four skills, listening is the one which is input and vital for the acquisition of foreign language. However, the scenario is that is our country Pakistan, it is the most neglected skills; though English enjoys a very prestigious position in country. It is required to be fluent in English to obtain any position. Listening is not a part of school curriculum; neither it is integrated in lessons with the rest of the strands. In this study, this is integrated with reading skills to measure its impact and effectiveness on the process of acquisition of second language. Listening is a variable which is independent and the effects listening class activities were monitored through narrow listening strategies.

Benefits of Listening

According to Ur (1984) we listen to statements seldom in order to answer someone and do not comprehend over the listening contexts. As stated by Brown and Yule (1983), there are two main functions of listening: to greet and to gain information. The purpose of interactional listening is exchanging greetings while the transactional listening is to gain information. An eminent researcher Underwood (1989) claimed that the role of a teacher is to prepare children for listening.

Skill in Listening

Generally, acquiring skills in listening is a very challenging. There are four stages of listening which only occur in sequence which is listening, understanding, interpreting and responding. It is important to realize that this sequence does not change (Bentley, 2000).

Listening Comprehension Skills

Skills in listening need concentration as it demands understanding and filtering the information from the long stretches of listening exercises (Anderson & Lynch, 1988).

Listening Comprehension

According to theories, the listening comprehension process is very active in its nature as it demands quick actions. During listening comprehension process, students need to listen, process, understand the context with its relation to the knowledge they have (Tubail, 2015).

For the speakers of first language the surface meanings contain no value due to the contextual undertesting; however, for a learner of second language, the surface meaning carries a lot of importance as it generates the basic understanding with the text (Ventsov & Kasevich, 1994; Frumkina, 1990). Therefore, that a listening program must incorporate all that sort of activities and techniques which allow listeners to develop the understanding of the text alongside the linguistic. If the programs will have these exercises, the learners will be able to go through a smooth process of language acquisition through listening comprehension.

Listening Anxiety

Fang (2011) enunciated that anxiety being an affective factor makes the learning process very complex. Moreover, (Chang and Read, 2008) asserted that students in the scenario of the second language learn English daily only in formal settings which limits their ability of spoken language. Besides, anxiety which affects their performance diminishes. This situation emphasizes the need to examine factors that influence L2 classrooms.

Narrow Listening

Narrow listening (NL) is an approach, to develop skills in listening at junior as well as advanced levels. It means listening to one part extensively and repeatedly in order to grasp what it means. It is actually the interest level of students which helps them to comprehend any information. According to Krashen (1996), Strategies of Narrow listening lower down students' anxiety and help them comprehend.

Authentic and Unauthentic Material for Narrow Listening

Authentic and unauthentic material is used for narrow listening in classes.

As per Glisan (2002) material which is authentic falls in the continuum which needs the actual life experience for example news bulletins and talk shows on television, this material demands the students to actually grasp the main points. The benefit of authentic material is that it provides a chance to develop higher order thinking skills of the students. The materials which are authentic, provide an opportunity to the learners to develop higher level of cognition by practicing listening (Byrnes, 1984 and Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes, 1991). As a result, pupils acquire the target language soon by absorbing the structures through authentic material. Most of all, authentic materials which are used in narrow listening generate effective results in listening skills.

Methodology of the Study

Leedy (1993) believes that through quantitative methods, questions can be answered in an unbiased way while defining relationships of measurable variables. This research had adopted quantitative method for an objective data collection and for the sake of generalization of the data findings to a larger group of population. The study investigates the impact of narrow listening (independent variable) on the second language acquisition (dependent variable) when conducting research based on a quasi-experimental design.

Population & Sample population

The population of this study includes all students of grade 5 studying in low-fee private schools in Lahore district. The quasi-experimental study included four groups: two were experimental and two were controlled (N=30) selected from the two branches of a representative private school.

Research Instrument and Instrumentation

Language testing is useful only if the appropriate tests are used as suggested by (Hossain& Ahmed, 2015). KEY test, which is a test designed by Cambridge university, was selected as the main instrument and was conducted as pre and posttest. This test is already tested for its validity and reliability. Depicting higher level of reliability for the KEY exam 2010, the Cronbach's Alpha for listening was equal to 0.86 (SEM=1.78), while the total score for reliability was 0.95 (SEM=3.42).

Wigglesworth (2008) believes that tests must be technically designed to assess the language skills of students. Hence, researchers in second language have developed some unique testing methods to collect SLA data (Shohamy, 2000). The test used in this research is designed specifically for second language learners of grade 5. It is tested by the ESOL department of Cambridge University and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) has placed it at the A2 level.

Data Collection

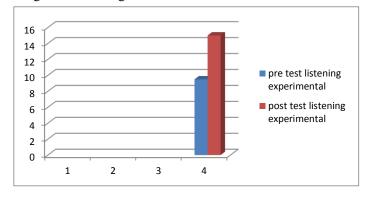
Every Monday, listening activities were conducted and narrow listening used to be a part of these classes. On 15th August, pre-test was conducted. Starting from 20th August 2017, the data collection process had ended on 15th March 2018, which was followed by the post-test in the last week of March, 2018.

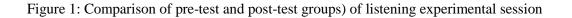
Many resources were used for narrow listening implementation to bring variety in the practices of classrooms and to give a vast exposure of strategies to the pupils. E- listening comprehensions were used for intensive and narrow listening listing both. To bring a more positive change, children; films, BBC podcasts, short listening exercises of short listening were used as material in the classrooms. The most effective content was the use of audio books which were used for narrow listening as the theme remained the same for a longer stretch of listening. This allowed them to have a variety of vocabulary on the same topic which was productive and enjoyable both. Usually, it has been observed that real life material is barely used by instructors in the classrooms which makes listening a taxing activity for learners (Rodrigo,2003).

Results and Findings

	0					
Table 1: grou	p mean score of group statist	tics (pretest li	stening)			
		Mean	N	S. D	Std.	Error
					Mean	
Pair no. 1	Listening (Pre-Test)	9.50	60	4.156	.537	
	Listening (Post-Test)	15.00	60	4.004	.517	

The above-mentioned table shows the scores of post-tests listening. The mean score difference in the pre-test and post-test performance indicate that the intervention of narrow listening had helped the students improving their listening scores.





It is evident from the above given graph of the mean scores of the experimental group that they had performed better in the post-test after they were exposed to narrow listening techniques (through their exposure to the BBC videos).

Table 2. experimental and controlled group (pre -test listening)

(Comparing Experimental pre-test with Control pre-test listening scores)

Group Statistics						
	Experimental/Control	n	М	Std. Deviation	Std.	Error
					Mean	
Pretest Listening	Experiment	60	9.50	4.156	.537	
	Control	60	9.23	3.596	.464	

The Table 2 for research question 1 and 2 (Do narrow listening strategies have a positive impact on students' performance in a controlled group? Do narrow listening strategies lower down anxiety among the learners of grade 5?).

In order to measure the difference between the Control and Experimental groups in their pretest listening performance, *t-test* (independent sample) was used. The mean score statistics in the table exhibit while Standard Deviation (SD) for the experimental group was 4.156 and for the controlled group was 3.596, the means score difference was not significant in the pre-test context. Table 3

Independent Sample t-test was run to compare the performance of pre-tests listening Experimental and pre-test listening control groups.

Samples t-t	est (Independen	it)							
		Levene for E of Varia	quality	t-test f	t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	
Pre-test Listening	Equal variances assumed	1.183	.279	.376	118	.708	.267	.709	
	Equal variances not assumed			.376	115.608	.708	.267	.709	

The *t-test* analysis presents a very insignificant difference when the performance of both groups was compared. 0.267 is the mean score difference and 0.7 is the value of p which claims that the difference is very minor and not at all significant. 118 is the value of t = .37 and p = .708 implies that p>0.05. After this analysis, it can be claimed that there was no significant difference between the performance in listening of controlled and experimental group.

Table 4: Group for comparison of compare post-tested experimental listening and control group (post-treatment)

Either Experiment or	Ν	Mean	Std.	Std. Error
Control			Deviation	Mean
Experiment	60	15.00	4.004	.517
Control	60	9.25	3.601	.465
	Control Experiment	ControlExperiment60	ControlExperiment6015.00	ControlDeviationExperiment6015.004.004

Unlike the previous table, for table 4 the results showed a difference for this as the results suggested that there is a difference in the pre-test and post-test listening scores which implies that the narrow listening strategies bring a change in the performance of the listeners and second language learners; hence can be used in second language classrooms for language acquisition. For experimental group in post-test the mean score values after analysis were equal to 15.00 and for control group the post-test mean score was 9.25 which clearly indicates that invention had led to fruitful results in the performance of the experimental group. Thus, it confirmed that strategies of narrow listening create a substantial impact on leaners' performance.

Table 5: Independent Sample t-test was run to compare post-test listening score of Experimental and Control group.

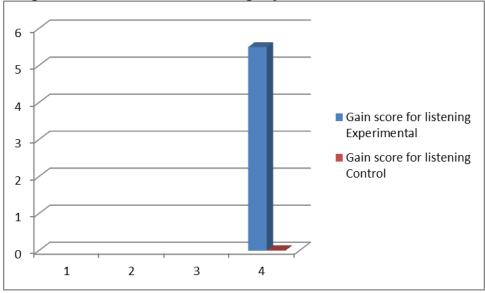
Independe	nt Samples Test									
		for E	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	Т	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference		
Post-test Listening	Equal variances assumed	2.072	.153	8.270	118	.000	5.750	.695		
	Equal variances not assumed			8.270	116.698	.000	5.750	.695		

The test analysis for the above-mentioned table 4 describes post- test listening scores of both groups, control and experimental. The Group statistics table shows mean scores for listening which is for post tested. p=0.15>0.05 reveals a significant difference in the performance of two groups. This strongly suggests that there was a difference which was significant for controlled and experimental group.

Table 6: Group statistics for the gain score listening to compare the difference of scores between the control and the experimental groups

Group Statistics					
	Either Experiment or	Ν	М	Std.	Std. Error
	Control			Deviation	Mean
Gain score for listening	Experiment	60	5.5000	2.35422	.30393
	Control	60	.0167	1.28210	.16552

The table 6 exhibit data findings Experimental and control Group in gain score listening. For intervention group N=60, (Mean=5.50 and SD=2.35). The gain score of controlled groups listening the values are (N=60, Mean=.0167 and SD=1.28) which illustrate a difference which is significant. It reiterates the fact that before intervention, both groups were not performing at the same level as narrow listening skills were not used for controlled group.



The figure of table 6 illustrates the gain score of Controlled and intervention group for listening. the difference between both schools is not significant which claims that the amount of impact was almost the same in both schools; hence claims that narrow listening strategies create impact and bring positive contribution develop listening skills while minimizing the anxiety level. Table 7 *Independent Samples t-test (Gain score listening for school 1 and school 2)*

Independe	ent Samples Test								
		Levene's for Equa Variance	ality of	t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	
Gain score for listening	Equal variances assumed	19.251	.000	15.844	118	.000	5.48333	.34608	
C	Equal variances not assumed			15.844	91.168	.000	5.48333	.34608	

The result analysis of the table mentioned above which used Independent Sample T- test illustrates the means (N=60) for controlled group and for experimental group (N=60), the value of t (118) and sig value 15.84. Hence for "Levene's test of equality of variance" is p=0.00. The significant 2-tailed p<0.05 means the gain score difference was significant of experimental and controlled group. These findings clearly support the use of strategies of narrow listening.

Discussion & Conclusion and Recommendations

Listening is input skill, hence crucial for second language acquisition. Two researchers Flowerdew and Miller (2005) mentioned that listening was treated as an orphan skill and its importance in the process of language acquisition was never given any credit in the past era. The similar is the situation in Pakistani schools. It was neither prescribed nor practiced. This study, keeping in mind the input hypothesis of Krashen used listening as an independent variable to lower down anxiety for the better results of acquisition.

In this study, listening was a variable which was independent. When the exposure was given to students, in form of narrow listening strategies, students enjoyed it a lot and without any anxiety they performed narrow listening exercises. They enjoyed the native accent in BBC documentaries, which did expedite their learning. Hence narrow listening curbs anxiety and the listening which is intensive generated anxiety as suggested by (Dobson, 2012).

According to two eminent researchers (Young, 1992, Kimura,2008) listening generates anxiety which does not allow the learners to perform well; the same was suggested by (Sparks, Ganschow, & Javorsky, 2000). During this research, students in pre-test did not perform well however, after the implementation of narrow listening strategies, a significant difference was observed clearly as the level of anxiety was low and students were not pressurized. This study was supported by the study of (Bagheri, & Karami, 2014, Vandergrift 1997 & Morley, 2001) who also purported that though listening is not given much attention in second language, it is the first step of the ladder to reach the acme of linguistic skills.

It is indeed a fact that listening practices allow those features to be generated which expedite the entire process of language acquisition and the same has been researched by Tyagi (2013). After the comparative analysis of the pre-test and post-test listening results, it can be highlighted that the present study confirms what researchers like Renukadevi (2014), Morris & Leavey (2006) Linebarger (2001), Hunsaker (1990) have asserted about listening skill as a gate way to the acquisition of other three language acquisition skills.

Because the second language acquisition has been a matter of great concern in second language countries, this study shall be helpful for researchers working in the area of narrow listening especially with reference to dealing with the listening anxiety. The purpose of narrow listening is to curb the levels of anxiety among learners which are generated by the use of intensive listening as it demands concentrated attention and keeps on changing themes and the choice of words, according to Krashen, (1996).

The results after analysis post and pre-test for the intervention group and controlled group produced the same results as of the study of (Rodrigo, 2004) who claimed that claiming that the texts which are chosen as per a theme for the purpose of narrow listening bring a vivid improvement in the language skills of second language learners. In this research the thoughtful selection of the

documentaries of BBC Erath's documentaries and the audio stories such as "The Secret Garden" engaged the attention of students due to a theme and interesting content; therefore, students were able to follow a same track and learnt many new words which were thematic not staggered. It allowed them to speak and write at a stretch on a topic without any initiation of listening anxiety' as they had plenty of words on a topic. The reason was a wide choice of thematic vocabulary and the continuation of the text which allowed them to guess as well. This way of teaching strategy corroborates the findings of (Krashen, 1996; Schmitt & Carter, 2000).

After the entire analysis of the intervention, it can be argued that the presence in real life material cannot be denied in the classrooms because it brings a positive change due to its simple nature; hence it allows a smooth acquisition of language by narrow listening. All this can be clearly observed by the data analysis which shows a highly significant difference between post tested results of controlled and experimental groups after the use of narrow listening strategies as were used by the researcher. Hence the research answered the research questions which wanted to investigate whether or not narrow listening strategies have a positive impact on the group which will be a part of intervention or if narrow listening activities curb the levels of anxiety. The tables and the analyzed data positively clearly illustrated that the activities which were a part of narrow listening created positive impact on students in the process of SLA as it lessened the anxiety of listening.

In the light of this research, it is recommended to introduce narrow listening strategies in classrooms while using many resources such as BBC earth, audio stories, podcasts and thematic listening content.

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