The Impact of Pre-Listening Activities on Iranian EFL Learner's Listening Comprehension of Authentic English Movies

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Abstract: *The aim of this study was to clarify the listening skill as an area of pivotal skill by investigating the effect of pre-listening activities on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension of authentic English movies. Based on this aim, sixty intermediate EFL learners from a language institute were selected and randomly assigned into two groups. One group was exposed to and received authentic listening input (experimental group) and the other group received simplified listening materials (control group). A proficiency test (including two sub-tests, listening comprehension, and listening perception) was used as a pre-test to measure the learners' potential differences at the beginning of study. After the instruction session a posttest was administrated to both groups. The analysis of the quantitative data and comparison of the mean scores of the two groups via posttest showed that the learners who were exposed to pre-listening activities performed better in the posttest. Moreover, the analysis of feedback indicated the positive effect of pre-listening activities on the EFL learners' listening comprehension of authentic English movies.*

Keywords: *pre-listening, listening comprehension, authentic English movies*

1. INTRODUCTION

The main goal of this study was to investigate the impact of pre-listening activities on Iranian female intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension. Listening comprehension is particularly difficult for those who study English in foreign language (EFL) classrooms, since in EFL classrooms the range of pre-listening activities is narrow and listening activities are restricted to English Books. In Iran as many EFL contexts, limited opportunities for developing L2 listening skill are seen in language classrooms.

Since intermediate Iranian EFL learners lack sufficient background knowledge of English vocabulary, they are required to use pre-listening activities before watching English movies. Pre-listening activities raise the vocabulary knowledge (input) of Iranian EFL learners and simplify the listening comprehension of authentic English movies. Moreover, using pre-listening activities enhances the input of learners, and motives them to improve their listening comprehension. Based on our goal, the study tried to answer the following research question:

Research question: Do pre-listening activities have any influence on Iranian EFL learners' comprehension of English movies?

Null Hypothesis (H0): Pre-listening activities have no influence on Iranian EFL learners' comprehension of English movies.

Alternative Hypothesis (AH): Pre-listening activities have an influence on Iranian EFL learners' comprehension of English movies.

2. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. The Importance of Listening Comprehension

A number of issues have aroused the most passionate debates about how to develop language abilities. Speaking and listening come naturally, unless one is born dumb and deaf. They also have to be learnt, of course while being young and being devoid of any formal or informal instruction. Speech comes first in our life history as individuals. We may have learnt to read and write, but we still go on talking and listening, and we still keep on learning by talking and listening.

Every human language has potential for meaning in two ways, it is a resource for doing with, and it is a resource for thinking with. We have no intention to go into nuts and bolts of which has resided in the brain. As Halliday (1985) stated, language has pragmatic and aesthetic functions that is, it is a resource for doing and for learning. Therefore, language is at once a part of and an image of the world we live in.

According to the historical overview of listening comprehension, listening was viewed as a passive process in which our ears were receivers into which information was poured, and all the listener had to do was passively register the message. Today we recognize that listening is an active process and that good listeners are just as active when listening as speakers are when speaking. (Lynch, 2002, p. 193).The ability to hear is "a natural process that develops in all normal infants. Indeed   most of us begin to hear sounds before we are even born". (Richards, 2005, p. 21).

Purdy (1991, p. 11) believed that listening is "the active and dynamic process of attending, perceiving, remembering, and responding to the expressed needs, concerns, and information offered by other human beings". According to Rubin (1995, p. 151), listening is as "an active process in which a listener selects and interprets information which comes from auditory and visual clues in order to define what is going on and what the speakers are trying to express". He has argued that, listening is the single most important aspect of tutoring. Without the tutoring there is no way to know what the tutee needs. It is also a rare and generous gift – to listen to someone – in this media bombarded society.

Students spend 20 percent of all school related hours just listening. If television watching and one-half of conversation are included, students spend approximately 50 percent of their waking hours just listening. For those hours spent in the classroom, the amount of listening time can be almost 100 percent. Think about your own activities in college. Are most of your activities focused around listening, especially in the classroom? How well do you really listen?

If you ask a group of students to give a one word description of listening some would say hearing is physical. Listening is following and understanding the sound, it is hearing with a purpose. Good listening is built on three basic skills: attitude, attention, and adjustment. These skills are known collectively as triple-A listening.

Listening is the absorption of the meaning of words and sentences by the brain. Listening leads to the understanding of facets and ideas. But listening takes attention, or sticking to the task at hand in spite of distractions. It requires concentration, which is the focusing of your thoughts upon one particular problem. A person who incorporates listening with concentration is actively listening. Active listening is a method of responding to another that encourages communication. Listening comprehension has received considerable attention in the fields of applied linguistics, psycholinguistics and second language pedagogy during the last two decades.

2.2. Pervious L2 Listening Comprehension Research

According to Morley (2001), during the 1980s special attention was incorporated into new instructional frameworks, that is, functional language and communicative approaches. Throughout the 1990s, attention to listening in language instruction increased dramatically. Listening comprehension is now generally acknowledged as an important facet of language; nevertheless, much work remains to be done in both theory and practice. (Morley, 2001, p. 69). Until recently, listening comprehension attracted little attention in terms of both theory and

practice, while the other three language skills (i.e., reading, writing, & speaking) received direct instructional attention (Mendelsohn, 1984; Oxford, 1993).

According Call (1985), the belief in the Audiolingual method is that if students listen to the target language all day, they will improve their listening comprehension skill through the experience. The fact that listening has been neglected or poorly taught may have stemmed from the belief that it is a passive skill and that merely exposing students to the spoken language provides adequate instruction in listening comprehension.

The roots of Audiolingualism lie in the early years of the 20th century, and had a significant influence on theories of language teaching. Among these were: (a) the entrenchment of positivistic pragmatism, (b) the blossoming of American structural linguistics and behaviorist psychology, and (c) the expression of scientific through formalisms (Johnson & Johnson, 1998).

Meyer (1984, p. 343) has referred that, behaviorists drew inspiration from Pavlov's conditioning experiments which promoted an account of behavior in terms of stimulus and response and suggested that these could be expanded into an ever widening network through association and newly learned responses strengthened through reinforcement. Language development was thought to be explained in a similar way; language consists of ultimately finite entities and might be learned through imitation and practice oriented activities that has trapped students in a frenzied Hear it, repeat it! Hear it, answer it! or 'Hear it, translate it!' nightmare.

In addition to the American Audiolingual Approach, the English language teaching program of the British Situational Approach did not pay attention to listening beyond its role in grammar and pronunciation drills and learners' imitation of dialogues during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s (Morley, 2001).

Then, slowly and steadily, more attention was given to listening comprehension. In the 1970s, the status of listening began to change from being incidental and peripheral to a status of central importance. Instructional programs expanded their focus on pragmatic skills to include listening as well as reading, writing, and speaking. During the 1980s, as researchers became increasingly interested in exploring the intricacies of this complex skill, more research, theory building and curriculum development on listening comprehension were done. Throughout the 1990s, attention to listening in language teaching increased dramatically. Aural comprehension in second or foreign language acquisition became an important area of study.

Celce-Murcia (1995) stated that, research into listening over the past three decades has, above all, highlighted the fundamental intricacy of the processes involved (Lynch, 1998). In order to comprehend spoken messages, listeners may need to integrate information from a range of sources including: phonetic, phonological, prosodic, lexical, semantic, and pragmatic.

2.3. EFL Learner's Difficulties

According to Vishwanath Bite (2013), listening is not easy and there are a number of obstacles that stand in the way of effective listening, both within and outside the workplace. These barriers may be categorized as follows.

- Physiological barriers: some people may have genuine hearing problem or deficiencies that prevent them from listening properly which can be treated. Some people may have problem in processing information or retaining information in the memory.

- Physical barriers: these refer to distraction in the environment such as the sound of an air conditioner, cigarette smoke, or an overheated room.

- Attitudinal barriers: pre-occupation with personal or work related problems can make it difficult to focus one's attention on what the speaker is saying, even if what is being said is of very importance.

- Wrong assumptions: the success of communication EFL depends on the both the sender and receiver. It is wrong to assume that communication is the sole responsibility of the sender or the speaker and that the listener has no role to play. Such an assumption can be a big barrier to listening. For example, a brilliant speech or presentation, however well delivered, is wasted if

the receiver is not listening at the other end. Listeners have as much responsibility as speakers to make the communication successful. The process should be made successful by paying attention, seeking clarifications and giving feedback.

- Cultural barriers: accents can be barriers to listening, since they interfere with the ability to understand the meaning of words that are pronounced differently. The problem of different accents arises not only between cultures, but also within a culture. For example, in a country like India where there is enormous cultural diversity, accents may differ even between regions states.

- Gender barriers: studies have revealed that men and women listen very differently and for different purpose. Women are more likely to listen for the emotion behind a speaker's words, when men listen more for the facts and content.

- Lack of Training: Listening is not an inborn skill. People are not born good listeners. It is developed through practice and training. Lack of training in listening is an important barrier.

In addition to the above mentioned barriers, Underwood (1989, as cited in Osada, 2004, p. 62) has offered seven conceivable causes of obstacles to efficient listening learning:

First, listeners cannot control the speed of delivery. Many English language learners believe that the greatest difficulty with listening comprehension, as opposed to reading comprehension, is that the listener cannot comprehend as quickly as the speaker speaks.

Second, listeners cannot always have words repeated. This is a serious problem in learning situations. In the classroom, the decision as to whether or not to replay a recording or a section of a recording is not in the hands of students. Teachers decide what and where to repeat listening passages; however, it is hard for the teacher to judge whether or not the students have understood any particular section of what they have heard.

Third, listeners have a limited vocabulary. The speaker may choose words the listener does not know. Listeners sometimes encounter an unknown word, which may cause them to stop and think about the meaning of that word thus causing them to miss the next part of the speech.

Fourth, listeners may fail to recognize the signals, which indicate that the speaker is moving from one point to another, is giving an example, or is repeating a point. Unlike discourse markers which are used in formal situations or spontaneous conversations, signals are vague as in pauses, gestures, increased loudness, a clear change of pitch, or different intonation patterns. These signals can easily be missed especially by less proficient listeners.

Fifth, listeners may lack contextual knowledge. Sharing knowledge and common context makes communication easier. Even if listeners can understand the surface meaning of the text, they may have considerable difficulties in comprehending the whole meaning of the passage unless they are familiar with the context. Nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions, nods, gestures or tone of voice, can also be easily misinterpreted by listeners from different cultures.

Sixth, it can be difficult for listeners to concentrate on the text. In listening comprehension, even the shortest break in attention can seriously impair comprehension. Concentration is easier when students find the topic of the listening passage interesting; however, students sometimes feel the listening task very tiring even if they are interested because it requires an enormous amount of effort to follow the meaning.

Seventh and last, students may have established certain learning habits such as a wishing to understand every word. By tradition, teachers want students to understand every word they hear by repeating and pronouncing words carefully, by grading the language to suit their level, by speaking slowly and so on. Consequently, students tend to become worried if they fail to understand a particular word or phrase and they will be discouraged by the failure. It is thus sometimes necessary for students to tolerate vagueness and incompleteness of understanding.

2.4. Schema and Listening Comprehension

There have been relatively few empirical research studies on the possible link between schema building and listening comprehension. Researchers have claimed that schematic knowledge facilitates listening comprehension and helps listeners deal with barriers in listening learning.

Rost (1990, pp. 23,183-189) stated that the listeners have numerous sources of information which make listening comprehension easier. In other words, listening comprehension is influenced by the information that an individual has in the mind. Therefore, schematic knowledge is overtly beneficial to listening comprehension and "relevant schemata must be activated" (Carrel, 1988a, p. 105).

Also, O'malley and Chamot (1989) argued that "listening comprehension is an active and conscious process in which the listener constructs meaning by using cues form contextual information and existing knowledge, while relying upon multiple strategic to fulfill the task requirement" (p. 420).

In the same vein, Long (1989, p. 32) expressed the idea that "comprehension is based on learner's ability to draw on their existing knowledge". According to Fang (2008, p. 22), "listening comprehension is regarded theoretically as an active process in which individuals concentrate on selected aspects of aural input, form meaning from passages, and associate what they hear with existing knowledge"; therefore, appropriate schemata need to be activated during text processing so as to facilitate efficient comprehension (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1998).

In a study Markham and Latham (1987) assessed the influence of religious-specific background knowledge on listening comprehension of adult ESL students. Sixty five ESL students who were classified as Muslim, Christian, and neutral, participated in the study. The analysis of recalled data demonstrated that the students who adhered to a specific religious group recalled ideas and produced more appropriate elaborations. They also had fewer inaccurate distortions regarding the passages associated with their particular religion. Therefore, background knowledge does significantly influence ESL students' listening comprehension.

Long (1990) highlighted the need to investigate how background knowledge influences auditory comprehension in second language. Results from her survey and recall protocols which were collected from 188 students taking Spanish courses showed that background knowledge was not available to L2 listeners (p. 92).

Schmidt-Rinehart (1994) carried out a research to find out whether there was an interaction between topical knowledge and L2 listening comprehension. Since the effect of background knowledge on listening comprehension is not clear cut especially when it involves L2 listening ability, she expanded the research of Long (1990) by adding proficiency level as a variable. the results collected from ninety university students of Spanish classes of different levels of proficiency, talking immediate recall-protocols showed that topic familiarity had impacts on the scores of the recall measures and that there was a consistent increase in the comprehension scores across the different levels. Furthermore, the results demonstrated no relation between topic familiarity and course level; that is, L2 listening proficiency, which disclosed that students of different course levels scored higher on the familiar passage.

In addition to the above studies, the effect of prior knowledge was examined by Jensen and Hasen (1995). They hypothesized that student's prior knowledge could be a source of bias to the tests. After having studied the results of 128 university level L2 learners, they concluded that prior knowledge does not dramatically contribute to L2 listening comprehension, and that more investigation is needed to investigate whether schematic knowledge really facilitates listening comprehension.

Recently, Hohzawa (1998) found that Japanese listeners with high prior knowledge understood the familiar text more than the unfamiliar one and more proficient L2 listeners understood more than less-skilled listeners in either familiar or unfamiliar text. Students were assigned to a background-information group (experimental group) and to a no background-information group (control group). A proficiency test was given to measure their prior knowledge about the topics of three new stories. Students in the experimental group discussed the content of the stories briefly after the introductions of the new stories were provided. Collected scores from a written recalled-protocol and a comprehension test revealed that students who lacked background information tended to produce more instances of inaccurate recall of the text or distortions, which was similar to finding of Markham and Latham (1987).

As presented in the above studies, the findings of L2 listening researches on the impacts which schematic knowledge have on listening comprehension are still rather controversial. The findings of the inconclusive role of schematic knowledge in listening comprehension supports the need to design a study, the main purpose of which is to investigate to what extent schema-building activities have impacts on listening comprehension.

2.5. The Importance of Authentic Materials

During the past decades, teaching foreign languages has gained much more attention in most countries around the world. As a result, searching for appropriate and effective teaching materials occupies a great space of instructors' thinking. The purpose of learning a foreign language is to be able to benefit from using it in the real world and in real situations. Therefore, most language teachers think whether it is enough to teach the language using the course book tasks, which are regarded artificial because they are designed for teaching purposes only, or if they should adopt using authentic materials to scaffold learners' learning process.

The issue of using authentic materials in language classrooms has been influential over the past two decades. Martinez (2002) defined authentic materials as the materials which are prepared for native speakers and not designed to be used for teaching purposes. Kilickaya (2004) defined authentic materials as exposure to real language and using it in one's own community.

Also Bacon and Finnemann (1990, p. 459) stated that "teachers need to find ways and means of exploiting authentic materials in classroom instructions". Many researchers claim that if students are willing to use English language sufficiently, they must be exposed to the language, exactly as it is used in real life situations by native speakers.

Widdowson (1990), asserted that exposing learners to authentic materials is indispensable, because of the rich language input they provide. Exposing students to such language forms will enable them to cope with genuine interaction, whether it is inside or outside the classroom. Researchers claim that when authentic materials are used with the purpose of students' learning, students will have a sense that the real language for communication is being learnt, as opposed to classroom language itself. In contrast to the design of the text books, authentic materials are intrinsically more active, interesting and stimulating (Lee, 1995; Little, Devitt & Singleton, 1988; Peacock, 1997; Shei, 2001).

Peacock (1997) defined authentic materials as the materials that have been produced to fulfill some social purposes in the language community. On the other hand, Nunan (1999) considered authentic materials as spoken or written materials which are not intended for use in teaching. Widdowson (1990) believed that authentic would be the materials designed for native speakers of English, and should be used in the classrooms in a way similar to the one it was designed for. Authentic materials may be written or spoken. For example, a radio news report was brought into the class, so students discuss the report on pollution in the city where learners live. Other examples of authentic materials are newspapers, magazines, posters, etc.

In addition, Kelly, Offner and Vorland (2002) believed that authentic materials are useful means to bridge the gap between classroom and the real world. Researchers have proven that the language taught in the classroom must be linked to its functions in the real world. In addition, Richards (2001) states that the language which the learners are engaged with in classroom, must represent the language used in the real world.

In the history of teaching listening comprehension, the issue of authenticity of second language materials has always been a point of discussion for both theoreticians and practitioners. More interestingly, a consensus has not even been reached on what type of materials can be considered authentic. The definition broadly accepted in the language teaching profession in the 1970s and 1980s was that authentic texts were samples of language being used for real communication between native speakers, and not specifically recorded for language teaching purposes (Lynch, 2009).

Authentic materials can be defined as "real texts not written for language teaching purposes" (Julian 1997, p. 27). These can include brochures, circulars, pamphlets, notices, menus, instructional manuals, posters, and advertisements, various kinds of magazines, newspapers as well as video clips, radio broadcasts and internet materials. These materials have been produced

for some social or intellectual, and for business purposes in the community. Therefore, the language used is real or authentic.

2.6. Effective and Ineffective Listening Strategies

Research has illustrated that not all of the strategies learners use are effective in helping them to improve their listening. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) argued that there are significant differences between effective and ineffective listeners on aspects such as checking comprehension, elaborating, and inferencing. These researchers found that whereas the effective listeners used both top-down and bottom-up approaches, the ineffective listeners used only a bottom-up approach to comprehend (O'Malley & Chamot 1990, p. 132). However, the research into what is effective is still unclear because other researchers studying types of listening used in formal test situations found that L2 learners use bottom-up processing more often than they use top-down processing (Tsui & Fullilove 1998).

In an earlier study, O'Malley, Chamot, and Kupper (1989) found that effective and ineffective listeners differed in three main ways: perceptual processing, parsing, and utilization. Perceptual processing which is a characteristic of effective listeners occurs when listeners are aware whenever they stop attending and try redirecting their attention to the text. Ineffective listeners are often put off by the length of the text and by the number of unknown words they encounter. When they stop attending because of these factors, they do little to redirect their attention to the text. Parsing which is present in effective listeners usually happens when they attend to larger chunks (or parsing) of information and only attend to individual words when there is some message breakdown. They utilize intonation and pauses and listen for phrases or sentences. Ineffective listeners tend to focus more on a word-by-word level - a bottom-up strategy.

Utilization again a characteristic of effective listeners occurs whenever theses listeners use world knowledge, personal knowledge, and self-questioning as a way of attending to the message. Ineffective listeners, on the other hand, use these elaboration techniques less. Whereas effective listeners can be described as actively participating in the listening process, ineffective listeners are more passive.

Although some learners may be categorized as possessing ineffective strategies, there are many examples of how these listeners can be trained to increase their strategy repertoire and use the strategies they have more effectively (Derry & Murphy 1986; O'Malley et al., 1985; Weistein & Mayer 1986).

2.7. Listening Strategies in the Classroom

A second way in which students can become aware of how to develop better listening habits is by "the integration of listening learning strategies into language lessons such as think-aloud procedure (a technique in which learners are asked to record their thoughts or strategies as they perform a language task) and having learners to listen to various texts in a second language" (Vandergrift 1997, pp. 392–394).

2.8. A strategy-based Approach to Teaching Listening

In this section we will illustrate a strategy-based approach to developing listening skills in English for specific purposes (ESP) context. We outline stages of a listening lesson in a course specially prepared for first-year engineering students at a university in Hong Kong.

The conceptual underpinnings of the listening section of the English for engineering course are oriented around two main foci: a task-based approach and a strategy-based approach. On entering the English-medium university in Hong Kong, the Cantonese-speaking engineering students need to be able to function with ESP in a variety of ways, one of which is to listen to engineering lectures from native and nonnative English speakers (British, American, Australian, Indian, Singaporean, & Chinese). In order to help the students meet this need, a series of target and pedagogical tasks (Long & Crookes, 1992) was developed for the students' first-semester language course.

The target tasks include listening to segments of authentic spoken text on an engineering topic. The pedagogical tasks are specially-prepared exercises and activities that enable the learners to

complete the target tasks. In preparing the preset pedagogical tasks, consideration is given to what listening skills can be developed through the texts. For example, some texts have general discussions and summaries in them. These texts are suitable for global listening. Other texts have more detailed information and specifications. These texts can be used for listening for specific information.

The tasks are structured around a simple format of pre-, while-, and post-task activities to facilitate overall language learning. The second focus of the ESP listening course is to make the learners aware of the strategies they use while completing the tasks and how they might develop their language-learning strategies. Exposing learners to a range of language learning strategies gives them the opportunity to find out which strategies work best for them. These language-learning strategies can then serve as the basis for future language development and, it is hoped, be used when learners listen to content-related lectures.

3. THE STUDY

3.1. Design of the Study

The present study included pre-test, post-test, control group and experimental group design. However, as the participants have not been randomly selected, the study is regarded as a quasi-experimental research. In this study, the pre-listening activity was the independent variable (with two levels of doing and not doing pre-listening activities) comprehension of the students as the dependent variable was investigated.

3.2. Participants

In this research study, sixty intermediate EFL learners were selected from an English language institute as the participants of the study. According to the policy of the language institute, the students were divided into two groups (30 female students in the experimental group & 30 female students in the control group) in order to create groups of equal language proficiency. The division was based on the language learners' pre-test scores, that is, scores on a test which consisted of 2 sections: vocabulary, and multiple choice tests. A questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the experiment to obtain other information about the participants that the researchers believed to have certain effects on the results of the study. Most students in both groups only attended English classes as a part of the official state school curriculum.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

To collect the data of this study and in order to check the hypothesis, the listening part of proficiency test was employed. The assessment of the students' listening skills was carried out using the listening part of the proficiency test. The test consists of two parts, each of which assesses the ability to comprehend a different type of listening material: multiple choice (20 items), short conversations (15 items). Moreover, a posttest was designed to measure the impact of pre-listening activities on the EFL learners' listening comprehension. Finally, the study employed a DVD player and a number of English movies in data collection.

3.4. Procedures

After ensuring the rough homogeneity of the EFL learners regarding their proficiency level, 60 intermediate EFL learners from a language institute were assigned to two groups with the use of a pretest and a posttest from an on-line listening site (www.els.lab.com). One group was exposed to and received authentic listening input (experimental group) and the other group received simplified listening materials (control group). A proficiency test (which included two sub-tests: listening comprehension & listening perception) was used as a pretest to measure the learners' potential differences at the beginning of the study. After the instruction session the same proficiency test was administrated to both of the groups. Analysis of the quantitative data and comparison of the mean scores of the two groups via posttest showed that the learners who were exposed to the pre-listening activities performed better in the posttest. The analysis of the feedback indicated the positive effect of the pre-listening activities on the EFL learners' listening comprehension of authentic English movies.

3.5. Treatment for the Experimental Group

The instructions of this study consisted of pre-listening activities and points by the use of different context-awareness activities which aimed to teach the idioms and real life words of the movies to

the EFL learners. These activities were employed in order to generate interest, build confidence, and activate EFL learners' current knowledge which facilitates their comprehension. These structures were selected from 3 English teaching movies: Mulan (Disney Classic), Top Notch (Saslow & Ascher, 2006), and American English File (Oxeden et al., 2007).

The instructions in this study were provided in three steps: pre-listening, while- listening and post-listening. In the pre-listening step different key words and idioms were selected from English movies for EFL learners' awareness and comprehension of the English movies. These patterns were classified into two categories according to the idioms and key words along with sentence examples (The target forms in focus were in italics).

The instruction for the experimental group was followed by the activities that captured learners' attention to comprehend the English movies. Thus, comprehending English movies, crystallized through pedagogical tasks.

Step I was planned as a teacher-led activity in the classroom to make learners aware of the key words that help to prepare summary and comprehend the movie very easy. But before that, the teacher talked about the topic of the movie and asked some questions to activate the language learners' L2 background knowledge. The following example is about the topic of the participants' handouts.

Interview with Heidi Evans, a flight attendant with Jet Blue Airways.

After that, the participants were expected to share their knowledge about the topic. Then, the sentences were worked on word-by-word and all new words and idiomatic expressions were explained. However, before providing the meaning of new words, the participants were encouraged to guess their meaning from the context. They were taught how to exploit the context to this purpose. If the students failed to make a correct guess, the teacher would impart the meaning. If there were any new grammatical structures, they would also be explained. In addition, specific characteristics of the spoken language, for example, contractions and elision were elaborated on.

In step II after being exposed to the target language, the researcher read aloud the handout and explained the idioms and new words with other different examples. With writing new examples on the board, participants got more attention to the taught points. After the teacher's explanations, learners repeated them to internalize and experience full comprehension. In addition, learners focused on the idioms and new words of sentences by some questions that teacher asked them or by completing some incomplete sentences that teacher wrote on the board.

In step III the learners were ready to relate their teacher's instruction in pervious steps to the features of idioms and real-life words they had already attended to meaningfully. This created opportunity for the teacher to contextualize teaching by the use of examples from the tasks in Step I.

Step IV was performed through conversations and videos. First the teacher played short conversations containing idioms and real life words in focus. The participants initially listened to them, later teacher asked the participants to recall what they could remember from the conversations. In other words, while the learners were reconstructing the conversations, they used the particular form of the target structure. In the next sessions they watched selected videos in English. These conversations and videos were also selected from the English teaching movies and English books (American File).

In step V they received a script of the conversations and videos. This helped them to identify the beginning and the end of idioms and English sentences.

In the next step the participants practiced the conversations in groups and then they acted the conversations as role plays for the whole class. Role play has been regarded as authentic language use, by involving face-to-face interaction between two interlocutors. It helped them to review what they had already learned in the previous stages and the teacher provided them with feedback whenever needed.

It is worth mentioning the fact that, in instructional English books, for example it is difficult to provide learners with authentic pragmatics input. Different studies have   examined the value of

using authentic sources in English class for EFL learners. For instance, focusing on requests, Fernandez-Guerra (2008) studied the effect of TV series and videos in spoken corpora. Results from this study showed that, requesting behavior in TV series and videos is natural and useful language resource with which to teach the speech act of requesting. Alcón and Martinez-Flor (2008) examined the efficacy of videos in learners' awareness of requests. Results of the study confirmed the value of employing video sequences to introduce pragmatics and the positive effects of instruction on learners' awareness of requests at both the noticing and the understanding levels.

In the last step in order to be quite certain about the students' comprehension of the movie , the participants were asked to narrate the movie based on the learned and practiced real life words, idioms , points and conversations about different situations and the completed questionnaire. Later they received feedback from their peers.

3.6. Treatment for Control Group

In the control group all of the conditions were the same except the fact that in this group the participants just received the while-listening and post-listening instructions to perform the narrative of the movies in English with teacher explanation without any other techniques or emphasis on the specific forms. Moreover, as it was mentioned previously, after treatment sessions another posttest was administered a week later to both of the groups.

3.7. Scoring Completion Test

The participants' responses to the pretest and the posttest items were scored in a way that each item with an accurate meaning and appropriate answer received a single point. An Inappropriate answer received a zero point. All the correct answers added up to a total sum.

3.8. Statistical Procedures

All of the statistical procedures of this research were done by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and the Excel software program. To accomplish the purpose of this study the following statistical procedures were followed: a) Frequency Analysis: in order to calculate the mean and standard deviation of Completion Tests; b) T-test: To find the differences between the means of two groups, and to find the differences between the means of LP.

4. FINDINGS

This section deals with the description of the statistical analyses conducted to answer the question of this study, and the discussions of the results of data analysis in light of the research question and hypotheses. In this section, the results of data analysis are presented and tabulated as an attempt to provide the answer to the research question. Moreover, the results of the pre-test and the post-test are presented in tables and graphs. Both of the pre-test and the post-test contained testing items. The aim of the study was to investigate whether the participants who were considered to be at the same level of English knowledge and started learning English at the same age were affected in this study.

4.1. Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data and answer the research question, the data of the two groups were compared. The data were analyzed according to the critical value of t. The t distribution critical value plays a role in a number of widely used statistical analyses, including the students' t-test for assessing the statistical significance of the difference between two sample means, the construction of confidence intervals for the difference between two population means, and in linear regression analysis. The statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. A paired sample T-test was used to analyze the data. The alpha level was set at 0.05. A significance level of '0.05' indicates that there is a 5% probability that the results are due to chance.

For the groups to be comparable and for an experiment like this to be meaningful, the researcher had to make sure that the learners in the experimental and the control groups had the same level of knowledge regarding the listening proficiency under investigation. To meet this requirement, a pre-test was given to all of the participants to measure their listening skill. Table 4.1 presents the descriptive statistics of the participants' mean scores on the pre-test across the two groups.

Table1. *Descriptive Statistics for the Pretest*

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CG	30	6	16	10.00	2.66
EG	30	6	16	9.90	2.63
Valid N (list wise)	30				

It can be seen in table 4.1 that the mean scores for the two groups are statistically very close (9.9_10). Therefore, it can be concluded that the learners in the two groups did not differ greatly from one another in terms of their knowledge of the target forms in question. That is, the participants' prior knowledge of the target forms was statistically almost equal before the instruction, but in order to be sure of the close homogeneity of two groups, a paired sample t-test was run. Results do not point to any statistically significant difference between the two groups and the two groups demonstrated similar performance on the tests.

Table2. *Paired Samples Test for the Pretest*

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	lower	upper	t	df	
Pair 1 CONTROL EXPERIM	.100	.481	0.087.	-0.079.	.279	1.140	29	.264

As it is illustrated in table 4.2, the observed value for t was 1.140, at 29 degree of freedom and it was lower than the t-critical value (1.69). Therefore, the two groups were at the same level of knowledge.

After the treatment sessions of both of the groups and in order to answer the research question, that is, whether instruction exerts a significant influence on the comprehension of English movies by Iranian female intermediate level EFL learners or not, and to investigate the impact of explicit instruction on the participants' listening comprehension, a paired-samples t-test was run. The t-test was intended to compare the obtained mean scores of the participants of the two groups to indicate the effectiveness of the treatment. The descriptive statistics, along with the results of the t-test for two groups, are presented in Tables 4.3 and 4.4, respectively.

Table3. *Descriptive Statistics for the Posttest*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CGPOST	30	3.50	16.50	11.2000	3.2632
EGPOST	30	6.50	19.50	12.1333	3.2295
Valid N (list wise)	30				

Table4. *Paired Samples Test for the Posttest*

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	upper			
Pair 1 CG POST EG POST	-.9333	.8976	.1639	-1.2685	-.5982	-5.695	29	.000

The researcher used two-tailed significance because the differences between the means were concerned. The alpha level was set at .05 according to the results of test for equality of variances equal variances was assumed. Given the information in Table 4.3, one can clearly see that the mean score obtained on the post-test for the experimental group (12.133) is higher than the one obtained for the control group (11.200). However, a paired-samples t-test was run to ensure that the observed difference was significant. Table 4.4 shows that there is a significant difference in the scores obtained from two groups because the probability value is substantially smaller than the

specified critical value (0.00 0<0.05) and the estimated t (t observed) is 5.695 with the degree of freedom of 29 and it was greater than the of the Distribution Table (t = 1.699) with the significance level of .05, and 29.

Thus, as the obtained data represent, the t observed exceeds the t of the Distribution Table that point to a probability level of P=0.000. So, it can be concluded that there exists a real difference between the performance of the two groups and the experimental group showed statistical superiority over the control group. Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed by confidence. Accordingly, it can be claimed that instruction was shown to exert a positive effect on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension of English movies.

Having gained some rudimentary information about the differences in the performance of the members of the two groups on the posttest, the researcher had to determine whether or not the observed differences were significant at the critical value (Sig.) of p<0.05. Therefore, a one-way between-group ANOVA was conducted. Table 5 provides the results of the ANOVA.

Table5. *The Result of ANOVA on the Posttest*

EGPOST	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	294.892	15	19.659		
Within Groups	7.575	14		36.334	.000
Total	302.467	29	.541		

On a closer inspection of Table 4.5, one can conclude that the two groups differed significantly with respect to their mean scores on the post-test because the significant value 0.000 is less than the critical value (0.05). Thus, that is to say pre-listening techniques had an influence on learners during the instruction.

5. DISCUSSION

To achieve its goal, the study addressed one main research question:

Research question: Do pre-listening activities have an influence on Iranian EFL learners' comprehension of English movies?

A multi-method data collection approach – (a) completion test (CT) to elicit performance data, and (b) questionnaire to elicit the participants' basic information – was employed to elicit data from 60 participants that were divided into two groups: (1) 30 in the control group, (2) 30 in the experimental group. A paired sample t-test and ANOVA analyses of the data were performed to identify detailed and quantifiable patterns of request realization between the two groups.

As it was mentioned previously, the main point which constructed the core stone of the present study was considering the result of the study which shows significant effect of the pre-listening activities on Iranian EFL learners' comprehension of English movies, and the researcher came to this point that pre-listening activities influence intermediate Iranian EFL learners' comprehension. In this sense, it can be stated that the current study contributed to pervious research regarding the positive effect of instruction on second and foreign language learning.

The important point to bear in mind is that this process takes more attempts and a longer time. So, satisfactory outcome requires a reasonable duration for the courses. It seems that in short courses and overcrowded classes creating such process would be difficult. But it should not prevent attempts in this regard on the side of affective teachers.

The purpose of this study was ultimately to enhance students' listening comprehension of English movies by helping them with pre-listening techniques to tune their brain in the second language listening. Liao (2003) stated that students need to understand how to recognize the purpose of the listening message, and make connections about the pre-listening stage. Admin (2010) proposed that, in real life it is strange for people to listen to something without having background knowledge of what they are going to hear. When listening to a radio phone –in show, they will probably know which topic is being discussed. When listening to an interview with a famous person, they probably know something about that person already. Moreover, he noted that, if students are going to listen to sports, looking at some dramatic pictures of sports players or events

will raise their interest or remind them of why they hopefully like sports. Personalization activities are very important.

A pair work discussion about the sports they play or watch, and why, will bring them into the topic, and make them more willing to listen. To be more precise, a possible explanation for the significant improvement of the experimental group may be attributed to the interactive model of teaching used in this study. In accordance with Vandergrift (2007), the amalgamation of bottom-up and top-down processing results in a greater improvement, as most non-native listeners are inclined to utilize top down-processing only, and neglect the importance of bottom-up processing (Field, 2004).

Also in line with what Hulstjin (2003) proposed, a good listening course must include tasks that in addition to emphasizing top-down processing, put effort into improving bottom-up processing as well. Therefore, it may be logical to posit that the combination of top-down activities, such as guessing idioms and new words from context, and the intensive analysis of the pre-listening activities (bottom-up) used in this study, possibly resulted in learners' improvement in the listening comprehension.

The importance of learners' competence in exploiting top-down strategies to process the flow of information is hard to neglect as overloading short-term memory by attending to every single word can cause the listener to lag behind in comprehension (Celce-Murcia, 2001). However, a question may arise as to how the L2 learners' bottom-up processing ability is related to enhancing listening. This question may be answered if one considers the issue of automaticity.

Automaticity in processing language components can free up learners' working memory capacity and therefore let them process information more accurately (Field, 2008). Consequently, acquiring automaticity in bottom-up processing can pave the way for easier higher level information processing (top-down) since the learners are able to process the text without effort at lower levels of word recognition and sentence parsing (Hulstijn, 2003). In agreement with the mentioned advantages, in the interview conducted at the end of the study, the experimental group subjects believed that intensive work on the pre-listening activities helped them process information more easily.

The participants said that they could overcome some of their problems in various aspects of language components such as structures and vocabularies in this way. Automaticity in bottom-up processing may not only be gained by acquiring a good command of previously acquired knowledge, it can also be possibly improved by acquiring new information (Hulstijn, 2003).

Available textbook materials do not adequately prepare students for developing an appropriate listening comprehension so English audio-visual materials have been the important resources of teaching and self-study. Balatova (1994) studied the influence of language difficulty and correlation degree of videos on the effect of listening comprehension. Moreover, Herron, Hanley and Cole (1995) investigated the way that videos provided visual assistance to the comprehension of language input, and the way that they improved the effect of listening comprehension.

Most of the relevant studies unanimously pointed out that audio-visual materials could make language input more comprehensible, and could thus facilitate foreign language study, especially the activity of listening comprehension.

The aim of this study was to clarify the listening skill as an area of pivotal skill by investigating the effect of pre-listening activities on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension of authentic English movies. Based on this aim, 60 intermediate level students of a language institute were assigned to two groups. One group was exposed to and received authentic listening input (experimental group) and the other group received simplified listening materials (control group). A proficiency test (pretest CT & MCT), a posttest (www.els.lab.com), and American English file books were used as a pretest to measure the students' potential differences at beginning of study. Analysis of the quantitative data and comparison of the mean scores of the two groups via posttest showed that the students who were exposed to the pre-listening activities performed better in the posttest. The analysis of the feedback indicated the positive effect of pre-listening activities on the listening comprehension of authentic English movies.

The analysis of this study was based on the data of intermediate students in their attempts to respond to the situations given in the tests. According to the test data of the students' pre-test (table 4.2), it was revealed that, the mean scores of the two groups were statistically very close (9.9_10) so the two groups were roughly homogeneous. Also a paired sample t-test results did not show any statistically significant difference between two groups. In order to find out the efficiency of the techniques, the experimental group received the treatment.

After sessions of treatment by the use of pre-listening activities, degree of differences between the mean scores of the two groups was convincing enough to warrant distinctness between these two groups and demonstrated that experimental group outperformed the control group. It turned out that the instruction with pre-listening activities was positive. In other words, the posttest served to show the effects of the pre-listening activities on the participants' production of idioms and new words. To see how effective the pre-listening activities were, the mean scores for the posttest of the two groups were compared with those for the pretest through paired samples tests (Table 2 & Table 4). The results showed that the experimental group did better in the posttest.

This indicates that instruction helped to facilitate the participants' listening comprehension of English movies. The results of this study supported the claim that pre-listening activities facilitate listening comprehension. More specifically, students' listening comprehension abilities improved significantly due to the effect of the teaching the pre-listening activities.

Thus, pre-listening activities can be influential in acquiring second language for EFL learners. The fact that learners who received instruction with pre-listening activities did significantly better on the posttest suggests that instruction was effective in leading learners to comprehend the new words. In addition, through the pedagogical intervention, learners used the examples taught during the treatment period and applied them to real-life contexts. In brief, although this study was limited in duration and scope, the results clearly support the findings of earlier research which favor the notion that pre-listening activities accelerate achievement as well as bearing positive impacts on certain important factors such as motivation and enjoying the class.

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