

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of

God

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THE EFFECT OF PRE-LISTENING ACTIVITIES ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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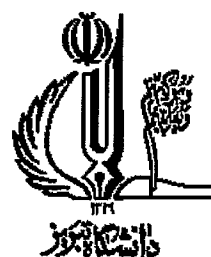
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To my parents

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of prior knowledge on the listening comprehension performance of FL learners. Twenty students, male and female, drawn from the two intact groups of the senior and junior English Language and Literature majors were chosen as the participants of this study. The two groups were then randomly assigned into the experimental and control group. The experimental group performed some pre-listening activities which were supposed to activate students pre-existing knowledge as well as establishing a framework for the incoming oral texts. The control group received no treatment. Both groups listened to three recorded lectures and answered the post-lecture comprehension test. The statistical analysis of the data revealed that the experimental group did not perform significantly better than the control group on the post-lecture listening comprehension questions. Implications for the task design of listening materials were offered.

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Listening Comprehension

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Learning

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Chapter One

Introduction

Chapter One

Introduction

The Effect of Pre-listening Activities on Listening Comprehension

This chapter introduces a short theoretical background for the present study. It also explains the purpose for which it was conducted and the insights that the findings could offer. Research questions and research hypotheses are presented subsequently.

1.1. Theoretical Background

The complicated process through which meaning is derived from the stream of speech sound has been a challenging issue in language learning. There is an assumption that listening comprehension is the result of interaction between two types of processes; top-down and bottom-up (Celce-Murcia, 1995; Long and Richards, 1983; Richards, 1990). While there seems to be no doubt about the existence of these two

types of processes, there is an ongoing discussion to determine the amount of importance which could be attached to either type. Whereas the findings of some studies such as the ones conducted by Wolff (1987) O'Malley et al (1989), Shohamy and Inbar (1991) appear to indicate the overriding role of top – down processes in listening comprehension, there are some other studies such as those undertaken by Tusi and Fullilove (1998), Keshavarz and Babai (2001) whose findings seem to favor bottom-up skills.

Similarly the studies that examined the effect of topic familiarity on listening comprehension yielded different results. While scholars such as Markham and Latham (1987), Schmidt -Rinehart (1994) found prior knowledge as a decisive factor in listening comprehension, there were others like Chiang and Dunkel (1992) Jensen and Hansen (1995) whose findings imposed limitations on our expectation of the effectiveness of prior knowledge.

The present study is going to address these issues from a different perspective. There is a hope that the findings could shed some light on the way that prior knowledge exerts its effect on listening comprehension.

1.2. The Purpose and Significance of the Study

As the first part of teaching listening, the pre-listening activities have occupied part of the language learning class time. These activities are supposed to help listeners have better comprehension of speech through providing some orientation to the incoming data as well as activating their pre-existing knowledge (Johnson & Johnson, 1998). One way to fulfill this orientation effect of pre-listening phase is through the introduction of some pieces of general prior knowledge which establish a framework for the forthcoming data. The present study is intended to examine the extent that predictive power of schematic knowledge could help listeners to improve their listening comprehension performance.

It is expected that the results of the study could offer some useful suggestions for the task design of listening material. It is also supposed that the findings could offer some revealing insights on what successful handling of oral input requires on the part of listeners.

1.3. Research Question and Research Hypotheses

Bearing in mind the above-mentioned points, the following research question and research hypotheses are formulated;

Statement of research question:

What is the effect of pre-listening activities aimed at activating and providing prior knowledge on the listening comprehension performance of FL learners?

Regarding this research question two research hypotheses, a null hypothesis and a substantive one, are offered as follow:

Hypotheses to be tested

H₀: The pre-listening activities aimed at activating and providing prior knowledge have no effect on listening comprehension performance of FL learners.

H₁: The pre-listening activities aimed at activating and providing prior knowledge have significant effect on listening comprehension performance of FL learners.

Chapter Two

Review of Related

Literature