

Narration and Partial Dictation Tasks: EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension Ability

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ABSTRACT

Although listening ability is one of the important skills in foreign language learning, there has been relatively little research in this specific area. The present study attempted to investigate the effects of narration and partial dictation tasks on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension. In order to have participant of relatively the same level of language proficiency, an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was used at the beginning of the research and sixty participants were chosen from the 85 students who took the test. The study consisted of three groups, two experimental groups and one control group (twenty participants in each group) with a pre-test and post-test measurement within a seven-week period of time. All the groups were exposed to the same listening test as the pre and post-test, however, only the experimental groups received the special treatment regarding tasks, narration and partial dictation. Meanwhile, the control group listened to the audio materials and was given the listening exercises in their textbook. ANOVA and paired-samples t-test were utilized to analyze the listening performance of the participants. At the end of the study, the results revealed that experimental groups outperformed the control group in post-test. And the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores for the experimental groups was found to be statistically significant, although for the control group it was not so. Moreover, the results didn't show any significant difference between performance of narration and partial dictation groups. The results of this study could help teachers, learners, and textbook writers and for those who are interested in this field.

Keywords: listening comprehension, narration, partial dictation tasks

1.1. Background

The listening expertise assumes a huge function in correspondence and language educating and learning (Rubin, 1993) and is maybe "the most key language ability" (Oxford, 1993, p. 205). Notwithstanding its urgent significance in learning a language and its need over different abilities, it has been viewed as the since quite a while ago ignored language aptitude as Nunan (1997) considers it the 'Cinderella expertise' most likely because of the misrepresented suspicion that it is procured consequently and adapted once for all (Teng, 1998).

Throughout the most recent twenty years, there has been expanding accentuation on listening appreciation for second language(L2) teaching method, reflected in a few techniques (e.g., Asher's Absolute Actual Reaction, Gattegno's Quiet Way, Lozanov's Suggestopedia), various listening reading material, audiotapes, tapes, and Cd ROMs. Tuning in as a significant skill in language learning and instructing first hit the spotlight in 1970s with James Asher's work on Complete Actual Reaction (Earthy colored, 2007, p. 299).

Numerous researchers have accentuated the significance of listening expertise. In unknown dialect study halls, listening is expecting more noteworthy and more prominent significance. There are a few purposes behind this development in notoriety. By accentuating the function of understandable information, second language obtaining research has given a significant lift to tuning in. As per Krashen's Information .

Through various investigations distributed in various settings (for example India by Mohanraj (1993), Turkey by Tavit (2010), and France by Graham (2005)), it is inferred that task-based guidance can improve listening cognizance capacity definitively. Errands can make assortment and delight for educating and getting the hang of listening appreciation. Ruso (2009) thinks about that expanding students' inspiration and execution can be accomplished by utilizing task-based guidance over the span of guidance.

This examination thinks about incomplete transcription and retelling assignments for showing listening cognizance. The instructive contemplations of errand based listening are referenced by Ellis (2003): "The exploration dependent on tuning in and-do undertakings has demonstrated that such assignments are successful both as listening cognizance gadgets and as a methods for introducing new semantic material to understudies" (p. 66). As per Ellis (2003) "Like specialists, instructors can utilize listening errands to give the understudy input enhanced with explicit highlights they (understudies) wish to target" (p. 37). The objective behind this examination is to explore the viability of incomplete transcription and retelling assignments on Iranian transitional EFL students' listening appreciation capacity. This means to check whether there is any significant impact of halfway correspondence and retelling assignments on improving listening cognizance capacity of EFL students and to give extra research on the function of undertakings, explicitly on the improvement of listening perception.

Methodology

The present study followed a quasi- experimental research design (it was based on a randomized pretest posttest control group design). Quantitative paradigms were utilized in analyzing the data. There was a pretest and a post test for all groups in this study. The study included two experimental groups and one control group.

Participants

The sample for the current study was comprised of 60 female learners, which were randomly divided into three equal groups (N=20): two experimental groups and a control group (Narration group, Partial dictation group, and Control group). They were all intermediate learners ranging in age from 17 to 23, studying English as a foreign language at ILI language Institute in Shiraz, Iran. The total sample was consisted of females.

Table 3.1. Number of EFL participants of the study

Groups	N
Experimental Group via Narration	20
Experimental Group via Partial Dictation	20
Control Group	20
Total	60

Instruments

Listening Proficiency Test

In order to have a controlled level of listening proficiency and work with homogeneous participants, the Listening Section of an institutional version of TOEFL was administered at the beginning of the study. The test had 20 multiple choice items, and enjoyed a reliability index of 0.86.

Pretest and posttest (Listening Test)

The first listening test was the listening section of an institutional PBT TOEFL. The test consisted of 20 mini-talks, each followed by a multiple choice question. The mini-talks were randomly selected from among 150 items provided in the Complete TOEFL Test section of *Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL Test* by Deborah Phillips (2003) published by Pearson ESL. The items in this pack are claimed to be similar to real TOEFL in terms of content and difficulty, hence evidence for its construct validity. In order to provide data for the first research question, two versions of this test were produced: the first version with written item modality (for both the stem and the options) and the second version with item stems in the oral mode (but with the options in the written mode). K-R 21 was utilized to estimate the reliability of the test, which was estimated to be 0.75.

Treatment Materials

The main material of the study was the students' textbook named English Book (2) for High School second year students by Parviz Birjandi, Mehdi Norouzi, and Gholamhosein Mahmoudi, published in 2013. The units which were taught during the experiment included all seven units of lesson plans used for the instruction of the textbook over a period of a whole semester. Another basic material of the study, besides the students' textbook, was a package comprising seven short English language documentaries about culture, environment, and adventure activities. An attempt was made to select multimedia tracks which were in line with the topics of the seven lessons of the students' text book. Each video and audio track was 3-5 minutes in length. There were some questions, at the end of each video or audio track, which targeted the comprehension of the presented materials by the participants of the experimental group.

Data collection and Procedure

To achieve the purpose of the study and to address the research questions, the researcher carried out the following procedures during the research progression in order to collect the required data. The data collection procedure of the study started in Oct(2020) and lasted for seven weeks. To begin data collection, almost 60 Iranian female EFL learners with age range of 17-20 were randomly selected from intermediate level classes at ILI Language Institute in Shiraz to participate in this study. First, for guaranteeing the participants' homogeneity in terms of language proficiency level, a version of Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was implemented. After determining their level of language proficiency by using Oxford Placement Test, 60 of these learners whose scores were between one standard deviation below and above the mean were chosen as the homogenous intermediate sample to participate in this study. Then, they were randomly divided into three equal groups: two experimental groups (Narration and Partial dictation) and a control group. Each group involved twenty subjects.

All participants of the two groups were then asked to take the pre-test before the experiment. They were also required to sit for the same test used as the post test to detect the possible

improvement of the learners after the treatment. The time allotted for the listening pre and post-test was 25 minutes.

Treatment Procedure

The procedure to carry out the treatment, giving partial dictation, is as follows. First, students were made aware of the topic of the passage or conversation to activate their background knowledge; they then listened to the whole passage or conversation without any pauses. Second, The texts were duplicated with blanks for the words or structures that were determined to be important and the students were provided with an incomplete written text, the tape were replayed and the students wrote down in the deleted parts what they heard. In the third stage they listened again to the whole passage or conversation to check what they had written. After the dictation they checked their writing against the tape script. Sometimes after checking their dictation, participants listened to the tape again while looking at their dictation and paying special attention to their mistakes and were given teachers' explanation and error correction. There were four steps in creating the partial text. First, the transcript was provided. Second, the instructor identified words or expressions that should be deleted. The deleted parts were mostly nouns or verbs because the most important part of meaning of a text is yield by nouns and verbs. Actually nouns and verbs carry the conceptual meaning of a text. Over 95% of deleted words were known to the majority of students; the chief aim of deleting known words was to provide sufficient practice in recognizing known words and/or strengthening sound-to-word relationships in the long-term memory. Additionally, less than 5% of deleted words were new; these served to teach, demonstrate, and practice transcription of a new word into phonetic symbols and thus to its spelling. This skill is crucial for life-long independent learning, for students can often find spelling and meanings of new words on their own. Third, based on deleted words, questions (primarily Wh-questions) were designed to guide students on what to expect and to focus on. Fourth, phonemic notations of word variations in connected speech (resyllabification, assimilation, elision, and reduction of function words) were supplied in the handouts to both facilitate in-class explanations and to raise students' attention on problematic word variations that reportedly impede EFL/ESL listeners' decoding and/or comprehension.

3.3. Descriptive Statistics for Pretest and Posttest

Table 3.6 shows the descriptive statistics for the participants' pretest.

Table 3.2 Descriptive Statistics of participants' Pretest

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Narration	20	17	23	20.70	1.86
Partial dictation	20	18	23	20.90	1.61
Control	20	16	25	20.95	2.08
Valid N (listwise)	20				

The above table indicates that the participants' listening pre-test mean score in narration group was 20.70 with the standard deviation of 1.86. The participants' listening pre-test mean score in partial dictation group was 20.90 with the standard deviation of 1.61. The participants' listening comprehension pre-test mean score in control group was 20.95 with the standard deviation of 2.08.

Table 3.3 Descriptive Statistics of participants' Posttest

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Narration	20	20	25	22.50	1.39
Partial dictation	20	20	25	22.90	1.37
Control	20	17	23	21.20	1.63
Valid N (listwise)	20				

The descriptive statistics of the posttest showed that the mean for narration group was 22.50, for partial dictation group was 22.90, and for the control group was 21.20. Hence, the mean of partial dictation group was slightly higher than the mean of narration group. This shows that partial dictation task was more successful in improving the learners' listening comprehension in

comparison to narration task. The mean of experimental groups was slightly higher than control group's mean. In order to see whether these differences were statistically significant, one way ANOVA test analysis was run.

3.6. The Results Regarding the First Research Hypothesis

To examine the pre- existing difference between the experimental and the control groups, the performances of the control and experimental participants on listening comprehension pretest were compared with aid of a one- way ANOVA on study's commencement.

Table 3.4 One- Way ANOVA for the Listening Pretest

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.70	2	.35	.10	.90
Within Groups	198.95	57	3.39		
Total	199.65	59			

Based on Table 3.4, the results of the ANOVA analysis show that there were no significance difference between the pretest results of the experimental and control groups at the beginning of the study ($p = 0.905 > 0.05$). Therefore, it was concluded that the participants of all the groups were homogenous in terms of their listening comprehension. After gaining certitude that the listening comprehension of all the participants was approximately similar, the study's treatment began and its efficacy was verified on the listening comprehension posttest.

The statistical procedure of one-way ANOVA was performed on the post test scores in order to answer the first research question of the study, that is, " Are there any significant differences in the effects of conventional, narration and partial dictation tasks on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension?" and to see if there were any significant differences between and within the three groups of learners to determine their level of progression after the course of instruction.

Table 3.5 One- Way ANOVA for the Listening Posttest

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	31.30	2	15.80	7.26	.002
Within Groups	123.00	57	2.17		
Total	155.60	59			

According to ANOVA analysis results, there was a statistically significant difference among the posttest results of the experimental and the control groups ($p = 0.002 < 0.05$). This implied that listening comprehension tasks brought about a significant improvement for the experimental participants. Therefore, the first null hypothesis - There are no significant differences in the effects of conventional, narration and partial dictation tasks on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension - was rejected.

It was necessary to run a Post- Hoc Scheffe test to determine the location of the significant differences. The test was conducted on the data to serve the purpose and the results of the Post Hoc test are presented in Table 3.11.

Table 3.6 Post- Hoc Scheffe Test

(I) Group	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Narration	Partial dictation	-.30	.36	.69	-1.57	.772
	Control	1.30*	.36	.02	.127	2.37
Partial dictation	Narration	.30	.36	.69	-.772	1.57
	Control	1.70*	.36	.00	.527	2.87
Control	Narration	-1.30*	.36	.02	-2.37	-.127
	Partial dictation	-1.70*	.366	.00	-2.87	-.527

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As it is can be observed in Table 3.6, based on the results of Post-Hoc Scheffe test, no significant difference was seen between the performances of the two experimental groups ($p = 0.69 > 0.05$). **The mean score of the participants in the narration group differed significantly** from the control group ($p = 0.02 < 0.05$). Also the partial dictation group had a significant difference with the control group ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$).

3.7. The Results Regarding the Second Research Hypothesis

In order to answer the second research question - Does narration task have any significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension? -the performance of participants of the narration group was compared on the listening pretest and posttest. Regarding this purpose, a Paired- Sample Test was utilized.

Table 3.7 A Paired Samples Test between the Pretest and Posttest of Narration Group

	Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
				Lower	Upper		

Table 3.7 A Paired Samples Test between the Pretest and Posttest of Narration Group

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Narration Narration	-1.80	1.23	.277	-2.38	-1.21	-6.39	19	.00

Table 3.7 displays that p- value is less than 0.05 and based on this result, the narration task had significant effect on participants' listening comprehension. Therefore, the second null hypothesis- Narration task has not any significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension- was rejected.

5.3. Final remark

The findings of this study revealed that partial dictation and retelling greatly facilitates L2 listening comprehension by helping learners pay attention, discover their weaknesses in listening and focus on useful words and expressions. Partial dictation and retelling tasks also help improve the ability to make inferences from context and promote good memory skills for the target language items in a meaningful manner. The findings also showed that selection of the right type of tasks is significantly related to learner's motivation and attitude towards learning listening comprehension and tasks helped to increase learners' engagement in class activities. It proved that partial dictation and retelling as a teaching techniques can be used to enhance listening mastery of intermediate EFL learners. The findings of this study is in line with Hughes' (1989),

Buck (2001), and Nation and Newton (2009), since they claimed that practice with partial dictation helps learners improve their listening comprehension. The finding of the present study also revealed a degree of consistence with the results of the study conducted by Brown, Dune, and Cooper (1996) on the effect of retelling on listening comprehension.

Considering the fact that most of the language learners, especially in countries where English language is taught as a foreign language, have problem understanding the gist of whatever they listen to, the research can open an avenue to firstly perceive the problem existed and secondly to establish a methodology in language teaching according to properties of partial dictation and retelling, and use them in language pedagogy. Because this study found that partial dictation and retelling can have a positive effect on the listening comprehension ability of intermediate EFL learners, EFL teachers can use these techniques in their classes with more confidence.

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