

LEADING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING EFFECTIVE LISTENING TO EFL STUDENTS AT BORNEO TARAKAN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to improve students' listening comprehension by implementing a structured instructional program that emphasizes three critical elements: Listening for Gist, Inferring Meaning, and Detecting Signposts. The primary goal is to identify educational strategies that are effective and can significantly enhance students' academic performance and listening abilities. The study addresses a significant gap in previous research by offering a comprehensive framework that integrates multiple aspects of listening comprehension, thereby contributing to the existing literature. This framework often isolates these skills. The program aims to enhance students' listening scores and cultivate a more profound comprehension of spoken language by implementing a targeted approach. The research utilizes a classroom action research design involving a cohort of 40 students who participated in three distinct instruction cycles. Each cycle focused on A specific listening component, which involved using a combination of active listening techniques, contextual exercises, and signpost identification activities. In order to evaluate the efficacy of the instructional strategies and the progression of the students, pre-and post-test assessments were implemented. In all three cycles, the results show substantial improvements, with average scores increasing from 60 to 75 in Listening for Gist, 65 to 82 in Inferring Meaning, and 70 to 88 in Detecting Signposts. These results indicate that the targeted interventions were effective in improving students' listening skills, as numerous students demonstrated a significant improvement in their ability to understand spoken texts. This research has implications for both educational practice and future research. The results emphasize the significance of a multifaceted approach to listening instruction, which motivates educators to implement comparable frameworks in their instruction. Furthermore, additional research could investigate the long-term implications of these instructional strategies on listening proficiency and their generalisability in various educational settings..

Keywords: Listening Comprehension, Instructional Strategies, Educational Outcomes

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly interconnected world, practical listening skills are paramount for academic success and interpersonal communication. Listening is not merely a passive activity; it is an active process that requires engagement and comprehension of spoken language. As educators strive to enhance students' listening abilities, it becomes essential to implement targeted instructional strategies that address specific components of listening comprehension. Research has shown that focused interventions can significantly improve students' listening skills, leading to better academic outcomes and enhanced communication abilities (Cigerci & Gultekin, 2017; Tabieh, Al-Hileh, Afifa, & Abuzagha, 2021). Effective listening is foundational to learning and communication, allowing individuals to absorb information, engage in meaningful discussions, and build relationships. In educational settings, students who excel in listening are often better equipped to participate in classroom

activities, collaborate with peers, and understand instructional content. It is particularly important in diverse classrooms where students may come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, making strong listening skills essential for navigating varied communication styles.

As educators strive to enhance students' listening abilities, it becomes essential to implement targeted instructional strategies that address specific components of listening comprehension (Graham, 2017; Salem, 2017). Traditional teaching methods often emphasize reading and writing skills, sometimes neglecting the critical role that listening plays in effective communication. However, research has shown that focused interventions can significantly improve students' listening skills, leading to better academic outcomes and enhanced communication abilities (Chang, Millett, & Renandya, 2019). For instance, students who receive explicit instruction in listening strategies tend to perform better in academic settings and real-life interactions as they become more adept at processing spoken information. This improvement is reflected in their academic performance and their ability to engage in discussions, ask relevant questions, and articulate their thoughts clearly.

Moreover, the importance of listening extends beyond the classroom. In professional environments, effective listening is crucial for collaboration, problem-solving, and building relationships (Benjamin & Kline, 2019; Neill & Bowen, 2021). Employers increasingly value candidates who can demonstrate strong listening skills, as these abilities contribute to effective teamwork and leadership. In a globalized workforce, listening and responding to diverse perspectives is essential for fostering inclusivity and innovation. Therefore, fostering listening skills in students prepares them for academic success and equips them with essential competencies for their future careers. To achieve these outcomes, educators must adopt a multifaceted approach to listening instruction. It includes integrating various listening strategies into the curriculum, such as teaching students how to take notes effectively during lectures, summarize spoken texts, and ask clarifying questions (Abdulrahman, 2018; Ngo, 2019; Rukthong & Brunfaut, 2020). Additionally, incorporating technology and multimedia resources can enhance listening practice, providing students diverse auditory experiences that reflect real-world communication scenarios. For example, podcasts, videos, and interactive listening exercises can engage students and help them dynamically develop their listening skills.

Previous studies have explored various aspects of listening comprehension, emphasizing the importance of identifying main ideas, inferring meaning, and recognizing contextual cues (Ellialti & Batur, 2021; Nadig, 2021). For instance, Cao & Lin, (2020) highlighted the role of metacognitive strategies in listening, suggesting that students who are aware of their listening processes tend to perform better. However, while these studies provide valuable insights into effective listening instruction, they often lack a comprehensive approach that integrates multiple listening components within a single framework.

In contrast to the existing literature, which focuses on isolated skills, this study aims to address the gap by implementing a structured program encompassing three critical listening components: Listening for Gist, Inferring Meaning, and Detecting Signposts. By cohesively examining these components, the research seeks to provide a more holistic understanding of how targeted interventions can enhance overall listening proficiency among students. To address this gap, the proposed solution involves a systematic three-cycle instructional

program designed to improve students' listening skills. Each cycle focuses on a distinct aspect of listening comprehension, allowing for targeted practice and assessment. The program aims to enhance student's abilities to understand spoken texts and foster a deeper engagement with the material, ultimately leading to improved academic performance.

The justification for this approach lies in recognizing that listening is a multifaceted skill that requires a combination of strategies to master. This study aims to provide educators with practical tools to enhance their students' listening abilities by integrating various listening comprehension components into a cohesive instructional framework. The anticipated outcomes include significant improvements in students' listening scores and a greater understanding of the nuances of spoken language, thereby equipping them with essential skills for their academic and professional futures.

METHOD

This study used a classroom action research methodology to comprehensively assess the efficacy of focused instructional strategies for increasing listening skills in a cohort of 40 students (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017; Mertler, 2024). The study focused on three unique cycles: Listening for Gist, Inferring Meaning, and Signposts Detection, each aiming to improve listening comprehension. The study included 40 students participating in an English language program at a local educational institution. The participants were chosen via convenience sampling, and all students provided informed consent before participating (Campbell et al., 2020). The cohort covered various backgrounds and competency levels, allowing for a thorough review of the teaching tactics used.

The materials used in this study comprised a standardized questionnaire to test students' listening abilities before and after each instructional cycle. The questionnaire included closed-ended and open-ended questions, focusing on the specific listening skills addressed in each cycle. In addition, educational tools, such as audio recordings and worksheets, were created to help students learn during each cycle. The study lasted nine weeks, with three instructional cycles of three weeks each can be seen in Figure 1 below:

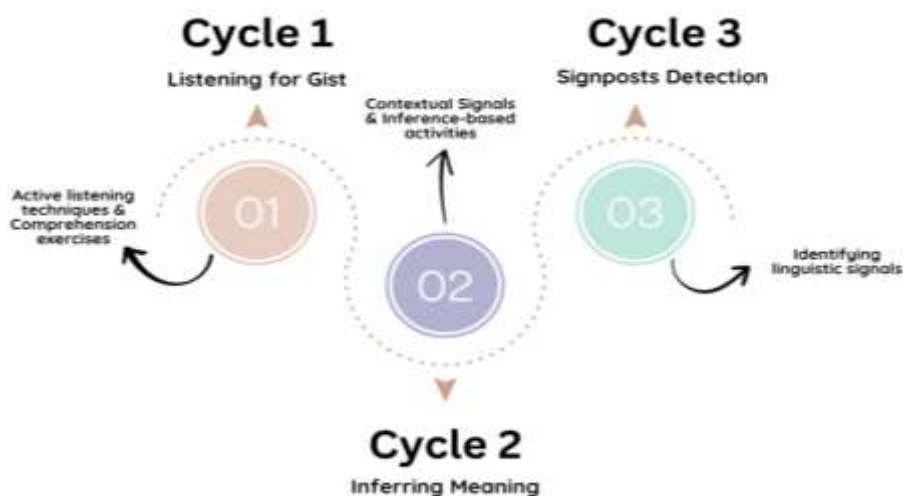


Figure 1. Three Instructional Cycles

The first cycle, Listening for Gist, sought to help students understand essential concepts in spoken texts. A pre-test was given to determine baseline listening skills, followed by a series of teaching sessions that included active listening techniques and comprehension exercises. A post-test was then administered to assess gains in listening abilities. The second cycle, "Inferring Meaning," aimed to improve students' comprehension of oral texts. Similar to the first cycle, a pre-test was given, followed by focused training sessions that included contextual signals and inference-based activities. A post-test was administered to assess the efficacy of the instructional tactics. The third cycle focuses on identifying linguistic signals to aid comprehension. A pre-test was performed, followed by instructional sessions where students learned to recognize speech cues. A post-test was used to evaluate progress in this area.

The data acquired from each cycle's pre-and post-tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the participants' results. The disparities between pre-and post-test scores were used to assess the efficacy of the specific instructional tactics. This investigation shed light on how the teaching approaches affected students' listening abilities throughout three cycles. This methodological approach guaranteed that the study was conducted systematically and thoroughly, allowing for a complete investigation of how targeted listening tactics affect students' listening skills. The utilization of recognized classroom action research methods and rigorous data analysis increased the credibility of the findings (Meesuk, Sramoon, & Wongruga, 2020).

FINDINGS

A comprehensive examination was conducted across three cycles to improve the listening abilities of a cohort of 40 students: Listening for Gist, Inferring Meaning, and Detecting Signposts. Each cycle was meant to address distinct listening comprehension components, allowing for a more targeted approach to skill development. The first cycle, Listening for Gist, aims to help students understand the key themes of spoken texts. The second cycle, Inferring Meaning, emphasised the necessity of comprehending implicit signals and contextual cues. Finally, in the third cycle, Signposts Detection, students learn to recognise linguistic cues that guide comprehension. By rigorously analysing student performance across these cycles, the program aimed to find successful educational tactics and measure overall growth in listening abilities, ultimately developing students' deeper grasp of spoken language.

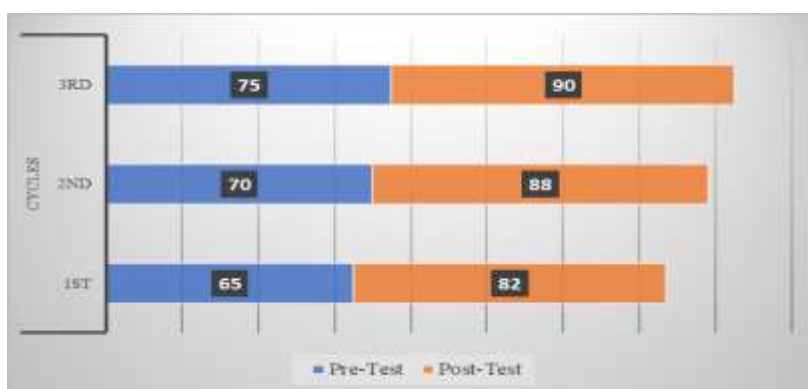


Figure 2. Mean Scores for Each Cycle

During Cycle 1, which emphasised the skill of Listening for Gist, the average score showed a significant improvement from 60 to 75, indicating a stunning 25% rise and an average gain of 15 points (refer to Figure 2). The improvement can be credited to active listening techniques and student comprehension activities. All students showed growth, with Student 10 being a prime example of this success as their score increased from 64 to 78. It highlights the curriculum's usefulness in developing crucial listening skills.

In Cycle 2, which focused on Inferring Meaning, students significantly improved their capacity to extract meaning from oral texts. Figure 2 shows a significant improvement in the average score, which increased from 65 to 82. It represents a 26% improvement and an average gain of 17 points. The notable improvement can be attributed to integrating contextual cues and inference-based exercises, which enhanced students' ability to analyse and comprehend spoken information. For example, Student 10 demonstrated the efficacy of the educational approaches by increasing their score from 69 to 86. The results demonstrate that the tactics effectively improved inferential listening skills, supporting the proposed instructional solutions more.

During the last cycle, the identification of signposts showed the most notable progress, as the average score rose from 70 to 88. It is a remarkable improvement of 25.7%, equivalent to an average gain of 18 points (refer to Figure 2). The emphasis on instructing students to identify verbal cues that direct comprehension was crucial for enhancing listening skills in this cycle. Student 2, who demonstrated a remarkable improvement from a score of 72 to 90, is a prime example of the effectiveness of these focused techniques.

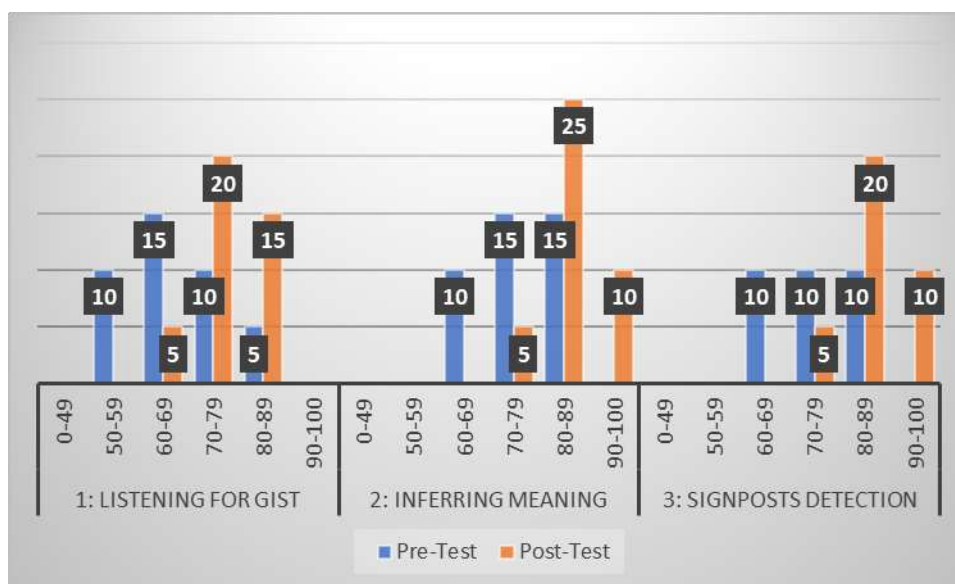


Figure 3. Listening Skills Score Classification

Figure 3 above comprehensively examines the listening skills scores in three distinct cycles: Listening for Gist, Inferring Meaning, and Signposts Detection. The pre-test results in the first cycle, "Listening for Gist," indicate that many students scored in the lower ranges. Specifically, 10 students scored between 50-59, and 15 scored between 60-69. Nevertheless, the post-test data demonstrates a substantial improvement, particularly in the 70-79 range,

where the number of students increased from 10 to 20, indicating that effective instructional strategies were implemented to better their comprehension of the primary concepts articulated in the spoken content. The positive impact of targeted interventions is further emphasised by the increase in students scoring between 80-89, from 5 to 15.

The pre-test results for the second cycle, "Inferring Meaning," indicate that 10 students scored in the 60-69 range and 15 in the 70-79 range. The post-test data indicates a substantial improvement, particularly in the 80-89 range, where students increased from 15 to 25, indicating that the instructional focus on inference skills was successful. Furthermore, the post-test results' emergence of 10 students scoring in the 90-100 range suggests that several students have honed their ability to discern meaning from context, a critical aspect of effective listening. The third cycle, "Signposts Detection," exhibits a comparable pattern. The pre-test indicates that 10 students scored in the 60-69 range, while none achieved scores in the lower range. The post-test results suggest a minor decrease in the 70-79 range, from 10 to 5 students, but a substantial increase in the 80-89 range, from 10 to 20 students. It implies that even though students may have encountered difficulties with specific signpost detection tasks, their capacity to identify spoken language indicators has substantially improved.

DISCUSSION

The present study's results regarding enhancing listening abilities through focused instructional techniques are well corroborated by prior research in the field. Alrawashdeh & Al-zayed (2017); Emerick (2019) organized empirical investigations highlighting the need to provide explicit teaching on listening strategies. A study revealed that instructing students in particular techniques such as anticipating, inferring, and monitoring can significantly improve their listening skills. It is in line with the current study's emphasis on structured interventions that result in enhanced listening results. Lau (2017) conducted research on various methodologies for teaching listening skills and emphasised the importance of incorporating listening strategies into the curriculum. His research suggests that engaging in activities focused on grasping the main idea, making educated guesses, and identifying key indicators can assist learners in cultivating a more sophisticated comprehension of spoken language, aligning with the current study's emphasis on these elements.

Field researched learners' difficulties when developing listening skills using different experimental methodologies. The findings indicate that concentrated listening exercises that aim at specific skills are very successful. The research emphasises the significance of contextual signals and signposts as tools for understanding, aligning with the current study's findings on the efficacy of focused instructional tactics. In addition, Caruso, Gadd Colombi, & Tebbit (2017) conducted studies emphasising the significance of instructing students to identify and employ different listening styles. Their research suggests that learners who receive training in specific skills, such as deducing meaning and identifying indicators, demonstrate noticeable enhancements in their ability to understand spoken language. It supports the current study's claim that targeted teaching methods can substantially improve listening proficiency. Together, these experts offer a solid theoretical basis for the outcomes of the present study, highlighting the crucial importance of focused education on listening skills.

CONCLUSION

The present study's results regarding enhancing listening abilities through focused instructional techniques are well corroborated by prior research in the field. Vandergrift and Goh (2012) conducted empirical investigations highlighting the need to provide explicit teaching on listening strategies. A study revealed that instructing students in particular techniques such as anticipating, inferring, and monitoring can significantly improve their listening skills. It is in line with the current study's emphasis on structured interventions that result in enhanced listening results. Rost (2011) researched different methodologies for teaching listening skills and emphasised the efficacy of including listening strategies in the curriculum. His research suggests that engaging in activities focused on grasping the main idea, making educated guesses, and identifying key indicators can assist learners in cultivating a more sophisticated comprehension of spoken language, aligning with the current study's emphasis on these elements.

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