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The Impact of Listening to Short Stories on Comprehension

**Dissertation Submitted to the Institute of Foreign Languages in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of the Degree of Master in Language Sciences**

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Dedication:

I wish to dedicate my modest work to all my family, my mother and my father with gratitude and love.

-To my sister Doria and her husband for their encouragement and intensive help.

-To my brothers and their wives for their attention.

-To my nieces: **Oumeima, Salsabil, Hayet, Hoyam, Naela** and the beautiful **Ibtihal**.

-To my nephews: **Zaki, Osama, Mohamed, Ishak, Houssam, Alaedine, Mouataz**, the brightest **Mehdi** and to the sweetest babies in the world: **Abdellah fawaz, Farouk**, and **Adib**.

-To my **fiancy** for his patient and care, and to his family for their attention and encouragement.

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ABSTRACT:

This dissertation attempt to investigate third year L M D students' listening comprehension achievement.

This dissertation contains two chapters, including one experiment on the effect of presenting short stories as a listening input on the listening comprehension achievement.

It aims at describing, and analyzing, what the listening skill involves, and showing how short stories can be used as a listening input within a communicative language teaching framework.

A short story has the advantage of creating a meaning full context for students. However, some factors have to be taken into account, such as the students' background knowledge and the schematic structure of short stories.

Listening has been neglected as a language skill, or practiced in inadequate ways .In this study, we use a test investigating third year LMD students' understanding and needs concerning the listening comprehension component of the oral expression course, as well as the listening input they had so far. The test also suggests the use of short stories as a listening input. As the results of the test show, students were fond of using short stories as a listening input. It is for this reason that we decide to carry out an experiment. Moreover, the test reveals that the time allocated to teaching aural comprehension and thus to oral expression is not enough, and learners are in need to speech comprehension as well as speech production.

The experiment used intends to show the effect of presenting short stories on students' listening comprehension achievement. The first activities aim at activating the students' background knowledge on the topic of the short story, and to facilitate the way to comprehending it, to set expectations, to make hypotheses, etc. While the second activities are designed to make students acquire real knowledge or information in a meaning full context. This knowledge extracted from the short story that is going to be used in order to make activities interacting.

The results of the study tend to show that short stories are a comprehensible input when they are presented via such an approach. They facilitate comprehension, develop critical thinking and encourage learners' elaboration. Learners tend to relate the stories' theme to their realities and to their personal experiences. Besides, the discourse of short stories has the advantage of presenting the components of communicative competence in a meaningful context as an input into use by native speakers.

List of abbreviations and symbols

G T M: Grammar Translation Method.

T L: Target Language.

M T: Mother Tongue.

S T M: Short Term Memory.

L T M: Long Term Memory.

F L: Foreign Language.

WM: Working Memory.

D M: Direct Method.

N: The number of subjects.

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Introduction:

1- Aim of the study

This study is conducted in the English department at Mentouri University at Constantine.

This research is aiming to demonstrate how listening to English short stories through using movies, videos, etc, improve third year LMD students' listening skill at the department of English , University of Constantine .

2- Statement of the Problem:

What effects do methods of presenting short stories have on improving the comprehension ability of third year LMD students?

3- Hypotheses:

As an answer to this question, we first hypothesize that presenting short stories as a listening input leads to a better achievement of the comprehension ability.

The second hypothesis is that promoting an appropriate listening through the activation of already existing schemata which interact with new incoming information that is conducive to thinking and speaking.

4- Assumption:

In this study, students involved in this research have studied English for many years at the university where they attended an oral expression course (aural comprehension and speaking). Hence, we assume that they have a relatively good linguistic competence and ability in English, such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. We also assume that they

master the sub-skills of the listening skill recognizing prominence within utterances, detecting and identifying stress and intonation.

5- Research Methodology:

This study is conducted in the English department at Mentouri University at Constantine.

In this research, we use a test investigating third year LMD students' understandings, who are supposed to listen carefully to short story and comprehend the content, as far as the listening input they had so far.

6- The Structure of the Study:

The research is basically divided into two main chapters. The first chapter contains the literature review, and the second chapter is concerned with the analysis of the data and the results obtained from the test.

The first chapter comprises the following sections: section one deals with a review of short stories, their role in literature, and their use as a listening input. Section two contains a survey of the English teaching approaches and methods

Section three deals with the listening skill , its definition, kinds of listening , characteristics of the variables in listening issues such as memory and concentration , and the factors influencing listening comprehension such as : topic , content , etc.

The second chapter concerned with the analysis of the data gathered and the results that are obtained from the test given to the third year LMD students.

Chapter one

Content

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Section 01: Short Stories. A review:

1-Introduction:

Everyone knows stories, overhears stories and narrative stories. Stories are used every day to recount what happened in class, outside class, how we learnt about this and that, what happened to this and that, how we fell in love, etc. Stories then seem to be omnipresent. In what follows, we will give a definition to the short story after giving an overview about it.

2- Overview:

Short stories have their origins in oral story - telling traditions and the prose anecdote, a swiftly - sketched situation that quickly comes to its points. With the rise of the realistic novel, the short story developed as a miniature version (Wikipedia: 2010).

Short stories were starting from the 19Th century as a staple of magazines. More recently, short stories have been reprinted in anthologies, categorized by topic or critical reception. Today many authors release collections of their short stories (Wikipedia: 2010).

Some authors are known almost entirely for their short stories, either by choice (they wrote nothing else) or by critical regard (short -story writing is thought of as a challenging art). An example is Jorge Luis Borges, who won American fame with "The Garden of Forking Paths", published in the August 1948 in Elley Queen's Mystery Magazine .

Authors such as Charles Dickens, Virginia Woolf, James Joys, and Ernest Hemingway were highly accomplished writers of both short stories and novels (Wikipedia: 2010). The art of storytelling is doubtlessly older than record civilization. The oldest and most direct ancestor of the short story is the anecdote and illustrative story (Wikipedia: 2010).

3- What is a Short story?

A short story is a work of fiction that is usually written in prose, often in narrative format. It is usually but not necessarily short in size. It is concise and recounts a series of events with causal or temporal relationships between them. The short story has a single mood, i.e., comic or tragic; we cannot have more than one mood because it is short. Generally, it presents no more than two characters and one significant event around which the story built.

A short story has a beginning, middle and end. The end in a short story is different from the beginning. Moreover, the events might allow the listener or the reader to anticipate or predict the end.

The theme of a short story is quickly and economically presented. There is neither a complex nor a thorough or total description of the characters and events. This is due to the length of the short story, with which the prospective listener / reader has so many inferences to make. S/he is not told everything that is why the reader is free to interpret secondary events as s/he likes depending on her/his background knowledge.

The short story has a double meaning, one concerned with the particular characters and events depicted in the story, and the other one, transcends to the universal meaning of reality.

Many short story writers define their work through a combination of creative, personal expression and artistic integrity (Wikipedia: 2010).

4- Characteristics of Short Story:

Short stories tend to be less complex than novels. Usually a short story focuses on only one incident, has a single plot, a single sitting, a small number of characters, and covers a short period of time.

In longer forms of fictions, stories tend to contain certain core elements of dramatic structure: exposition (the introduction of setting, situation and main character); complication (the event that introduces the conflict); climax (the point of highest interest in terms of the conflict and the point with the most action); resolution (the point when the conflict is resolved).

Because of their length, short stories may or may not follow this pattern. Some do not follow patterns at all, for example, modern short stories only by occasion have an exposition . The ending of many short stories are open and may or may not have a moral or practical lesson.

When short stories intend to convey a specific ethical or moral perspective, they fall into a more specific sub-category called “fables “. This specific kind of short story has been used spiritual and religious leaders worldwide to inspire, enlighten, and educate their followers (Wikipedia: 2010).

5- Can we Use Short Stories as a Listening Input?

The cause behind the choice of short stories as a listening input is that one wanted to support the main listening materials by an additional one. Listening input must expand in variety but fit with students’ interests, needs and aspirations. The primary function of short stories is to entertain and inform. They keep interest alive in the classroom and motivate students, they have factual (real) and cultural values. They keep interests alive in the classroom and motivate students, they create a comfortable atmosphere and a good environment and enjoyable. Every student will create her / his own setting, characters, physical appearance and relating them to her / his own reality and experience to that of the story, thanks to her/ his background knowledge.

So, we use stories that can cope with the learners’ framework and his/ her schema in order to make her/him listen with great care, and understand perfectly well the content of that

story, because if this short story cannot go with the schema, then learning will come to nothing. Learners are involved to see and interpret (Arab: 1990).

The framework serves two important functions: first, the use of it to interpret new stories we hear; second, use it to guide our construction of a new story or our re-telling of a series of real life episodes which we believe comprise a story (Gordon: 1976).

The framework is a set of related categories which are to be filled by particular objects and events in the story. To clarify this notion, Gordon (1976: 512) gives an example:

Consider your framework of a soccer game; you have lots of organized knowledge about the various players, their roles, relations and goals. When you go out to watch an actual game, I suppose that you call up this soccer framework from memory and proceed to instantiate its elements with the actual characters and events you see before you. That framework is the background allowing you to understand the significance of particular events.

So, the framework helps us distinguish major from minor events (Gordon: 1976).

6 – Schema Theory:

Schema theory was proposed by Bartlett (1932). It counts for the role of prior knowledge in language comprehension. One basic principle of schema theory is that any text whether it is spoken or written does not by itself carry meaning. A text provides cues to the language comprehenders as to how background knowledge should be used to understand meaning. In other words, comprehending language involves an interaction between the linguistic importance and the background knowledge. The structures of background knowledge are called: “schemata “. Schemata permit us to leave much details unsaid and inferred when interpreting language. For Carroll and Eisterhold (1983):

Much of the meaning understood from a text is not actually in the text, per se but in the reader , in the background or schematic knowledge of the reader .

And the same applies to the listener by analogy. In other words, we provide schemata to comprehend language. The principle of compatibility, according to Carroll and Eisterhold (1983) results in two modes of information processing, namely the bottom –up and the top-down processing:

bottom-up processing is evoked by the incoming data;

... Bottom- level processing is, therefore, called data driven.

Top-down processing, on the other hand, occurs as the system makes general predictions based on high level, general schemata and then searches the input for information to fit into these partially satisfied higher order schemata. Top-down processing is, therefore, called conceptually -driven.

These two information processing skills act simultaneously. While trying to comprehend language, we process the incoming data through the bottom-up mode, and at the same time, we activate the appropriate schemata against which this incoming input is matched.

7- Culture Specific vs. Cross Cultural Properties of Short Stories:

Each and every short story contains events that are goal- oriented. That is to say, each event aims at something precise. The events that do relate to our native culture are better understood than those that are remote from our culture . And the cross- cultural events will be difficult or less easy to understand. This is due to the non- existence of the particular schemata needed to understand the events, or it may exist but with relatively small or big differences depending on the cultural distance between the native and the foreign culture, because there are some events that need culture- specific knowledge to be interpreted and fully or correctly understood.

8 – Conclusion

Some of the listening inputs that teachers use are questionable. Teachers have to rethink, question and test the nature of the listening input they use. In the language teaching field and especially in the teaching of language comprehension, there is much contention about the "context-of-use" principle and "shorter –is –easier –to process" principle (Brown: 1986). But we may integrate these two principles so that the listening input that is used –as in this chapter –presents language in its context of use. By the same token, we use meaningful extracts of short stories to ensure an easier language processing. This section has shown the nature and relevance of short stories a contextualized listening input.

Section2: Survey of the English Teaching Approaches and methods

1 – Introduction

A method is expected to help the students in their everyday learning activities. A method is also expected to help students activate the structural patterning of the language they are learning together with making them aware of how language is actually spoken by native speakers in different natural context of speech .

A method should give confidence to the learner towards the TL. That is, it should arouse in him the desire to learn the FL so that he can pick up-in the most effective way possible - the language he is learning.

In this section, we will present and discuss some current methods and approaches in language teaching. We will also try to explore tentatively some alternatives as to suggest an eclectic method that would satisfy the students' needs as well as their input requirements.

A method is a set of procedures and techniques used in systematic way in the study of facts and concepts. An approach is a particular way to use a scientific theory. An approach can be inspired by a given theory, but it does not follow that theory.

The two terms appear with different meaning. In the language teaching field, Richards and Rogers (1985) define the term approach as a set of assumptions, beliefs, and theories dealing with the nature of language and language learning which inspires teachers in their teaching practice .

Each approach / method in language teaching dominated a certain period of time, but without the exclusion of the other approaches / methods.

The major language teaching approaches and methods that will be presented in this section is the G.T.M., the Direct Method (D.M), the Audio-lingual Method, Active Participation, in addition to the innovative teaching Method: the Silent Way.

2- Grammar-Translation Method:

Grammar- Translation Method (G.T.M) was originally used in teaching Greek and Latin. Then it has been applied to the teaching of modern languages. Classes are taught in the mother tongue (MT), with little use of the target language (TL) except reading aloud the translated sentences. Hence, the pronunciation of the TL is overlooked.

This method aims at acquiring the TL deductively; it applies a deductive approach to grammar learning. The grammatical rules are presented explicitly. Grammar instruction provides the rules of putting words together. Instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words (MORA: 2008). This method is focuses also on memorization of vocabulary in the form of lists of isolated words. The learning activities consist of the translation of isolated sentences from the TL into the MT and vice versa. On the One hand, the emphasis is on form rather than meaning, and on the other hand, the reading skill is comparatively overemphasized in comparison with the neglected of oral skills. Moreover, errors which are part of any learning process are not tolerated. This has an inhibiting effect on the learners.

However, with this method learners have no opportunity to use the language they are learning. In fact, they become proficient translators but not competent language users. The grammar teaching does not allow the learners to use grammatical rules creatively; they are simply memorizing the inflections and structuring of words, and have no opportunity to use TL orally except when reading aloud the translated sentences.

3- The Direct Method:

It was at the turn of the 20th century that the Direct Method (DM) become widely known and practiced. It was developed initially as a reaction to the GMT in an attempt to integrate more use of the TL in instruction. The basic to this teaching method is the belief that the TL is the only language of instruction, which is presented orally to the learners' right from the beginning. According to this method, oral skills are best learned via practice. There is a

frequent use of dialogues, followed by questions in the TL, which are to be answered also in the TL. There is no explicit grammar teaching, and grammar is also acquired via practice.

Advocates of this method state that students learn to understand a language by listening to a great deal of it, and that they learn to speak it by speaking it. The stress associating speech with appropriate action, in other words, learning a foreign language has to be through direct association of words with actions and objects without the use of the native language. In fact, it has to be like the way children learn their native language or how foreign children acquire a second language in a second language environment. Among the characteristics of this method, Richards and Rogers (1986: 9) suggest:

Vocabulary is presented through detonated objects and actions using both the physical and semantic contexts relying on the exclusive use of the TL. The teacher replaced the textbook of the early stages of learning. Speaking began with systematic attention to pronunciation. Both speech and listening comprehension were taught.

According to Prator and Celce-Murcia (1989: 3):

Grammar is taught inductively; rule generalization comes only after experience. Verb are used first, and systematically conjugated much later. Advanced students read literature for comprehension and pleasure: literary texts are analyzed grammatically. The culture associated with the TL is also taught inductively.

However, listening comprehension was simply taught to develop pronunciation habits and accuracy in terms of the mastery of certain teaching points such as question -and -answer exchanges. Given the exclusive use of the TL, vocabulary teaching is arduous. In sum this method requires intensive contact with the TL. Thus, it is time consuming and not practical. This method flourished in around 1900, i. e., the beginning of the twentieth century; it declined, then emerged around 1950's under the form of a variant method, namely the audio-lingual method.

4- The Audio-lingual Method:

Early, it was called the "oral approach" or "aural-oral method". The term audio-lingual becomes popular around 1960 by Nelson Brooks. This method is based on the principles of behaviouristic psychology, led by Skinner, and structural linguistics led by Leonard Bloomfield. The effect of the world war, and the urgent need to teach millionnaires serving overseas oral skills of various languages in a brief period of time, in addition to the development technology enhanced the development of the audio-lingual method. A major tenet of this method is that language learning is a matter of habit-formation. This method believes that the learner of the foreign language (FL) must train his ears to ensure good language proficiency. It assumes that learning a language entails mastering the elements or building blocks of the language and learning the rules by which these elements are combined.

The Audio-lingual methods according to Brooks (1969) saw language from the structuralist point of view: sound, word, sentence...etc. He argues that learners go through all these steps by means of imitations, repetition, and memorization. Concerning listening, Brown (1987: 11) argues that:

with the advent of oral approaches listening was viewed as a problem of aural recognition of linguistic structures. Exercises to develop listening ability consisted of various types of identification and description, with verbatim reproduction.

Later, a more sophisticated addition was made to identify the meaning indicated by the intonation of a sentence. The sentence would be spoken slowly and clearly, in isolation and the student would be required to identify whether the sentence was intended, for example, as a statement, an instruction or a polite request. Rost (1990) says that later variations of aural recognition exercises included recorded situational dialogues and read-aloud written texts often performed repeatedly by comprehension questions on the content.

William Moulton (1961) summed up the basic principles of the audio-lingual method: "Language is speech not writing; a language is a set of habits; teach the language, not facts about the language; a language is what native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say; languages are different".

This method provides learners with a stock of readymade expressions and sentences which are identified as appropriate responses in some situations. However, it so often happens that learners fail to use these expressions accurately in the appropriate social instances. It produced good speakers in terms of pronunciation and behavioral responses, but not necessarily good communicators who are able to use the foreign language creatively and appropriately in different situations. Finocchiaro (1982: 4) states that:

in the audio-lingual approach, the structuralists and consequently textbooks writers, emphasized the formal properties of language...The over learning, the attention to form, and the daily exhaustion of teachers after five or six classes using the audio-lingual method still did not produce large numbers of learners who could communicate with either the teachers, their peers, or native speakers of English.

5- The Silent Way:

The silent way developed by Gattegno (1972) is characterized as a problem solving approach to learning. Gattegno believes that learners should develop autonomy and responsibility through solving problems related to different linguistic knowledge. This

method is based on the idea that learning is facilitated if the learner discovers or creates rather than repeats and remembers what is to be learnt.

The teacher is silent much of the time, hence, the name of the method, teachers have to resist their tendency to help students at the slightest difficulty and allow the possibility to work out solutions by themselves. In a silent way classroom, the students have to cooperate with each other in the process of solving language problems. The teacher uses as a material a set of colored rods of varying lengths and a series of colored wall charts. The rods are used to introduce vocabulary, colors, adjectives, verbs..., and syntax: tenses, word order ...etc. The charts introduce punctuation models (rules) and grammatical paradigms.

According to Newton (1989):" the advantage of the silent way is that it combines a high degree of mental involvement and interest with actual use of the language", i.e. it combines intensive listening and concentration with language production. He further adds that the "silent way "has not been proved to be successful in class or that it might be used at more advanced stages. According to the advocates of the "silent way ", the results of the language learning process are not as important as the change that happens to the individual.

6- Active Participation:

Simulations provide a unique means of encouraging learners to respond actively and to participate with their fellows. Stervick (1976) has argued that absorbing students in interaction encourages attention to input, an essential requirement for language acquisition (Allwright and Bailey: 1991). Learning is more effective the more it engages the learner, and simulations seek to achieve this.

7 – Conclusion:

As a conclusion to the section, it may be said that listening was not necessarily ignored in most teaching approaches and methods, but it certainly was not adequately taught.

Section 3: The listening skill

1-Introduction

Students often find a tremendous amount of difficulties while they are listening to the language they are learning. In their learning practice, students are saddened by the inability to comprehend recorded dialogues, or songs, even if the elements of stress and intonation are slowly enunciated.

It is established that listening is a basic language skill prior to the other language skills. It is a prerequisite to and more useful than speaking. Rivers (1988) suggested that listening is more useful than speaking English for specific purposes, because the listening activity seems to require more recognition vocabulary from the foreign language learners for a rapid comprehension than a sophisticated and complex knowledge of syntax. Moreover, Ingram (1974) considers the fact " that comprehension is ahead of production a linguistic universal of acquisition ". Krashen (1984) asserts that "speaking is the result of acquisition. The ability to speak a second language emerges or develops on its own after the acquirer has built up enough competence listening and reading."

Lund (1991: 2002) goes even further to suggest listening after reading:

Listening after reading helps learners recognize acoustically what they can already comprehend in print and instills satisfaction and confidence in listening.

In sum, listening plays an important role in language learning and it should be given more attention and consideration (Rivers 1968; Widdowson 1978; Mc Carty 1991; Long 1985; Ur 1984). But despite the importance of listening skill, the emphasis on developing effective listening has been slight. Even Chastain (1988) suggests that listening might be called the: "forgotten skill". What contributed to this situation was the fact that listening in itself as a distinct behavior has not been fully investigated for many reasons. In what follows, we will give some reasons for listening and then consider some definitions of listening.

2 – Reasons for listening

Most students want to be able to understand what other people are saying to them in English, either face to face, on TV or on the radio, on tapes or other recorded media (Jeremy Harmer: 2007).

Harmer (2007) suggests that listening is good for the pronunciation of the learners, i.e. the more they hear and understand English being spoken, the more they absorb appropriate pitch and intonation, stress and the sounds of individual words and those that are blend together in connected speech .As an example: listening to the news reader on TV reading the news in highly voice could be more beneficial to the learners of second language.

Moreover, Harmer (2007) suggested that: "listening texts are good pronunciation models, in other words, and the more students listen, the better they get, not only at understanding speech, but also at speaking themselves. Indeed, it is worth remembering that successful spoken communication depends not just on our ability to speak, but also on the effectiveness of the way we listen."

3-The Nature and Definition of Listening:

With the growing demands for communication as in lectures, business, telephone, etc, with the difficulties encountered by learners of English language in communication, listening comprehension is now given a special attention, and it is rather more important than any other language skill. Rivers (1968), Widdowson (1978), McCarthy (1991) consider listening comprehension as a solid basis, a foundation and a prerequisite for oral proficiency. Therefore, the teaching of comprehension of spoken language has become of major importance based, more particularly, on what learners "should most usefully be able to communicate in the foreign language." (Wilkins: 1976).

Listening is a complex and difficult issue to be investigated which means that it is not easy to provide an easy and quick definition of listening. For Rost (1994)." listening is less

directly observed and less noticeable in both its development and its everyday use." Additionally, listening has been defined as an active process which has taken place between various situations. It requires concentration to understand the message. Tucker(1925) define listening as "... an analysis of the impressions resulting from concentration where an effort of will is required." In effect this definition attracts our attention on concentration. Hook's (1950) definition, however, depicts listening as:

*... the conscious, purposeful registration of sounds upon the mind
... [It] leads to further mental activity ...all true listening is
creative.*

In fact, what is genuine about Hook's definition is the creative aspect in listening. As an example, when the learner listens to a native speaker narrating a story in T.V this enables the learner to generate new ideas and concepts related to this story. Wolff et.al. (1983) suggest that listening is: "a unitary _ receptive communication process of hearing and selecting , assimilating and organizing , and retaining and covertly responding to aural and non- verbal stimuli ."

In general, we do respond overtly, because speaking is a subsequent behavior to listening. Listening for Brownell (1986) is "a process involving six skill areas, or components: hearing messages, understanding messages, remembering messages, interpreting messages, evaluating messages, responding to messages."

Hyslop and Tone (1989) define listening as:

The first language mode that children acquire. It provides a foundation for all aspects of language and cognitive development, and it plays a life-long role in the process of learning and communication essential to productive participation in life.

When one listens he takes on information which can be thought of as signals in his mind related to ideas and relationships between different things. As a result, the language provides the signal and the listener provides the image, so, information is a possibility for having access to ones' images, ideas, and memories. The whole process of language understanding is the integration of new incoming information into already existing knowledge. That is how previous knowledge or schemata stored in memory plays an important role in the listening comprehension process.

Additionally, remembering is involved in the whole process. This means that listening can be held in our Short Term Memory (STM) such as the first parts of the message as well as the incoming parts, and only the relevant parts that are crucial for the building of meaning reach our Long Term Memory (LTM). Memory then plays an important role throughout the listening process.

4- Kinds of Listening:

Learners can improve their listening skills and gain valuable language input through a combination of extensive and intensive listening material and procedures. Listening of both kinds is important since it provides the perfect opportunity to hear voices.

4-1- Extensive Listening:

Extensive listening refers to listening which the students often do away from the classroom, for pleasure or some other reasons. The audio material they consume in this way should consist of texts that they can enjoy listening to, because they more or less understand them without the intervention of a teacher or course materials to help them. Students can also use tapes and CDs to listen to their course book dialogues again after they have studied them in class. Another way of getting students involved in a form of extensive listening is to encourage them to go to English language films with subtitles; as they hear the English dialogue, the subtitles help them understand; as they understand, they will, to some extent, absorb the language they hear(Harmer:2007).

4-2-Intensive Listening:

Intensive listening is different from extensive listening, in that students listen specifically in order to work on listening skill, and in order to study the way in which English is spoken. It usually takes place in classrooms or language laboratories, and typically occurs when teachers are present to guide students through any listening difficulties, and points them to areas of interest (Harmer:2007).

5- Characteristics of the Variable in Listening Issues:

In listening for the comprehension of a message, we attend to perceive, and assign meaning to what we hear so that it approximates as much as possible the meaning intended by the speaker.

Listening involves key psychological and linguistic variables. The former are; memory, concentration, and attention; and the latter is vocabulary. These variables will change differently in different situations, so it would be better to sketch what every one involves and how to deal with it.

5- 1- Memory:

Memory is an active and a constructive process (Neisser: 1982); a process with dynamic mechanisms for retaining and retrieving information about past experience (Sternberg: 1995). We draw upon our memory of the past to help us understand the present (Sternberg: 1995).

Memory is also the acquisition of vocabulary and the other different language patterns as syntax, phonology, or stylistic skills. For practical purposes, memory is presented in short-term memory (STM), and long-term memory (LTM). However, the intervening time between STM and LTM is called Working Memory (WM). STM is the capacity to keep active

information available and accessible for processing ongoing tasks but which fades rapidly and is recreated from time to time.

For Miller (1968) STM can hold only approximately seven units. While working memory for Rost (1994) is “the time span over which actual comprehension and inference processes take place ...[T] he contents of working memory are always being recycled : we take in new information and let go off old information continually" Working memory is also responsible for the analysis and retrieval of appropriate problem-solving schemas.

The next component of memory and which interferes in the listening process is LTM. This is the part of memory we use for storing information, experiences and schemas. Bartlett (1932) showed that perceiving, recognition, imaging, and recall are to be understood as the expression of native or dynamic processing dealing with the current situation of the organisms and its current needs, always based on end related to its past experiences. A schema is a mental representation of a typical knowledge of events and instances stored in memory, accessible and which can be activated under various circumstances which interpreting what we encounter. For Neisser (1976), schema is somehow corresponding to a "total situation rather than some localized element of it." In sum, we cannot process information without activating or making appeal to memory.

5.2 – Concentration

Concentration is used in the usual sense. It refers to the listener’s ability to pay attention to what s/he listens to. It seems to be the most critical component in listening. Often, teachers complain of students’ lack of attention or poor attention span. Furthermore, students are subject to internal distracters as physical conditions or having problems. Added to this, time constraints and lack of curiosity are behind listeners’ lack of attention.

First, time- constraints, requires students to divide their attention energy among various elements. On the one hand, they have to pay attention to the speaker, the topic and the listener Etc, and on the other hand, they have other extra preoccupations. This

divides their attention span and energy rather than direct it towards the message to be listened to.

Second, some students lack curiosity when the tests are not marked. So, they must feel a need to listen in order to overcome such a situation. The topics of the listening materials themselves should be interesting and should not be remote from the students' field of interest, because in case the topics are remote, students will feel that they are useless. So, we have to link short stories to the students' personal experiences in order to make them feel that they have something to learn from the situation presented in the short stories, because it has some sort of personal value for them. Then they will listen seriously and concentrate deeply. For Underwood (1989) "if students find the topic interesting they will find concentration easier."

These two major causes added to listeners' preoccupation with recalling and retrieving the main ideas of the message, which they are going to use in order to answer the listening comprehension questions, all contribute to students' poor concentration.

5.3 – Vocabulary:

Vocabulary plays a key role in listening, especially for a foreign language learner. In the listening skill, we must pay attention to the size of the new vocabulary to which learners are confronted. Brown and Yule (1983) mention that, learners start looking for the meaning of a word and lose the thread of speech. That is why they must be trained to go on listening and to accept the fact that it is not necessary to understand every word because good listeners, according to Brown and Yule, tolerate vagueness and incompleteness. Hence, when teaching the listening skill, it is useful to devise sessions aimed at practicing the sub-skills of inferring the meaning of unknown words from the context using the appropriate strategy.

6 - Factors that Influence Listening Comprehension:

Communication involves specific components, which are: source, message, channel of transmission, noise, and the environment of communication (which includes, for instance, the relationship between communicators, the listener's status: being a participant or an eavesdropper). These factors may influence our listening comprehension process, causing it to fail or to breakdown. So, it is important to understand these factors in order to diagnose what makes communication fail, or what prevents the listener from comprehending the message.

6.1 – Topic:

In the listening materials, the topic dealt with has a strong effect on the degree of listening comprehension. On the one hand, if the listener has the essential prior knowledge, understanding will be improved and enhanced. On the other hand, if the listener has no prior knowledge, s/ he will have to make much efforts to comprehend what s/ he listens to, because prior knowledge is always applied to the situation or context in question. That is why when teaching listening comprehension, the teachers at first activate the already existing knowledge of learners, or they at least, provide clues and evidences in order to facilitate understanding.

6.2 – Content:

It should be noted here that in a coherent story, version recall becomes best for proportions that are situated at higher levels of the hierarchy of the story, and recall tends to decline across lower levels of the proposition of the story. This means that in a short story the most important sentences and propositions must be always situated at the top of the story to make recall more efficient (Gordon: 1976). The contextual clues makes comprehension easier, hence, comprehending a short story will be undoubtedly easier, because a short story has the advantage of creating a meaningful context for learners .

6.3 – Self-Concept:

Learners' concept of their listening comprehension ability has an influence on their listening performance and achievement. Research in psychology proved that we behave in accordance with our self- concept through a self-fulfilling prophecy which can be seen as a prediction. Within social psychology, this term refers usually to the fact that frequently things

turn out just as one expected that they would not necessarily because of one's experience but because one behaved in a manner that optimized these very outcomes. A teacher who predicts that a student will ultimately fail tends to treat that student in ways that increase the likelihood of failure, thus fulfilling the original prophecy.

6-4-Physical and Psychological States:

The physical and psychological states (fatigue, headache, illness, pressure, nervousness, anxiety, etc) influence the listening ability and behavior. If listeners do not feel well, or are anxious and worry about the listening task and its outcome, when it is marked, they may not perform well. Students, despite their anxiety and distracting thoughts, force themselves and put the necessary extra -effort to perform well. One may think of the exams where students have a low affect, are anxious, but despite such a state they perform well. In other words, the correlation between low affect, high anxiety on the one hand, and poor performance on the other hand is not always true.

7- Conclusion:

In this section, we have tried to provide a diachronic overview of the definitions of listening. This was done on purpose to highlight the complexity of this covert process. Many studies and investigations have been made over years and years to arrive at a unified definition of listening. Knowledge of the characteristics of variables as well as processing skills involved in listening is very important. Once having an account of these, one may have a critical look at how listening is taught, and formulate a suggestive view as to how listening ought to be taught effectively and successfully.

Chapter two

Content

- 1-Introduction
- 2-Which Experimental Design
- 3-The Target Population
- 4- Sampling
- 5- Results of the Tests
 - 5-1-Test One
 - 5-2-Test Two
 - 5-3-Test Three
- 6-General Discussion and Conclusion

1-Introduction :

This experimental work has been carried out at Mentouri university in Constantine with students of third year LMD option : language sciences with three groups asked to perform the experiment. Their approximate age ranges from 21 to 25 years. They are taken from a population of (420) students from both sexes.

Students who participate in this experiment were asked to listen carefully to the passage that the instructor read for them from a short story written by Jonathan Swift entitled 'Gulliver's travels' and the title of the passage is " a voyage to Brobdingnag".

The first group was given a full explanation about the context during which this story was written. The second group had received more details in order to make them understand and comprehend the meaning of the passage. The control group has received no explanation and was asked to resume the passage.

2- Which experimental design:

We decide to choose t-test for independent group design because under the null hypothesis the difference between the groups is due only to chance and that the two groups used for the experiment are found identical.

However, under the alternative hypothesis the two groups have different means reflecting the difference between the performance of these two groups. The main problems which is facing the research then is to calculate P; the probability that the two samples could have been drawn from a population of students.

In our research, one would like to depict whether or not there is indeed a significant difference between the two groups i.e., the control group and experimental groups.

We have two variables, in our hypothesis which are listening to short story used as an independent variable and achieving understanding as a dependent variable.

The t-test is a statistical test which helps in drawing statistical inferences from an experiment's data. This test gives a mathematical formula for computing the value of the observed t .

N_1 stands for the number of subjects in the control group.

N_2 stands for the number of subjects in the experimental group.

\bar{X}_1 stands for the means of the control group.

\bar{X}_2 stands for the means of the experimental group.

S^2_1 stands for the variance of the control group scores.

S^2_2 stands for the variance of the experimental group scores.

3- The target population :

According to Miller (1975), the term population is used in statistics to refer to all subjects of a particular type, we take samples through which we seek to make inferences about the target population. There are two ways of selecting the population: using pre-existing groups as they occur in nature(true experimental groups) or using groups constructed for the experimental (quasi-experimental groups).

During the 2009-2010 academic year, a total of around four hundred and twenty (765) students were registered in the third year in the department of foreign languages, University of Constantine, they form thirteen(13) groups of approximately forty five (45) students per group. All students have studied English for many years, at the university, they had to study a module of oral comprehension and speaking skills.

4- Sampling:

A sample is a relatively small group selected from a population. This group is most of the time supposed to be representative of the target population. When developing an experimental research within the human and social sciences, we generally take a sample of the population to which we wish to generalize the findings of the study.

In this study the sample consists of thirty students, they are chosen randomly and assign to the experimental and control groups. We prefer to select third year LMD students, because in this year, they are given more attention to listening comprehension, contrary to first and second year, in the first year they are aware of the changes that happened to them when they move to the university, with its new atmosphere and the huge number of students. In the second year they become interested in speaking English rather than listening to it.

The overall age range of the students is between twenty (20) and twenty three (23) years. Moreover, there was no age group division, nor has the number between boys and girls been balanced for the simple reason that this experiment does not aim at testing the proficiencies of boys and girls apart.

5- Results of the Tests:

5.1- test one:

Table1: scores recorded from the experimental group one.

Subjects	Scores of Experimental group1
1	14
2	12
3	12
4	10
5	6
6	6
7	8
8	12
9	10
10	10

$$\bar{X}_1 = \frac{\sum X}{N} = \frac{100}{10}$$
$$\bar{X}_1 = 10$$

According to the results show above, the majority of subjects recorded over the average, since the experimental group one receive an explanation about the context.

- The mean is (10) for the experimental group one.
- There are three subjects recorded scores below the average.
- Three subjects recorded scores equal to (10).
- Three subjects recorded scores equal (12).
- One subjects recorded score equal to (14).

Since the first experimental group was given a full explanation about the context during which the story was written, before they listen to the story, the majority of them recorded scores over the average.

5-2 : Test two

Table2 : Scores recorded from the experimental group two scores.

Subjects	Scores of Experimental group2
1	14
2	12
3	12
4	14
5	14
6	10
7	10
8	12
9	10
10	14

$$\bar{X}_1 = \frac{\sum X}{N} = \frac{122}{10}$$
$$\bar{X}_1 = 12.2$$

Table.2 shows that the scores of the experimental group two increased, the mean increased from (10) to (12.2) in the first experimental group.

- The experimental group two recorded all the scores over the average.
- There are three subjects recorded scores equal to (10), and three recorded scores equal to (12).

Four subjects are perfect and recorded scores equal to (14).

The second experimental group had received more details in order to make them comprehend and understand the meaning of the passage. That is why all of them recorded scores over the average.

5.3 – Test three

Table.3 : Scores recorded from the control group.

Subjects	Scores of control group
1	8
2	6
3	10
4	8
5	8
6	10
7	8
8	6
9	10
10	4

$$\bar{X}_1 = \frac{\sum X}{N} = \frac{78}{10}$$
$$\bar{X}_1 = 7.8$$

Table.3 shows that the scores of the control group have decreased. The mean decreased from the experimental groups and it equal to (7.8).

- In the control group, there are three subjects that recorded scores equal to (10).
- seven subjects records scores below the average; two are equal to (8), two are equal to (6), and one equal to (4).

The control group did not receive any explanation from the instructor, then they were asked to resume the passage after listening to it. This group recorded most the scores below the average because they did not understand the story well.

Table4: scores of the control group and experimental group one doubled.

subjects	Control group		Experimental group one	
	Receiving no explanation		Receiving explanation	
	X_1	X_1^2	X_2	X_2^2
1	8	64	14	196
2	6	36	12	144
3	10	100	12	144
4	8	64	10	100
5	8	64	6	36
6	10	100	6	36
7	8	64	8	64
8	6	36	12	144
9	10	100	10	100
10	4	16	10	100

The computation of the observed t:

1-the two means of the control and experimental group \bar{X}_1 and \bar{X}_2 are calculated using the formula:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

Making the substitution, we find:

$$\bar{X}_1 = \frac{\sum X_1}{N_1} = \frac{78}{10} = 7.8$$

$$\bar{X}_2 = \frac{\sum X_2}{N_2} = \frac{100}{10} = 10$$

2-calculating the two variances S_1^2 and S_2^2 using the formula:

$$S_1^2 = \frac{\sum X_1^2}{N} - \bar{X}^2$$

Making the substitution, we find:

$$S_1^2 = \frac{\sum X_1^2}{N_1} = \frac{644}{10} - (7.8)^2 = 3.56$$

$$S_2^2 = \frac{\sum X_2^2}{N_2} - \bar{X}_2^2 = \frac{1064}{10} - (10)^2 = 6.4$$

3-to find the observed t, we substitute the value of : $\bar{X}_1, \bar{X}_2, S_1^2, S_2^2, N_1, N_2$ in the t- test formula:

After making the substitutions, we find:

$$t_{(n_1+n_2-2)} = 2.09$$

Conclusion

The observed $t_{(n_1+n_2-2)} = 2.09$ in part one of the experiment is greater than the critical value (1.81). It means that there is a relation between the independent and dependent variable of the hypothesis.

In other words, the hypothesis stated at the beginning of this piece of work which says: "listening to short stories can affect comprehension" is now proved correct.

Table 5: Scores of the Control group and Experimental group two doubles

subjects	Control group		Experimental group two	
	Receiving no explanation		Understanding and comprehending the meaning passage	
	X_1	X_1^2	X_2	X_2^2
1	8	64	14	196
2	6	36	12	144
3	10	100	12	144
4	8	64	14	196
5	8	64	14	196
6	10	100	10	100
7	8	64	10	100
8	6	36	12	144
9	10	100	10	100
10	4	16	14	196

The computation of the observed t:

1-the two means of the control and experimental group \bar{X}_1 and \bar{X}_2 are calculated using the formula:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

Making the substitution, we find:

$$\bar{X}_1 = \frac{\sum X_1}{N_1} = \frac{78}{10} = 7.8$$

$$\bar{X}_2 = 12.2$$

2-calculating the two variances S^2_1 and S^2_2 using the formula:

$$S_1^2 = \frac{\sum X_2}{N} - \bar{X}^2$$

Making the substitution, we find:

$$S_1^2 = \frac{\sum X^2_1}{N_1} = \frac{644}{10} - (7.8)^2 = 3.56$$

$$S^2_2 = 2.76$$

3-to find the observed t, we substitute the value of : $\bar{X}_1, \bar{X}_2, S^2_1, S^2_2, N_1, N_2$ in the t- test formula:

Making the substitutions, we find:

$$t_{(n_1+n_2-2)} = 5.25$$

Conclusion

The observed $t_{(n_1+n_2-2)} = 5.25$ in part two of the experiment is greater than the critical value (1.81), it means that there is a relation between the independent and dependent variables of the hypothesis. In other words, the prediction we supposed in this work is accepted.

6-General discussion and conclusion

Subjects from the experimental group one were asked to listen carefully to the passage that the instructor read for them; they were given a full explanation about the context during which the story was written. Then, they were supposed to answer the questions.

The second experimental group has received more details in order to make them understand and comprehend better the meaning of the passage.

The answers to the questions were corrected and marked over fifteen. Whereas, subjects from the control group were just asked to resume the passage read by the instructor without receiving any explanation.

The scores obtained by both groups tend to vary significantly, the experimental group's scores range from (06) to (14) and those of the control group from (04) to (10).

To detect any probable significant difference between the two groups, t- test was used to see whether or not the significant difference can emerge between the two variables of the hypothesis that was stated at the beginning of this research i.e. listening to short stories and comprehension.

After carrying out the arithmetical computation of t-test, the final values were obtained (2.09) and (5.25) and after they had been compared to the critical value of t (1.81) t-test was found significant in the first one and largely significant in the second.

This means that the experimentals who were asked to perform under task two and three and who were significantly helped by the instructor, improve largely their ability to comprehend and became good listeners while trying to learn English, whereas, the controls who receive no help whatever from the part of the instructor, were incapable of improving their ability to comprehend spoken English during this short period of time.

This also indicates that the more learners receive further help from the teacher/instructor and the more they became ready to grasp and understand concepts and words while they are trying to learn how to learn as has been indicated in our hypothesis at the beginning of this research, i.e. short stories presented as a listening input leads to a better achievement of the comprehension ability.

General Conclusion

This research has shown that, until recently, listening has been neglected as a language skill, or practiced in inadequate ways. Besides of this research, this study, has somehow confirmed the hypotheses that we set at the beginning of this research, i.e., the presentation of short stories as a listening material improves learners listening comprehension achievement.

The test, revealed that learners welcomed the use of short stories. It also revealed that indeed the time allocated for teaching aural comprehension and thus for oral comprehension is not enough, that there is not much innovation in the listening materials used, and that the most perceived need of the learners s speech comprehension as well as speech production. Both of these constitute a communicative competence.

The second hypothesis, stated that the activation of already existing schemas that interact with new incoming information is conducive to thinking and speaking.

Students who were responsive and reacted to what they listened to the activation of their schematic knowledge did enhance comprehension.

In the experiment that forms a small part of this research, two variables were involved, listening comprehension and short stories as a listening input with much emphasis put on listening comprehension.

To develop and improve listening comprehension, the teacher try to know what learners think how the teaching method should look like, in order to be more effective and more enjoyable for them. Moreover, debates and discussions may be useful.

The teacher needs from time to time to ask learners even not formally (i, e, orally not using structured questions or interviews) about how they feel about the teaching, and what they would like to have in the course. The teacher has to make use of the learners metacognitive knowledge of the learning process, i, e. what beliefs about language learning do they have, and arousing their awareness of the mental processes they are in language learning.

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Appendix

Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift.

A voyage to Brobdingnag:

I left Bristol on June 20th, 1702, in a ship which was sailing to India. We had good sailing weather until we reached the cape of good hope in south Africa, where we landed to get fresh water. we has to stay there for the winter, because the ship needed repairs and the captain was ill.

In the spring we left Africa and sailed round the island of Madagascar into the Indian ocean.

But on the 19th April, the wind began to blow very violently from the west, and we were driven to the east of the Moluccas Islands. On 2nd may the wind stopped blowing and the sea was calm. But our captain, who knew that part of the world be a storm the next day, so we prepared the ship as well as we could, and waited.

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل ودراسة مهارة السمع والتي تعد إحدى المهارات اللغوية بالإضافة إلى مهارة التكلم، القراءة والكتابة، سواء كان ذلك في اللغة الأصلية أو أي لغة كانت. كما تتطرق هذه الدراسة إلى تبيان مدى أهمية مهارة السمع في تعلم اللغات عامة، واللغة الإنجليزية خاصة.

إذ قمنا باقتراح القصص القصيرة المروية شفهيًا من طرف متكلمين أصليين للغة الإنجليزية كوسيلة تربوية لتطوير وتحسين مهارة السمع عند طلبة السنة الثالثة LMD بمعهد الإنجليزية، جامعة منتوري قسنطينة.

حيث أنه من إيجابيات القصص المروية شفهيًا أنها تعطي للطلاب بعد لغوي أصلي ذو مغزى وهدف اجتماعي، بالإضافة إلى كون هذا النوع من القصص يوفر للطلبة اللغة الأصلية كما يتحدث بها المتكلمين الأصليين في مواقف مختلفة، من طرف عدة أشخاص، وتمدهم بإطلاقة على الرصيد الثقافي من جهة وتفتح لهم مجالات لفهم واستيعاب القصص حسب رصيدهم الثقافي، وبذلك يكون هناك مزج والتقاء للثقافات والذهنيات إلا أنه هناك عدة عوامل لا بد من أخذها بعين الاعتبار مثل الرصيد المعرفي للطلاب وكذا تركيبة القصص عامة.

من أجل هذا أجرينا اختبارًا بسيطًا لطلبة السنة الثالثة LMD بمعهد اللغات، دائرة الإنجليزية،

وهذا الاختيار يعتمد على تقصي احتياجات الطالب فيما يخص مهارة السمع والتي تدرس في إطار مقياس التعبير الشفهي وكذا الوسائل التربوية التي استعملت لتدريس مهارة السمع خلال السنوات الفارطة. تعتمد هذا الاختيار على قراءة جزء صغير من قصة قصيرة من طرف متكلم أصلي، ونحاول أن نوصلهم بمحتوى القصة وذلك لتسهيل فهمها، بعد الاستماع يجيب الطلبة على بعض الأسئلة المطروحة حول مضمون القصة والإشكالية التي تتطرق إليها.

أوضحت النتائج أن القصص القصيرة المروية شفهيًا تعد وسيلة تربوية ناجعة، وبالأخص إذا

كانت تدرج من أجل توفير للطلاب فرصة الاستماع إلى اللغة الأجنبية كما يتحدث بها المتكلمون الأصليون، إذ أنها تكشف للطلاب معظم جوانب القدرة الكلامية والسمعية للمتكلم الأصلي للغة الأجنبية في إطار قصص لها معنى وخلفيات مختلفة.

Résumé:

Le but de ce travail est de tenter de repenser l'enseignement de la compréhension orale, d'essayer de décrire et d'analyser toutes les composantes de ce processus, tout en proposant le récit d'un courte histoire comme moyen pédagogique. Cette étude vise aussi à montrer l'importance de la capacité de l'écoute dans l'apprentissage des langues en général et spécialement l'anglais.

Si on propose de courtes histoires racontées par ceux qui parle l'anglais comme langue d'origine, comme un moyen didactique pour améliorer la capacité de l'écoute chez les étudiants de la troisième année L M D a l'institut d'anglais, a l'université Mentouri, Constantine.

Le récit d'une courte histoire a l'avantage présenter à l'apprenant la langue étrangère dans un contexte intégral, bien qu'il y est certains facteurs a prendre en considération. Parmi ces derniers on cite les connaissances acquises de l'apprenant, et la structure schématique de la courte histoire.

Pour cela on a fait un simple teste pour les étudiants de la troisième année L M D à l'institut des langues, arrondissement d'anglais, ce teste se base sur les besoins concernant la capacité de l'écoute qui est étudiée dans le module de l'expression orale est les moyens didactiques Utilisés pour enseigner la capacité de l'écoute durant les années passées.

Ce tests se base sur la lecture d'une petite partie d'une courte histoire de la part d'une personne dans la langue mère est l'anglais; puis on essaye de leur expliquer le contenu de l'histoire pour faciliter la compréhension. Après l'écoute, les étudiants répondent à quelques questions sur le contenu de l'histoire et sa problématique.

Les résultats de cette expérience ont démontré que les contes histoires Racontées est un bon moyen pédagogique, il est compréhensible surtout lorsqu'elles sont données pour présenter à l'étudiant l'occasion pour écouter la langue étrangère comme elle est parlée par ses propriétaires car elle permet à l'étudiant de découvrir tous cotés de la capacité de parler et d'écouter chez le Propriétaire de la langue étrangère dans le cadre des histoires ayants un sens et des arrière pensées différentes.