

Improving Listening Comprehension Skills in English Using a Note-Taking Strategy Among Secondary School Students in Iraqi Schools

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Abstract

The main objective of the study is to evaluate the effect of applying a note-taking strategy on improving listening comprehension skills in English among secondary school students in Iraqi schools. The literature review highlighted the challenges EFL students face in this area as well as the significance of listening comprehension for language acquisition. The study was notable since it examined several listening comprehension procedures, with a focus on note-taking techniques. The analysis comprised research from a range of cultural contexts, including Vietnam, Jordan, Iran, Armenia, and Turkey. When all is said and done, the statistics suggest that teaching EFL students in Iraqi secondary schools' efficient note-taking strategies significantly enhances their capacity for listening comprehension. These findings provide scholars, educators, and policymakers with relevant evidence that supports the inclusion of note-taking strategies as an essential part of language acquisition processes. The study highlights how important it is to employ a range of context-specific and diversified teaching tactics in order to improve secondary school students' overall English as a foreign language education in Iraqi classrooms, given that language acquisition is a complex process. The study suggested that curriculum developers and educational establishments consider incorporating particular teaching on note-taking strategies within the English language curriculum. Additionally, it provides English language teachers with the opportunity to advance their careers and gain the knowledge and abilities required to effectively train and encourage note-taking habits. In addition, implement continuous assessment protocols that measure students' note-taking skills and their impact on listening comprehension.

Keywords: *Note-Taking Strategy; Listening Skills; Comprehension; English; Iraq*

1. Introduction

English is widely regarded as the most ubiquitous language, utilized for communication purposes everywhere. English has been given an increased attention, particularly in the educational system. In both public and private schools, English is taught for twelve years, from the first to the twelfth grade. Four abilities make English a universal language for thorough communication. Learning a foreign language teaches us how to read, write, converse, and listen first. The four "language skills" are speaking, writing, listening, and reading. One of the most important abilities in English is listening, as it is essential to all successful communication (Al-Ghazo, 2023).

Making sense of what you hear is a difficult process that takes a lot of work to master. It serves as a channel for sharing ideas and information as well as for communication. According to Berner (2004), listening is the first skill that EFL speakers learn in their home language. One of the most important language abilities that is vital to human communication is listening. According to Howatt and Dakin (1974), listening is the capacity to identify and understand what others are saying. It required understanding the thoughts, concepts, syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation, and meaning of the speaker. According to O'Malley et al. (1989), listening comprehension is a critical ability in which the listener receives information and interprets it as discrete meanings.

Numerous studies, such as Hamouda (2013), show that while teachers place a high value on vocabulary, reading, grammar, and writing skills, EFL students struggle greatly with listening comprehension. This is still the most underutilized talent in language learning and teaching since they do not take it into account in their foreign language classes. The issues at hand pertain to the caliber of audio CDs and DVDs, accents, unfamiliar vocabulary, listening speed and pace, cultural disparities, poor grammar, unclear instructions for listening activities (Azmi et al., 2014; Graham, 2006), and word pronunciation (Bloomfield et al., 2010; Walker, 2014).

Teachers of EFL students should be aware of these hearing challenges in order to implement the necessary and efficient listening comprehension strategies, which will help EFL students' listening comprehension and help them overcome problems. According to O'Malley et al. (1989) and Vandergrift (1997), listening comprehension strategies are methods that students employ to gather, understand, and subsequently apply knowledge in an efficient manner. Accordingly, listening comprehension methods are thought of as actions people use to enhance

language understanding and learning acquisition (Vandergrift, 1997). EFL students will be able to absorb, store, understand, and apply spoken input by using these tactics.

According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), there are three primary techniques for listening comprehension: social, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. Students employ the metacognitive strategies as management techniques to take charge of their own learning by organizing, observing, and editing their work before assessing and making adjustments. According to Derry and Murphy (1986) and Azmi et al. (2014), cognitive strategies are problem-solving techniques that students utilize to manage their learning tasks and speed up the acquisition of new knowledge. To understand, store, and recall new knowledge, EFL students use cognitive techniques. Top-down and bottom-up tactics are two categories under which these types of methods fall. According to Vandergrift (2003) and Abdalhamid (2012), in order to use socio-effective techniques, listeners must assess their understanding of what they are learning, engage with the speakers, reduce anxiety, increase their motivation to learn, and boost their self-esteem and confidence.

Additionally, in order to help students, overcome their difficulties with listening comprehension, teachers must give them real materials, create several projects and activities that enhance listening comprehension, and give them the feedback they need on how they performed (Al-Ghazo, 2023). Additionally, they make an effort to help kids develop a variety of listening techniques, asking them to watch or listen to foreign movies or music, converse in person with foreigners, or use the internet (Al-Ghazo, 2023). According to Brown (2001), there are a few practical guidelines that can be followed when creating listening techniques. These include using methods that naturally inspire learners, making use of real-world contexts, taking into account the format of their responses, and promoting the development of listening learning strategies like note-taking, which is a cognitive learning strategy.

Taking notes is one of the most important learning strategies since it functions as a recording tool, allowing listeners to access tasks and information at a later time (Siegel, 2015). In terms of the educational system, taking notes provides students with a resource for exam and lecture preparation and aids in their ability to focus and listen intently. Learners can take effective notes during and after the presentation by using a variety of ways. Students should pay close attention to what their teachers are saying in order to identify key points and understand what is being discussed. They must go over their notes after the talk because everything is still fresh in their minds. In summary, in order to study efficiently, students do not attempt to jot down

every word that is stated in the lecture. Using a note-taking technique aids student in recalling the lecture material. Thus, this study's primary goal is to find out how note-taking technique affects EFL learners' listening comprehension.

1.1 Research problem and questions

Numerous earlier studies revealed that students' proficiency in the English language, particularly in listening, is fairly low. As a result, individuals continue to face several obstacles and problems with listening comprehension. According to Hamouda (2013), EFL students struggle with listening comprehension because teachers place a lot of focus on vocabulary, reading, grammar, and writing skills. In their international classes, they don't take this skill into account. According to Vandergrift (2003), lower-level listeners found it difficult to summarize text since they lacked in-depth knowledge and did not retain as much information. The higher-level listeners successfully summarized new material while maintaining their memory recall. Additionally, they can employ various techniques both during and after listening. It was found that taking notes is one of the most important techniques for helping students' listening comprehension. The issue is that this technique is underutilized and not taught very often in colleges and universities. Many academics have noted how challenging it is for EFL learners to employ this method in lectures (Gilbert, 1989).

As a result, it has become necessary to evaluate the effect of applying a note-taking strategy on improving listening comprehension skills in English among secondary school students in Iraqi schools. For this purpose, the research topic was developed using a methodology consisting of the following questions:

1. What is the role of note-taking in listening comprehension?
2. What are the listening comprehension challenges and strategies?
3. What are the practical guidelines for effective listening techniques?

1.2 Research importance (significance)

This study holds considerable importance for several reasons:

1. The study focuses on the listening comprehension abilities of secondary school students in Iraqi schools, addressing a significant issue in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL). A key component of effective communication is listening comprehension, and the study notes that EFL students have difficulties with this ability.

2. The study investigates how note-taking techniques can enhance listening comprehension. It is emphasized that taking notes is an essential learning approach that helps with information retention and acts as a recording tool. The study acknowledges how taking notes improves students' comprehension and retention of spoken language, which aids in their overall language learning.
3. Research from a variety of cultural contexts, including Vietnam, Jordan, Iran, Armenia, and Turkey, is analyzed in this paper. This expands the viewpoint on successful teaching techniques by taking into account various cultural contexts. The recognition of cultural quirks emphasizes how important it is for language learners to comprehend context-specific vocabulary.

Moreover, the present Narrative Review adds to the current corpus of knowledge by consolidating research results about the impact of note-taking on improving listening comprehension abilities in Iraqi secondary school students. The goal of the project is to give educators, researchers, and policymakers a thorough grasp of the approaches that work best for enhancing language learning results, especially when applied to EFL instruction.

1.3 Research objectives

The main objective of the study is to evaluate the effect of applying a note-taking strategy on improving listening comprehension skills in English among secondary school students in Iraqi schools.

The problem of the current study can be summarized in the following sub-objectives:

1. Investigating the role of note-taking in listening comprehension.
2. Assessing listening comprehension challenges and strategies.
3. Emphasizing practical guidelines for effective listening techniques.

2. Research methodology

2.1. Research Design

In order to compile and evaluate the body of research on the impact of implementing a note-taking technique on enhancing secondary school students' English listening comprehension abilities in Iraqi classrooms, this study used a Narrative Review methodology. A narrative review is selected because it enables an in-depth investigation of the subject, condensing and

analyzing data from various sources to produce a coherent story and insights into the research issues.

2.2. Data Collection

The main sources of data for this study are academic papers, research articles that have already been published, and pertinent literature on the subject. Academic journals, PubMed, Google Scholar, and other databases pertaining to applied linguistics, education, and language learning are all used in the literature search. Relevance to the subject, publishing in peer-reviewed journals, and an emphasis on the effect of note-taking techniques on listening comprehension are the inclusion criteria that were used to choose the studies.

2.3. Data Synthesis and Analysis

The gathered material is methodically examined, and important conclusions on note-taking techniques and how they affect listening comprehension are gleaned. To create a unified story, the literature is arranged either chronologically or thematically in the synthesis. The content is analyzed and interpreted using a qualitative method, which helps to uncover recurrent themes, patterns, and insights in the chosen research.

2.4. Limitations

Potential restrictions on the study include publication bias and the availability of relevant material. The distinctiveness of the chosen studies and their contextual variables may limit the generalizability of the findings.

3. Literature review

3.1 Previous related studies

Hayati and Jalilifar (2009) looked at the connection between students' note-taking techniques and their listening comprehension. Three groups of sixty EFL participants were created by the researchers: non-note-takers, Cornell note-takers, and uninstructed note-takers. To ensure their homogeneity, the researchers employed the TOEFL proficiency test as a pre-test. They then used the post-test to get the outcomes following therapy. The results showed that this method had a noticeable effect on the student's capacity for listening comprehension.

Haghverdi et al. (2010) looked at how instructors and students in Iran felt about note-taking techniques' effects on students' academic achievement. To get the required information, they

employed questionnaires. With SPSS, the acquired data were examined. The findings showed that the participants, who included both male and female instructors and students, had favorable opinions and attitudes on the effects of providing note-taking approach instructions on students' learning.

Rahimia and Katal (2012) investigated the metacognitive listening techniques employed by Iranian EFL students in high schools and colleges. A Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) was given to 116 high school students and 122 university students in order to fulfill the study's objectives. The results demonstrated that college and high school students' awareness of metacognitive listening strategies differed.

Movezyan (2012) investigated how students' opinions toward the critical role that note-taking approach plays during listening exercises and their listening comprehension were affected. The American University of Armenia provided the participants for this study. There was a control group and an experimental group assigned to the participants. The required data was collected using class observations, a semi-structured interview, an attitude questionnaire, and a listening comprehension exam as quantitative instruments. The hearing post-test findings showed a significant statistical difference ($p < .05$) between the means of the experimental and control groups. Additionally, the qualitative data showed that the students view taking notes as an important tool for enhancing their listening comprehension with a positive attitude. This indicates that the note-taking technique has a good and effective impact on the listening comprehension levels of the EFL students.

Gur et al. (2013) looked into how note-taking techniques affected students' ability to listen during various kinds of narrative, informational, and philosophical lectures. Participating in the study were 122 students from Cumhuriyet University's Faculty of Education. They were split up into an experimental group (61) and a control group (61). The results are derived from a pretest and a posttest. The participants who took notes while listening to the three different types of lectures had the best degree of comprehension, according to the results of the SPSS data analysis. The primary techniques for listening comprehension as well as the listening challenges that students encountered when listening to oral texts were outlined by Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), through this study, the researchers aimed to increase teachers' awareness of how to help students overcome their listening challenges and enhance their listening abilities.

The Cornell Note-taking Method, which was created by Pauk (1974) to teach EFL students how to record, review, and organize their notes, is thought to be a straightforward, comprehensive, and widely used format. Maricar and Castillo (2019) attempted to demonstrate

the significance of improving listening comprehension among learners through this method. In order to meet the study's goals, the researchers looked into how note-taking techniques affected students' listening comprehension. To explain the relationship between note-taking technique and listening comprehension, they employed a descriptive correlational design. To evaluate the data, mean, ANOVA, frequencies, and percentages were measured. The findings showed that using a note-taking method enhances students' listening comprehension.

Deregözü (2021) conducted a study on the primary listening comprehension techniques employed by EFL students in remote learning. In order to accomplish the goals of this study, students enrolled in online English and German language courses at three Turkish state institutions used the Listening Strategy Inventory (LSI). The independent samples t-test was employed by the researcher in a quantitative design to assess the data. The findings demonstrated that learners used listening comprehension strategies to a moderate degree. The nonverbal listening method was the most often employed, whereas the word-oriented strategy was the least.

Lam (2021) investigated how note-taking techniques affected the academic listening comprehension of EFL students. Sixty Vietnamese EFL students took part in the research. The data was gathered and analyzed by the researcher using quantitative methods. The results showed that note-taking techniques enhance students' listening comprehension. Stated differently, they have a favorable impact on their listening performance. To enhance their learning in general and listening skills in particular, it is advised that students be trained to employ note-taking techniques.

3.2 Note-Taking Strategies and Listening Comprehension

Collectively, the research investigates how note-taking techniques and listening comprehension interact in the context of teaching English to foreigners (EFL). Notably, a number of researches highlight the beneficial effects of note-taking on listening comprehension. These studies include those by Hayati and Jalilifar (2009), Movezyan (2012), Gur et al. (2013), and Lam (2021). For example, a study conducted by Movezyan (2012) at the American University of Armenia shows a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups, suggesting that taking notes is an important way to improve listening comprehension. Furthermore, Movezyan's study's qualitative data highlights how students view taking notes as a helpful tool for enhancing their listening comprehension, pointing to a recurring pattern in these studies.

A unifying theme among the research is the focus on many approaches to evaluate the

connection between taking notes and listening comprehension. Pre- and post-tests are used by Hayati and Jalilifar (2009), SPSS data analysis is used by Gur et al. (2013), and descriptive correlational design is used by Lam (2021). These various perspectives add to a thorough comprehension of the subject. Furthermore, as demonstrated by Haghverdi et al. (2010), who focused on Iran, Movezyan (2012), Deregözü (2021), who focused on Turkey, and Lam (2021), who focused on Vietnam, the research takes into account various cultural settings. These research's cultural quirks emphasize the necessity for context-specific understanding of the connection between note-taking techniques and listening comprehension.

All of the research highlights how crucial note-taking strategies, including the Cornell Note-taking Method, are for enhancing listening comprehension. The Cornell approach is the focus of Maricar and Castillo's (2019) investigation, which supports the general pattern found in these studies: taking notes improves listening comprehension. Furthermore, Deregözü's (2021) study on the fundamentals of distant learning listening comprehension emphasizes how flexible note-taking procedures are to various learning contexts. All of the research points to the same conclusion—that using efficient note-taking strategies improves EFL students' listening comprehension considerably and is a useful addition to instructional strategies.

4. Research conclusion

In conclusion, this study explores the crucial connection between note-taking techniques and listening comprehension abilities when teaching English to high school students in Iraq. The main aim of the study was to assess how using a note-taking method can improve listening comprehension in English. A narrative review was selected as the research methodology, enabling a thorough synthesis of the body of knowledge already available on the topic.

The literature study emphasized the importance of listening comprehension for language acquisition as well as the difficulties EFL students encounter in this area. The study was noteworthy for its exploration of several strategies for listening comprehension, with an emphasis on note-taking methods. Research from various cultural contexts, such as Jordan, Iran, Armenia, Turkey, and Vietnam, was included in the analysis.

The debates among the research emphasized the range of methods used to evaluate the relationship between taking notes and listening comprehension, such as descriptive correlational designs, SPSS data analysis, and pre- and post-tests. Furthermore, the research

took into account cultural subtleties, acknowledging the necessity of context-specific knowledge in various educational contexts.

All things considered, the data point to the conclusion that teaching EFL students in Iraqi secondary schools effective note-taking techniques greatly improves their listening comprehension abilities. These findings support the inclusion of note-taking tactics as a crucial component of language learning processes by offering insightful information to academics, educators, and policymakers. Since learning a language is a complex process, the study emphasizes how crucial it is to use a variety of context-specific and varied teaching strategies to improve secondary school students' overall English as a foreign language education in Iraqi classrooms.

4.1 Recommendation

Based on the findings and insights derived from the study "The Effect of Applying A Note-Taking Strategy on Improving the Listening Comprehension Skills in English Among Secondary School Students In Iraqi Schools" several recommendations are proposed for educators, policymakers, and researchers:

1. Curriculum planners and educational institutions ought to think about including specific instruction on note-taking techniques in the English language curriculum. Students may gain useful skills from this that will improve their listening comprehension.
2. Give English language instructors the chance to grow professionally so they can acquire the skills and information necessary to properly instruct and promote note-taking practices. To improve teachers' ability to integrate these ideas into their teaching practices, workshops, seminars, and training sessions can be planned.
3. Establish ongoing evaluation procedures that gauge students' ability to take notes and how they affect their ability to listen. Give pupils helpful criticism, emphasizing areas for development and praising well-executed ideas.
4. Understand the cultural setting in which learning English takes place. Make sure that note-taking techniques are appropriate for the culture in question and that the advice are relevant and sensitive to cultural norms.
5. Encourage more investigation on how note-taking techniques affect listening comprehension over the long run. Examine how these tactics continue to help pupils as they go through various academic phases and skill levels.

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