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DEVELOPING THE TEACHING OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH AT MIDDLE SCHOOLS

THE CASE OF 9AF CLASSES , BEN BADIS SCHOOL ,BATNA

A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL REQUIREMENT FOR A MAGISTER DEGREE
IN LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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Dedication

To my best friend Zidat Ayache

Acknowledgements

First of all , my deep gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr Ghouar Amor who never ceased to provide guidance and help and who contributed to the elaboration and completion of this work .

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Thirdly , I’m very much indebted to my friend and colleague Mr Zidat Ayache for his generous help .

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List of abbreviations

LC : Listening comprehension

FL : Foreign language

ELT : English language teaching

FLL : Foreign language learning

SLA : Second language acquisition

NNS : Non-native speakers

C I : Comprehensible input

DEFINITION OF TERMS

-Listening comprehension : in the context of ELT , this term means listening to a passage and processing it through a number of activities for the sake of interpreting it.

-Listening : this term means receiving an oral message .For example listening to words for the sake of correct pronunciation .

-Parsing : dividing a sentence into parts and describe the grammar of each word.

-Reading comprehension : Processing a written text through a number of activities.

-Prior knowledge : knowledge which the learners already have and helps them to process a text .

-Pre-listening : any activity in which the learners are involved before a listening task.

-Post-listening : any activity or follow up done after a listening task .

-Top down processing : refers to using background knowledge to interpret and understand a message .

Bottom up processing : refers to deriving the meaning of a message based on language data like the sounds , words ,grammatical relationships , stress and intonation .

-Schemata : background knowledge used to interpret a message .

ABSTRACT

The present research work attempts to shed some light on the teaching of the Listening skill .We are trying to scrutinize listening comprehension in the context of 9AF level Skill to eventually improve its teaching in the middle schools as a whole. The work is limited to listening comprehension as a pre-reading .
The work is divided into two parts :

The first part is an overview literature where important facts related to listening comprehension are discussed . It includes three chapters relevant to the listening skill , its assessment , factors affecting listening comprehension and its importance as a pre-reading .

The second part is the field work . This an experiment we conducted with 9 A.F. pupils . We tried to collect and analyse the results of the observation grid , examine the effectiveness , pupils' reaction and the impact of the independent variable on the reading comprehension .

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Introduction

The overlook at language learning as speaking being the mainstream does not exclude listening because comprehension is the basis for communication. Communication is seen as the exchange of thought tokens, in other words, when the student has to learn not only to understand the forms of the foreign language, the sound segments, the word forms, the sentence structures, but also to interact with context to constrain the possible meaning. Some teachers consider listening as the easiest skill to be taught, most students think it is the most difficult, though . This contradiction tells us that there are some aspects about teaching listening that need to be explored. If students' burden in listening comprehension activities does not arise from difficulties in decoding the signals, where do they arise from? In our normal experience in the mother tongue the language grows in context, whereas in a foreign language, context must be created, because the more we know about the situation the more readily we understand the language used in it.

This made listening one of the most challenging skills for our students to develop and yet also one of the most important. By developing their ability to listen well , we develop our students' ability to become more independent learners, as by hearing accurately they are much more likely to be able to reproduce accurately, refine their understanding of grammar and develop their own vocabulary

To explain listening I like to use the analogy that listening is to hearing what looking is to seeing. Both listening and looking require a zoom, whether auditory or visual, which enables a person to take in relevant information while also tuning out irrelevant information. Listening is too often regarded in our schools as simply the

passive state of a child that enables the teacher to instruct and to be obeyed. This narrow perspective of listening presents the child as a passive receiver of information and fails to acknowledge that listening is active as it requires both attention span and interaction

Listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and his vocabulary, and grasping his meaning

According to Bulletin (1952), listening is one of the fundamental language skills. It's a medium through which children, young people and adults gain a large portion of their education--their information, their understanding of the world and of human affairs, their ideals, sense of values, and their appreciation. In this day of mass communication (much of it oral), it is of vital importance that our pupils be taught to listen effectively and critically, he says.

Listening to and understanding speech involves a number of basic processes, some depending upon linguistic competence, some depending upon previous knowledge that is not necessarily of a purely linguistic nature, and some depending upon psychological variables that affect the mobilization of these competence and knowledge in the particular task situation. The listener must have a continuous set to listen and understand, and as he hears the utterance, he may be helped by some kind of set to process and remember the information transmitted. His linguistic competence enables him, presumably, to recognize the formatives of the heard

utterance, i. e. , to dissect out of the wave form of the morphemes, words, and other meaning-bearing elements of the utterance.

Listening is a receptive skill, and receptive skills give way to productive skills. If we have our students produce something, the teaching will be more communicative. This brings us to the must of integrating language skills. There are two reasons for using integrating activities in language classrooms:

1. To practice and extend the learners' use of a certain language structure or function
2. To develop the learners' ability in the use of two or more of the skills within real contexts

Integrated activities, on the other hand, provide a variety in the classroom and thus maintain motivation and allow the recycling and revision of language which has already been taught separately in each skill In listening activities, we listen for a purpose. We make an immediate response to what we hear. There are some visual or environmental clues as to the meaning of what is heard. Stretches of heard discourse come in short chunks, and most heard discourse is spontaneous, therefore differs from formal spoken prose in the amount of redundancy 'noise' and colloquialisms, and its auditory character. In listening to English as a foreign language, the most important features can be defined as:

1. Coping with the sounds,
2. Understanding intonation and stress,

3. Coping with redundancy and noise,
4. Predicting,
5. Using visual and environmental clues.

This brings us to the thought that, while planning exercises, listening materials, task and visual materials should be taken into consideration. The teacher should produce a suitable discourse while using recordings. A preset purpose, ongoing learner response, motivation, success, simplicity, and feedback should be the things considered while preparing the task. Visual materials are useful for contextualization. We can also categorize the goals of listening as listening for enjoyment, for information, for persuation, for perception and lastly for comprehension and lastly to solve problems.

We can divide listening for comprehension into three stages;

1. Listening and making no response (following a written text, informal teacher talk)
2. Listening and making short responses (obeying instructions - physical movement, building models, picture dictation. etc.), true- false exercises, noting specific information, etc.
3. Listening and making longer response (repetition and dictation, paraphrasing, answering questions, answering comprehension questions on texts, predictions, filling gaps, summarizing, etc).

All these issues do not concern only teachers . Educators , inspectors and pupils ,as partners, are all concerned with these aspects of listening comprehension . Answering questions related to the teaching of listening comprehension in the Algerian context goes with the purpose of this work .

Our intention is to theoretically discuss some of the main aspects related to the teaching of listening comprehension as highlighted in relevant literature .We hope this will constitute a framework which will help us when conducting our research that will be held at the level of Ben Badis of Batna city . Our main concern is to approach the listening comprehension skill in order to attract the teachers' attention and finally devote some time to this skill in their teaching/learning process .

Statement of the problem

Next to my experience in TEFL, the common remark is that there is a complete neglect of listening comprehension in the teaching of English at middle schools. This is supported by the fact that listening comprehension is not designed by the different coursebooks and teaching materials used at this level. This neglect resulted in an imbalance in the teaching/learning process which normally caters for and necessitates the presence of the four skills.

At the origin of this problem, a number of elements are hypothesized. In 'SPRING', a book which has been used for over eighteen years , listening comprehension tasks are almost completely absent .A simple analysis of this book shows clearly the meagre proportion of listening comprehension compared to other

skills and aspects of language. Of the fifteen units which ‘Spring two’(the book for 9AF) contains, there is no track of any listening comprehension input and almost the same for the listening tasks (see appendix 01 and 02) .

This situation is worsened by the quality of teachers performing in the middle schools. The majority of these teachers are graduates of the former ITE (institut technologique de l’education) and received limited training which doesn’t qualify them to be competent enough to adapt or devise activities by themselves . Furthermore , there’s a widespread belief that listening is not important because it’s not tested . As a result , it’s simply not taught.

It’s worth ,however, to note that listening is dealt with principally in our schools for pronunciation purposes . In this case , listening is controlled, in that the students are taught how to pronounce and repeat words correctly . Rost (1990) remarks that ‘…a distinction should be made between mere listening and listening comprehension. In the first the student doesn’t invent and organize; in the second he processes information’.

In order to draw limitations for my present work , I will emphasize the importance of listening comprehension as a pre-reading . There are common strategies that underlie both listening and reading comprehension such as comprehension questions, T/F statements, MCQ and matching .These are strategies

which can be used to exploit both a listening and a reading passage . 'There appears to be an important general language processing skill that influences performances in both listening and reading' (Anderson and Lynch 1995).

On this basis, I assume that a developed training in listening comprehension would have a positive impact on reading .The pupils are assumed to be prompted by being both familiar with the processing strategies and the thematic link between the listening and the reading passages. Our students primarily need to use their reading skills during their academic studies and the present work reinforces and serves this need.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Choice of the method

Expecting and targeting credible and valid results along with the nature and requirements of the topic are major factors in the preference of a method to another. Therefore ; carrying out an experiment seems to be the most appropriate method that suits the topic under investigation .This method proved its efficiency and gave considerable results in natural sciences .On the one hand , this will keep me close to the conditions of the situation and will enable me to observe clearly the impact of listening comprehension on reading. On the other hand it helps me to a great extent to control or at least be aware of the different variables and factors that might affect the teaching process .The other methods, mainly the descriptive and historical ones ,are thought not appropriate despite their efficiency.

We have to note that even with the use of the experimental method, some shortcomings might be encountered regarding the age ,sex, motivation, intelligence and the relation of all these to the social background of the students .

Sampling

The target population for in the present study is the pupils of 9AF in Ben Badis middle school, Batna for the school year 2004/2005 . Practically , it's not possible to study the entire population under an experimental approach . According to Deldime and Demoulin(1975) ,'sufficient data can be obtained through the study of a proportion of the population : a sample'. Because of this, we have selected two groups to represent the whole population.

The students who were initially enrolled for 9 AF form were split into four groups .The administration of the school claimed that the students were systematically assigned to their respective groups for the sake of creating mixed ability classes. Since I had very little choice , systematic sampling imposed itself . I selected two of them for the experimental and control groups. The criterion for my selection of the two groups was homogeneity in terms of age (14,15,16), level and sex . The experimental group consisted of 40 students(20 girls and 20boys) and the control 41 students(21 girls and 20 boys). These factors are catered for in order to maximize the discarding of possible bias and hence spot the effect of the independent variable.

Next to pupils , teachers of English at middle schools are also part of the population Meant by our study . This category of respondents comprises 210 teachers dispersed throughout the different middle schools in the wilaya of Batna .

While administering the questionnaire to these subjects , we opted for random sampling to ensure a variety of responses. Out of two hundred and ten teachers, seventy of them , were selected to work with .This sample includes forty female teachers and thirty male ones . Sixty of them are graduates of the ITE while the remaining ten graduated from the university. I didn't meet any difficulty to have access to our teachers .The work was held in a very relaxed and secured atmosphere and the questionnaire was kept anonymous .

Data gathering tools

In addition to the use of the pretest and post test to find out about the level of students in reading , we opted for the use of the observation grid. This is for the sake of observing the impact of listening upon reading comprehension and hence the progress of our students in reading. In the observation grid, I emphasized comprehension , in accordance with my objectives .Besides this, and in order to win a different perspective of the investigation, a questionnaire was used with the teachers. This would provide us with useful information about a larger population. We gave the questionnaire an appealing format to attract the reader's attention and increase his will to co-operate . It consisted mainly of questions revolving around

the teachers knowledge about the listening comprehension , the frequency of teaching, , devising relevant materials and their insertion to fit in the teaching context.

PART I : CHAPTER 1

Foreign Language Listening Comprehension

I.1.A DEFINITION OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Despite much theoretical research, a consensus on a definition of the listening skill has not yet been reached . Ellis (1994), examining the state-of-the-art in listening research, notes the lack of agreement upon a definition of listening, reflected in the wide range of vocabulary used

‘ … analysing, concentrating, understanding, registering converting meaning to the mind, engaging in further mental activity, responding, reacting, interpreting, relating to past experiences and future expectancies, assimilating, acting upon, selecting, receiving, apprehending, hearing, remembering, identifying, recognising, comprehending, sensing, evaluating, emphasising and organising.’

Brown (1994) see both narrow and broad definitions:

‘What is listening comprehension? In its narrowest definition it is the process by which listeners come to an interpretation for a stream of speech ... In its broader definition it also includes the process by which listeners use those interpretations for their intended purpose.’

Anderson and Lynch (1995) define the listening process as "the process of receiving, attending to and assigning meaning to aural stimuli" . These elements are found in most definitions of listening. The "receiving and attending to" is also called speech perception and refers to the processes of distinguishing phonemes, constructing these into words, recognizing the features of stress and intonation and

combining this information to construct the syntax . This is also known as "bottom-up" processing .Assigning meaning to the decoded stimuli is referred to as "top-down" processing, and involves assigning communicative meaning to the decoded utterances based upon previous knowledge. Top-down processing may also help in 'filling in gaps' in understanding created by decoding failures.

Rost (1990) chooses to place the emphasis on the interpretative and inferencing processes:

' Understanding spoken language is essentially an inferential process based on a perception of cues rather than a straightforward matching of sound to meaning. The listener must find relevant links between what is heard and those aspects of context' (1990). In fact the majority of scholars emphasize that any definition of listening comprehension must cater for the fact that many processes work together in an interactive and simultaneous way.

1.2 THE CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF THE LISTENING PROCESS

This section describes the constituent elements of the listening processes . Anderson (1995) splits listening into three distinct interrelated processes. These are:

* speech perception or perceptual processing,

* parsing or lexical and grammatical access,

*comprehension,

and each will be described in turn.

1.2.1 Speech Perception.

Speech perception is automatic, fast and happens effortlessly . How might this be achieved ? There are two relevant views on this .The traditional view sees a two-stage process where sounds are identified and then assembled into sequences. These are then matched with stored forms of words. The second sees no assemblage of sounds into sequences. It proposes that lexical access is simply a result of matching the results of sound perception directly with the word forms stored in the mental lexicon.

For the traditional view of speech perception , "Most researchers believe that there is a stage of phonetic representation intermediate between the acoustic input and words" (Brown 1993).

In order to justify the sound assemblage, these researchers accounted for the role of memory in speech perception . Dirven (1981) sees a two stage role of memory in speech processing from 'acoustic buffer' to 'auditory memory', and talks of a "... gliding time window, the contents of which are passed on to central processing mechanisms that extract auditory attributes like pitch, timbre, loudness and duration from the input signal" . The acoustic buffer represents the exact signal and it is brief and quickly emptied . Sequentially, there is a second form of memory, 'auditory memory' which holds the results of the already processed contents of the acoustic buffer and matches them with the words stored in the mental lexicon.

1.2.2 **Recognizing spoken words**

The outcome of speech perception is the recognition of words.To recognize spoken words , Brown (1993) proposes the cohort model that includes the following stages:

* initial contact
* lexical selection
* word recognition

The cohort model suggests that all words are recognized from the phonological information available at the beginnings of words .This initial phonological information, once decoded, raises a cohort including all the known words that have similar phonological beginnings. To illustrate this, if the word "crash" is spoken, then once the initial phoneme "k" has been decoded then all words in the hearer's mental lexicon that start with a "k" sound are possibilities (the cohort). Further decoding that adds an "r" sound to the "k" means that all words which don't match the "kr" cohort drop out and so on until the word is complete. Recognition occurs when only one word remains possible from the acoustic-phonetic information.

I.2.3 Parsing - understanding the syntactic structure of sentences.

When individual words have been recognized two types of information become available, its meaning and its syntax. Palincsar (1988) defines parsing as follows:

‘The essence of parsing is that the listener is working with input that consists of lexically identifiable elements, temporarily sequenced; and is working towards

determining the relationships of those elements as a part of the understanding process.’

Researchers like Rixon (1981) have proposed that listeners use strategies based upon the surface structure of the sentence to explain the syntax . An example of such a strategy is the use of the knowledge that articles signal that a noun phrase has started, or that English sentences frequently have a Subject-Verb-Object sequence. These simple strategies are tried first and if they don't succeed then further parsing needs to be done.

I.2.4 Comprehension.

There is considerable and further work to be done to extract and interpret meanings from speech after the words have been recognized, their meanings computed and the syntax of the utterance has been parsed. Understanding the process of comprehension involves the types of knowledge which a listener needs to bring to get a meaningful interpretation of the spoken input. It also needs consideration of how knowledge is organized in memory. Rost (1990) suggests that :

‘ it is important to emphasize the principle of meaning as active knowledge construction.Meaning in discourse is created by the listener within a personal knowledge domain. Meaning is created only by an active listening in which the linguistic form triggers interpretation within the listener's background and in relation

to the listener's purpose'.

1.2.3.1 Prior knowledge.

One of the factors which affects the listening comprehension is the listeners' level of prior knowledge. The effect of prior knowledge on reading comprehension was demonstrated by Nakic (1981). They gave subjects short passages to read, and either:

i)supplied no context,

ii) gave prior context or

iii) gave context after the story was read.

Those given the context before reading the passage better . Similar work was carried out by Hadfield (1984) with listening passages and they also found that supplying a meaningful context increased children's comprehension.

World knowledge is created through experience and is thought by scientists to be stored as schemata, a term coined by Bartlett (1932). Schemata are structures in semantic memory which specify how bodies of information are organized. These packets of knowledge are used to interpret linguistic input and to facilitate comprehension.

1.2.3.2 Inferring.

Trying to understand well spoken texts enables listeners to infer meanings, thus going beyond what is actually stated. Brown (1994) notes that there are many types of inference. One of these is the logical inference. For example in the sentence: "He ran in another marathon last week", the listener can easily infer that 'he' participated before in other marathons.

Another type is the elaborative inference, where world knowledge is used. Elaborative inference from 'pop star' ,as an example, might involve notions of wealth, fans, and TV appearances. In this type , we have the use of both inferring and prior knowledge . Nunan (1993) noted :

‘that inferences are drawn from background knowledge or from what is explicit in the text. Face-to face conversations provide opportunities to infer from visual appearance and paralinguistic signals and thus inferences are also contextually based.’

1.2.3.3 Anaphoric reference.

As speech usually comprises more than one sentence, the listener has to compute the connections between the sentences. Background knowledge, both linguistic and world knowledge help us to achieve this, in particular, by helping connect the new information with what has been said before. This is referred to as anaphoric reference, when the connection is backwards to items which have been previously mentioned . The task of the listener is to work out what these connections are through inferring backwards in the discourse. Sometimes this is clearly stated : for example 'Betty is getting married on Thursday. She is wearing white', it is easy to infer that 'she' is 'Betty' .

However, when the connection is not clear the listener has to invoke background or world knowledge to leave out ambiguity. Research has uncovered some strategies which listeners use to clarify the connections like the use of

meaning of words and their syntactic value in the sentence. An example of this are gender connections through the position of pronouns in the utterance where it is usual to refer the pronoun back to its nearest referent. Besse (1981) show that 'pronoun resolution is quicker when the referent was last mentioned in the conversation.'

1.2.3.4.Short-Term Memory /Long Term Memory

Short-term memory is the system used to remember information "in use," such as a telephone number while one is dialing it. It is limited in storage capacity: for example most people can repeat a 7- or 8-digit telephone number. Because of its limits, it hasn't received much attention in research

Unlike the short-term memory , The long-term memory relies heavily on remembering the meaning of a passage, a conversation, or an event. This was made clear by numerous experiments. For instance, if an individual learns a list of words that happens to contain a number of animal names, 'he or she will tend to recall the animal names in a cluster, even though he or she originally heard them scattered throughout the list' Rost 1990. This suggests that the learner actively attempts to place some form of organization on the material in a consistent manner. It is by placing what follows in relation to what has already been said that the listener establishes the speaker's meaning. What we will remember later is what is stored in the long time memory, and not what we held briefly in the short term memory.

1.3 TEACHING / DEVELOPING THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION

The learners' need to gain increasing control over their FL knowledge is crucial and has to be catered for. Ellis (1990) summarises that 'learners achieve control through meaning focused instruction . In order to develop control , the learner needs to practice in 'real operating conditions'.

Rost (1990) however, is more specific about the nature of the development of the listening comprehension and proposes that: ' instruction in listening should aim to present learners with challenging listening texts and pedagogic tasks and to induce the learner to resolve points of non-understanding (1990). This means that we have to increase the amount of language the learner can process and the range of situations which can be dealt with. In addition, Rost notes that:

'the development of listening ability will be to some extent quantitative, involving increasing knowledge, and to some extent qualitative, involving the appropriate selection of responses ... The development of knowledge and language are both necessary conditions for the development of LC'.

Lynch, however, doesn't agree with Rost . He states that: 'in language learning, it would be foolish to claim that no listening response is better than the other ... . All listening probably helps (1995) .

1.3.1 DEVELOPING AN INPUT FOR LISTENING COMPREHENSION

In consideration of what materials or input are thought to be most useful for listening development, consideration is given to linguistic content, text types and delivery method. Listening texts and accompanying tasks are used not only to develop listening comprehension, but also as input for possible acquisition of new language. Traditionally, aural texts used for developing listening comprehension tended to be written specifically for such a purpose. Authors wrote such texts to be rich in the linguistic features, usually grammar or lexis, which they aimed to teach .

There are, however, powerful linguistic and pedagogic arguments against the use of such 'invented' and simplified texts . Dirven (1981) analysed listening texts from EFL textbooks and found them to differ from real-life speech in many ways These include too much information, clear enunciation, distinct turn-taking and structural repetition . Seliger (1995) argued that '... there has been for many years in English teaching a loss of respect for the natural patterns of a language .. teachers have got in the way of accepting all sorts of invented or adapted texts .. there is no virtue in them.

Nunan (1991) too, says of the language used in the classroom "If we are to study language in use then we must study real language designed to serve some communicative purpose". Underwood (1993) concludes that it is authentic listening material which provides "... a true representation of real, spontaneous speech ... which will make them (listeners) more able to cope with 'real life' speech when they meet it outside the learning situation" and she advocates its use from early stages.

Rost (1990) also sees pedagogic arguments against using simplified listening materials. He believes ‘it deprives listeners of the challenge of making sense of difficult language, and that by removing culturally rich features of the language we undermine the process of student enquiry’,he adds that ‘... if learners are being shielded systematically from those very cultural features that they are seeking to explore, we are indeed short-circuiting the entire education process’ .

1.3.2. DEVELOPING LISTENING TASKS

The development of listening comprehension is approached through the provision of tasks which accompany the listening input. These tasks are provided to help listeners elicit the meanings contained in the texts and simulate the kinds of information transfer which occur in a natural communicative context. They aim to replicate authentic listening purposes. The provision of tasks is to support, guide, focus and assist listeners in the extraction of meanings from the texts. These need to be designed "as aids to aural comprehension practice, directing the students' attention to 'focal points' in the listening passage so that they will learn to listen more effectively" (Underwood, 1993) . In addition to tasks as questions, there are a whole range of listening tasks, for example, using maps, pictures, true / false, mcq , diagrams, and matching . The completion of a listening task results in an observable outcome. Outcomes are seen as a key aspect of task design because they are a "... recognisable evaluation point in a learning activity" (Rost 1990). He adds that ‘A task outcome will allow learners and teachers to be able to evaluate their interpretations

of listening texts and match their interpretations against those of a native speaker, contributing to a qualitative development in the listening skill.'

As the teacher designs listening tasks, he should keep in mind that complete recall of all the information in an aural text is an unrealistic expectation to which even native speakers are not usually held. Listening tasks that are meant to train should be success-oriented and build up students' confidence in their listening ability.

1.3.3. A TYPOLOGY OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION TASKS

A-PRELISTENING ACTIVITIES

The activities chosen during pre-listening may serve as a preparation for listening in several ways. During pre-listening the teacher may:

- check students' background knowledge of the topic and linguistic content of the text.
- provide students with the background knowledge necessary for their comprehension of the listening passage or activate the existing knowledge that the students possess .
- clarify any cultural information which may be necessary to comprehend the passage
- make students aware of the type of text they will be listening to, the role they will play, and the purpose(s) for which they will be listening.

Sample pre-listening activities:

- looking at pictures, maps, diagrams, or graphs
- reviewing vocabulary or grammatical structures
- reading something relevant
- predicting the content of the listening text
- doing guided practice

B-WHILE LISTENING ACTIVITIES

While-listening activities relate directly to the text, and students do them during or immediately after the time they are listening. If students are to complete a written task during or immediately after listening ,the teacher should allow them to read through it before listening. Students need to devote all their attention to the listening task . The instructions should be explained for the task before listening begins so that they are not distracted by the need to figure out what to do.

Writing should be kept to a minimum because the primary goal is comprehension, not production. Having to write while listening may distract students from this primary goal. If a written response is to be given after listening, the task can be more demanding . Tasks have to be organized so that they guide listeners through the text.

Global tasks such as getting the main idea or topic have to be combined in a way in order to have students' attention focused on the elements of the text crucial to comprehension of the whole. Before the listening activity begins, the students need to review questions they will answer orally or in writing after or while listening.

Sample while-listening activities

- listening with visuals
- filling in graphs and charts
- following a route on a map

- checking off items in a list such as true/false or mcq
- listening for the gist
- searching for specific clues to meaning
- completing cloze (fill-in) exercises

C-POST LISTENING

After listening , comprehension may be evaluated through a particular task in order to measure the overall progress in listening . At this stage ,the teacher has to decide if the tasks used were appropriate for the listening purpose. There are two common forms that post-listening tasks can take. These are reactions to the content of the text, and analysis of the linguistic features used to express the content.

Reaction to the text

Of these two I find that tasks that focus on students reaction to the content are most important. Again this is something that we naturally do in our everyday lives. Because we listen for a reason, there is generally a following reaction. This could be a discussion as a response to what we've heard - do they agree or disagree or even believe what they have heard? - or it could be some kind of reuse of the information they have heard.

Analysis of language

The second of these two post-listening task types involves focusing students on linguistic features of the text. This is important in terms of developing their knowledge of language , but less so in terms of developing students' listening skills.

It could take for example the form of an analysis of verb forms from a script of the listening text . This is a good time to do focused work as the students have already developed an understanding of the text and so will find dealing with the forms that express those meanings much easier.

I.4 -TESTING THE LISTENING SKILL

For decades, tests of second language reading, writing, and speaking have attracted attention . This was for the sake of creating reliable, valid, and practical assessments. 'Listening, however, has traditionally been the forgotten skill when it comes to testing' (Chaudron, 1993). Richards (1996) attributes this neglect to 'the lack of a widely-accepted theory of listening comprehension', and goes on to state: "It seems that in practice test constructors are obliged to follow their instincts and just do the best they can when constructing tests of listening comprehension" . Fortunately, the assessment of second language listening has attracted some attention recently, and research has been conducted on the subject.

1.4.1. TESTING COMPREHENSION

The role of question type in tasks is an important consideration in FL listening comprehension testing. Holland (1997) claims that ' comprehension questions are the commonly accepted practice in listening exams.'

Ur (1993) thinks that comprehension questions are 'commonly accepted and have achieved "respectability" because they are similar to content-subject tests, and because students are very familiar with them'. The most important thing about comprehension questions is that they are relatively easy to create, and economical to administer in large-scale testing .

Richards examined the feasibility of writing FL listening comprehension questions and found that it was very difficult to write such questions. He drew a distinction between lower-level processing and higher-level processing, and attempted to create two distinct question types, “those which asked for information clearly stated in the text, and those which required testees to make inferences based on that clearly stated information” .

Shohamy (1995) also studied how the type of task question affected test-takers’scores. The task questions studied were of two types: those meant to assess global comprehension, and those meant to assess specific comprehension . They found that ‘specific comprehension questions were significantly easier for test-takers to answer correctly than global questions, concluding that test-takers have more difficulty inferring information than finding specific information in a text’. They also found that most students who answered global questions correctly were able to also answer specific questions, but the opposite was not true.

Nunan (1991) study provided somewhat different results . In comparing reading comprehension with listening comprehension, he found that ‘test-takers reading a written text were able to recall more details of the text than test-takers who listened to a read text. The listeners, meanwhile, were able to recall more main ideas than readers’. However, Lund used the same text for both tests. Because of this, he was very much criticized for this as using a written text that is read aloud for a listening comprehension presents a feasibility problem.

Listening comprehension tests typically resemble reading comprehension tests except that the student listens to a passage instead of reading it. The student then answers a set of questions that address various levels of comprehension such as background knowledge, inferring and reference .The Important elements in all listening tests are :

(1) the listening stimuli,

(2) the questions, and

(3) the test environment.

The listening stimuli should represent typical oral language, and not consist of simply the oral reading of passages designed to be written material. The passages should be interesting and relatively short. To ensure fairness, topics should be grounded on experience common to all students, regardless to sex and geographic, socioeconomic, or racial background.

The testing environment for listening assessment should be free of external distractions. If stimuli are presented from a tape, the sound quality should be excellent. If stimuli are presented by a teacher , the material should be presented clearly, with appropriate volume and rate of speaking. Teachers concerned with developing the listening comprehension of their students need to be aware of these test elements for the sake of assessing their students' progress.

In addition, the teachers should be keen on the choice of the method used for assessing the listening skill . A method ,for example, that is appropriate for informal evaluation of students is not appropriate for evaluating students at the end of a course. However, any assessment method should adhere to the measurement principles of reliability, validity, and fairness. This means that the instrument must be accurate and consistent, it must represent the abilities we wish to measure, and it must operate in the same way with a wide range of students.

1.4.2 TESTING PRONUNCIATION AND INTONATION

Besides testing the listening comprehension , a listening test involves a variety of skills such as the discrimination among sounds, discrimination among intonation and stress patterns.

1.4.2.1 Testing Phoneme Discrimination

Sounds are sometimes difficult to discriminate in a language other than one's native language . There are several ways to test phoneme discrimination, that is, ability to tell the difference between different sounds. One way to test phoneme discrimination is to have the testees look at a picture and listen to four words and decide which word is the object in the picture. The words chosen as alternatives should be close to the correct word. However, it is often difficult to find common words with similar sounds, and if unfamiliar words are used, they will not make good alternatives . This example can be done the other way round: the testees could be presented with four pictures and be asked to choose the picture that matches the word

that they hear. Another possibility is to give testees three words and ask them to indicate which two are the same. Finally, testees can listen to a spoken sentence and be asked to identify which one of four similar words were used in the sentence.

I.4.2.2 Discriminating Stress and Intonation

The ability to recognize stress can be tested by having testees listen to a sentence that they also have in front of them. Testees are instructed to indicate the word that carries the main stress of the sentence. While recognizing stress patterns is useful in English, the problem with this type of test is that it lacks a context. Testees need to show that they can recognize the difference between "*John* is going today" and "John is going *today*," but they do not need to show that they understand that there is a difference in the meaning of the two sentence or what the difference is.

The ability to understand the meaning of difference in intonation can be tested by having the testees listen to a statement and choose from three interpretations of the statement. For example, testees might be given the statement "Paul is a wonderful musician" and be asked to decide whether the speaker is making a straightforward statement, a sarcastic statement, or a question. Since the context is neutral, however, it is sometimes difficult to avoid ambiguity. In real communication, listeners make use of their background knowledge, the context, etc., as well as the intonation to help them interpret the communicative meaning of an utterance.

Conclusion

There are a number of ways to test listening, but, particularly when testees' listening proficiency gets more advanced, testing listening becomes more complicated. It becomes more difficult to separate listening from other skills, and combining skills can put great demands on the testee. In addition, some ways of testing listening do not reflect real-world listening tasks. In choosing tasks for listening , the teacher should be aware of these problems.

PART A : CHAPTER 2

FACTORS AFFECTING FOREIGN LANGUAGE LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Introduction

The chapter above provided a brief overview of the interlinked, internal processes believed to underpin listening comprehension. This chapter describes the factors which research has shown affect listening in a foreign language. It follows the influential framework for describing such factors proposed by Rubin (1994). Her framework has the following categories:

*Texts

* Spoken language and written language read aloud

* Listeners

* Processes of LC

*Non-verbal communication

2.1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TEXTS AND LISTENING COMPREHESION

This section describes the characteristics of listening texts which affect listening comprehension in English as a foreign language. The characteristics of spoken English which have been shown to affect comprehension are: speech rate, pauses, pronunciation and intonation .

2..1.1 SPEECH RATE AND LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Learners of English often remark that one of the main obstacles to comprehension is that speech is too fast. Although ...'it is possible that speed of delivery is an effect of difficulty in comprehension, not a cause, i.e., non-native speakers have problems understanding and, therefore, perceive speech as fast, even

though objectively it is not (Ellis 1994).

Rost (1990) found that 'spoken texts which were reduced in speed from 170 words per minute (wpm) to 145 wpm did not result in groups of Polish or Puerto Rican listeners comprehending more, except for those at very low proficiency levels'. Her pedagogic conclusion was that '... we should not be overly concerned with speed of speech. ...except at the lowest levels of L2 proficiency' . Ellis (1990) also found that reducing the word rate of texts did not increase comprehension.

Other studies have reached the opposite conclusion. Brown found that listening comprehension of NNSs was negatively affected by a faster speech-rate and that 'NNSs seemed to demonstrate a tendency to decode the input verbatim' (1989). Likewise, Hadfield showed that, 'at least for lower intermediate students, a higher speech rate of 220 wpm led to a decrease in comprehension'.

In a study which has implications for multimedia-based listening applications, Korst (1997) examined the effect on comprehension of allowing learners themselves to control the speech rates of input texts delivered by computer. This study too found that 'a slower wpm rate led to greater comprehension. Subjects' self-report questionnaires confirmed that they were aware of the gains afforded by a slower wpm'. Korst summarized the study:

'First, the students changed the speech rate when given control. Second, in controlled situations, the students achieved better comprehension than in non-controlled situations. Finally, all participants reacted positively to the use of computers to control speech rate .

2..1.2 THE EFFECT OF PAUSES ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Research into the effects of the frequency of pauses in spoken texts has shown that such a phenomenon has a positive effect on comprehension . Nakic (1981) found that pauses ‘aided the quantity of note-taking which resulted from lectures’. Long (1993) found that the ‘inclusion of pauses in texts facilitated greater comprehension than did a reduction in the rate of speech’. He added that ‘those pauses which were filled with 'er' and 'umm' etc. had a greater effect than blank pauses’. She concludes: ‘The use of pauses is a modification to input that is easy to implement and has the potential to significantly help NNSs receive the comprehensible input they need to successfully learn a language’ .

More recently, Korst (1997) reported his study which compared the effect of pauses on comprehension :

(1) speech at normal speed,

(2) speech at slowed rate and

(3) normal-speed speech with pauses inserted.

The third condition facilitated greater comprehension. He concluded that ‘That pauses have been consistently demonstrated to provide greater comprehension has implications for multimedia, where learners can be given control of input and initiate their own pauses to facilitate their comprehension when needed’.

2..1.3 PRONUNCIATION AND INTONATION

Stress in linguistics is the relative force with which a sound or syllable is spoken, or the emphasis placed on the sound or syllable spoken most forcefully in a word or phrase. Hence: stress refers to the importance, significance, or emphasis placed on something. The purpose of stress is to highlight words which carry the main information the speaker wishes to convey, and changing stress can alter the meaning of an utterance when the words remain the same

The segmentation of words in continuous speech is essential for comprehension . Word recognition comes about from a combination of the perceptual processes outlined in the previous chapter , mainly the use of the context and the situation surrounding the speech. Recent research on the boundaries of words in English has shown the extent to which words are embedded within others. For example the word 'bracing', has 'brace', 'race'', 'ace', 'racing' and 'sing'. Research also showed that ‘continuous spoken English means that about every one and a half seconds there is a word available to the listener’ Shaw (1995) .

The teachers and the students alike should be aware of a very important point about how English is spoken and used . Namely, English is considered a stressed language. This means that, in English, we give stress to certain words while other words are quickly spoken (some say eaten!).

English spends more time on specific stressed words while quickly gliding over the other, less important, words . Let's look at a simple example : the modal verb "can". When we use the positive form of ‘can’ we quickly glide over the ‘can’ and it is hardly pronounced.

They can come on Friday. (stressed words underlined)

On the other hand, when we use the negative form "can't" we tend to stress the fact that it is the negative form by also stressing "can't".

They can't come on Friday.

As one can see from the above example, the sentence: "They can't come on Friday" is longer than "They can come on Friday" because both the modal "can't" and the verb "come" are stressed.

So the teachers (and the students) need to understand which words are generally stressed and which are not . Basically, stress words are considered content words such as :

- Nouns e.g. kitchen, Peter
- (most) principal verbs e.g. visit, construct
- Adjectives e.g. beautiful, interesting
- Adverbs e.g. often, carefully

Non-stressed words are considered function words such as :

- Determiners e.g. the, a, some, a few
- Auxiliary verbs e.g. don't, am, can, were
- Prepositions e.g. before, next to, opposite
- Conjunctions e.g. but, while, as
- Pronouns e.g. they, she, us

The phonetic composition of a learner's L1 will also affect their ability to perceive sounds in English. If certain sounds are not present in the L1 then there will be initial difficulties in recognizing them in English. Vandegrift (1996) sees 'francophones as having a sound discrimination problem as , for example, in their perception of the phoneme /h/ which is problematic'. Likewise, it was demonstrated that Arab learners of English found difficulty in distinguishing between the phonemes /p/ and /b/, /f/and/v/ because the second ones are not found in Arabic.

Another aspect of language linked to the texts and their mode of delivery is the role of intonation in affecting listening comprehension. Nakic (1981), in his study of comprehending spoken language, describe intonation as 'very important in being able to understand spoken language'. An intonational utterance is closely related to its syntactic and semantic properties.

2.2. SPOKEN LANGUAGE AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE READ ALOUD

It is now widely accepted that spontaneous spoken language doesn't sound like written language read aloud. Written language is more densely packed with information, uses longer and more specific words and sentences, and it is formed in

complete sentences. When it is read aloud, that fact that it has already been organized means ‘the reader-aloud can read in a constant rhythm, in sweeping intonation curves that stretch unbroken from one comma or full-stop to the next’ (Brown1993) . Since spontaneous speech is made up as the speaker speaks, it tends to be less organized, much less densely packed with information, to contain quite a lot of stops and starts together with occasional errors which the speaker has to go back over . Brown adds that ‘spontaneous speech is much less rhythmically structured, with varying length of pauses, and is typically structured in much shorter sentences and phrases’.

In other words, written language read-out is much easier to process than spontaneously spoken language - because it is more regular, more rhythmical, and the speaker's face is held steadily before the text . Moreover most readers-aloud tend to articulate quite clearly, since they are paying attention to how they are reading. The listener has only to pay attention to one speaker, who maintains a constant point of view on what is being said, and . However, it is often difficult even for native speaker to listen to written language read aloud if the content is packed too densely for the listener to take in comfortably. Written language is typically written in the expectation that readers can take their time over it, reading it again if necessary.

2.3 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LISTENERS

Research has shown that among the most important individual variables affecting FL listening comprehension ability are: proficiency level, memory and attention, and the amount of background knowledge. It is perhaps ‘axiomatic to state those more

advanced learners, with a greater store of linguistic knowledge, and a more sophisticated control over this knowledge, achieve greater understanding of speech. Language proficiency level is going to be a major variable factor in all listening contexts' Rost (1990. However, as Rubin (1994) states 'It is not clear what role grammar, vocabulary, background knowledge of the culture, play at different proficiency levels'. However, Nunan (1991) provides that '...lexical ignorance is the main obstacle to the advancement of the foreign language learner'.

Listening is active as it requires both attention span and interaction.Anderson and Lynch (1994) define attention span as the "ability to listen for a prolonged period of time; it is 'listening plus time factor'" while "concentration, on the other hand, is the ability to cut out parasitic information ". Moreover, he argues "to help children maximize their attention span at school is to help them maximize their listening."

Logically, success in listening comprehension is affected by the amount of attention directed towards the input. For successful FL listening comprehension , Harvey (1989) found that 'effective listeners seemed to be aware when they stopped attending and made an effort to redirect their attention to the task' and that ' ineffective listeners reported that when they encountered an unknown word or phrase in a listening text, they usually just stopped listening or failed to be aware of their inattention' .

2.4 THE PROCESSES OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Research into different listening strategies is being keenly pursued. One important issue is whether, while processing input, listeners are focusing on the linguistic forms of the message, the words and grammar, or whether they are focusing on the meanings, using world knowledge, in the text. This is the 'bottom-up' versus 'top-down debate'. Richards (1996) inquired this and found that ‘when learners paid attention to the linguistic forms, this process interfered with their comprehension of the content’. He concludes that this is: ‘...evidence that conscious attention to “form” in the input competes with conscious attention to “meaning” , and, by extension, that only when input is easily understood can learners attend to “form” as part of the intake process .

Rixon (1993) found that ‘learners adjusted their strategies according to the difficulty of the texts. With topics which were unfamiliar, subjects relied more heavily on 'bottom-up' processing’.

A study by Harvey (1985) differentiated the strategies used by effective and ineffective listeners. Three strategies were found, which were regularly used by effective listeners:

* self-monitoring of comprehension : listeners were checking their understanding and their output while it was taking place;

* elaboration : relating new information to previous knowledge and to any new

information;

* inferencing : guessing strategies to fill-in gaps in comprehension caused by insufficient linguistic knowledge.

In a later study, Vandergrift (1996) looked at the effective use of strategies by listeners engaged in listening comprehension. He sees these strategies as being useful in resolving comprehension problems and thus in facilitating language learning. The research generated a taxonomy of six types of reception strategies. These were:

- global reprise : asking for repetition

-specific reprise : asking about a fragment of language that was not understood

-hypothesis testing : asking specific questions to test out whether or not the message has been correctly understood

-use of kinesics : or paralinguistic signals

-uptaking : use of kinesic or paralinguistic signals to indicate that the speaker should continue

-faking : any signals that would show they have not understood.

Vandergrift summarized the differences between proficiency levels as:

'A number of distinct strategies were identified. Students, with novice level proficiency, made greater use of kinesics, global reprises, and hypothesis testing in English in order to clarify meaning or solicit further input. Students with intermediate-level proficiency also used these strategies, but less frequently . In addition they also used the strategy of uptaking' .

2.5 THE ROLE OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN LC

The kinesic behaviour (in the previous section ,of the listener) of the speaker can be helpful for the listener to recognize the components of the incoming text and so, to understand the input appropriately. Richards (1996) defines kinesic behavior as 'all movements of the body, both muscular and skeletal'. Both Richards (1996) and Brown (1994) describe 'how a speaker's body movement and stressed syllables are linked. These movements are helpful for the listener because stress often coincides with items that are semantically salient, in that they often provide new information'. This kinesic behaviour can aid the learner's recognition of the aural input and help the learner to understand it appropriately

Rixon (1981) argues that kinesic behaviour plays another important role in FL listening comprehension. She asserts 'that kinesic behaviour is an additional way in which language is redundant, in that gestures and the facial

expressions of the speaker serve to reinforce the linguistic message'. Rixon concludes that '… to reduce language to the sole channel of verbalization is not communicating in full .

PART I : CHAPTER THREE

THE IMPORTANCE AND ROLE OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION AS A PRE-READING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Introduction

As suggested by first and second language acquisition research, an integration of training in listening comprehension in classroom practice can accomplish conscious learning and intuitive, acquisition simultaneously. Research in first and second-language reading consider the reader as 'an active participant in the creation of meaning and this might be influenced partly by the listening comprehension' Rost (1990) . Rost goes on to state that 'Although there are considerable differences between processing a written and spoken text, the cognitive strategies that underlie effective reading have much in common with those that underlie effective listening'.

Our students primarily need to use their reading skills during their exams and it is assumed that a training in listening and reading skills would serve their needs. The observed relationship between listening and reading skills may well lead to a better reading as 'there appears to be an important general language processing skill that influences performances in both listening and reading' (Anderson and Lynch 1995).

3.1 RECEPTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE SKILLS : PRIORITY OF LISTENING

The idea of the priority of listening (receptive skill) over speaking (productive skill) is supported by theories which stress the similarities between foreign language learning and second language acquisition (SLA). In this context , Anderson and Lynch (1995)noted that:

‘Current approaches to the role of listening comprehension have their roots in the observation of two essential features of L1 acquisition. First, young children are typically allowed a 'silent period' in the early part of their lives during which they are not expected to attempt to produce adult-like language (...) Second, even after they have begun to attempt linguistic production, children clearly understand more than they can say.’

The listening activities not only foster speaking but also reinforce text processing strategies used in reading comprehension. Rixon (1981) observed that ‘ …students provided evidence for the motivating effect of listening in the L2 classroom among university students who consider spoken texts more challenging than written ones but not as threateningly difficult as speaking in front of the class and the teacher’. In this context ,Brown(1994) reported on a research programme conducted with students which demonstrated the superiority of comprehension-oriented instruction compared to traditional teaching methods. He summarized this as: ‘the students participating in the comprehension-oriented instruction not only showed greater improvements in language proficiency but had a more positive attitude toward learning’. The author argued that language instruction should emphasize the development of competence in listening and reading comprehension before requiring students to master production skills.

The most influential SLA theory in the 1970s was Krashen's Input Hypothesis which he regards the central claim of his Monitor Theory . He attempts to explain the way a foreign language is acquired : ‘It maintains that second language is acquired

through processing comprehensible input, i.e. language that is heard, read and understood' (1978).

Krashen emphasizes that 'acquisition' is the result of comprehensible input and not production. Input is made comprehensible because of the help provided by the context.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis justifies the importance to provide foreign language learners with extra/optional listening to facilitate not only comprehension skills but language acquisition as well. Krashen's view of the classroom language learning and teaching is expressed in the principles of the 'Natural Approach' summarised by Ellis(1994) as follows:

1. The goal is communicative skills.

2. Comprehension precedes production.

3. Production emerges when learner is ready.

4. Acquisition activities are central.

5. The affective filter needs to be kept low.

Krashen(1978) suggests that active listening is 'a useful classroom activity in terms of intake: it can provide a meaningful, contextualised, appropriately graded, sufficiently interesting and relevant language input for the learner'. To support Krashen, Long(1989) claims that 'children and adults who are not provided with

comprehensible input but only native speaker models acquire only a very limited range of formulaic utterances.

In their article on teaching thinking skills, Brown(1987) describe ‘how listening and reading comprehension can be conceptualised as a problem-solving activity that foster interactions with the text. Listeners/readers construct meaning for the text while simultaneously reconstructing prior conceptions’ .

The close relationship between the two receptive skills, listening and reading, has been a main area of L1 research led by Anderson and Lynch who refer the results of a large scale L1 survey of 6,000 schoolchildren in which it was found that ‘children at ages 8, 11 and 13 performed consistently in cloze test of reading and listening comprehension: good listeners proved to be good readers and poor listeners were usually poor readers. The interdependence of reading and listening was true for all ages’ (Anderson and Lynch 1995) .

As stated previously , one of the assumptions is that there exists an interdependence between listening and reading comprehension strategies. This assumption is reinforced by the following L1 study. Rost (1990) claim the validity of using the results of a listening comprehension test as a predictor of reading comprehension. The listening test was administered to 321 school children and at the end of the 1st grade 162 of them were administered a reading achievement test. Data suggest that the ‘test has potential value as a predictor of reading comprehension and

as an indicator of a language comprehension ability needed for reading comprehension' Rost (1990).

3.2 : PARALLEL PROCESSES OF LISTENING AND READING COMPREHENSION

To be able to interpret the observed relationship between listening and reading comprehension a deeper understanding of language processing skills is indispensable. Teachers of FL also need a good understanding of the nature and processes of comprehension so that they can teach their students how to cope with unfamiliar spoken language. It appears that proficiency in using these skills is just as important when listening as it is when reading. 'Developing effective listening skills could well lead not only to improved listening but also better reading, for foreign learners as well as for native speakers'(Anderson and Lynch 1995).

Although reading and listening involve different decoding skills (one is visual the other is aural) the cognitive strategies of reading have much in common with those used in listening. Current views of listening comprehension propose that listeners actively process language input : 'it is an act of construction rather than reception' (Rivers 1990) . This observation is consistent with the views about the reader who is involved in an interactive process while constructing the meaning of a written text.

Rivers (1990) claims that there are three stages of constructing a message and are basically the same for both the aural and the graphic medium:

1st stage: sensing - the first rapid selection of segments we hear/see which for comprehension must be identified as meaningful segments of phrase structures.

2nd stage: identification - through segmentation and grouping at various levels applying syntactic and lexical collocational rules.

'This identification process is an active, detailed one that processes the signal it is receiving sequentially, interrelating the segments it has already identified and those it is identifying within the phrase structure of the utterance'. (Rivers 1990)

Although it is difficult to explain how the information (aural or graphic) received from the outside is converted into cognitive meaning.

According to Rivers 'as we listen (or read) we construct a parallel message within our own cognitive system, according to the organized rules we have internalized, and compare it for match, with what we are perceiving'.

There is a common experience of hearing words that have not been uttered or supplying words while listening/reading or being able to finish utterances with a probable word. 'It seems plausible that as listeners/readers, we are engaged in an 'anticipatory projection of the message, with adjustive correction' (Rivers 1990) .

A very important pedagogical implication of these findings is the need to train students in specific operations for listening comprehension and encourage them to apply these operations to the graphic text.

3rd stage: rehearsal and recoding of the material - this takes place before the perceived message enters the long-term memory. 'Rehearsal means that the material is recirculated through the cognitive system, related to what follows and is readapted

if necessary. Finally it is recoded in a more easily retainable form. When we are asked about what we have heard or read we usually give the gist of it' (Rivers 1990) . She concludes that 'In view of this similarity of processes, learning to read fluently could be considerably facilitated by combining it with a program for listening comprehension'.

Fluent readers tolerate vagueness at some points in the text, as well as unknown words (they draw essential meaning from the text) and allow meaning to become clear as they read on . Teachers can improve students' understanding of the reading process and facilitate reading fluency by encouraging 'a transfer of processes and techniques of listening comprehension to reading comprehension and exercises similar to those for listening comprehension can be developed for reading too. All good teaching is teaching for transfer and teaching of listening comprehension should be no exception' (Rivers 1990).

The above quotation is a central claim of the present paper and not only justifies the teaching of an optional listening course but also shows the relevance of investigating the effects of FL listening training on the development of reading comprehension skills.

PART II

FIELD WORK
THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND THE EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

II.I THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

In order to win a different perspective of our present work, we have used a questionnaire with the teachers performing in the middle schools. This was meant to investigate the teachers' perceptions and opinions concerning the topic under investigation, namely listening comprehension . In doing so, we aimed at bridging the gap between theory and practice, in that data collected from the field do not always stand as an evidence to reinforce theory.

For the sake of a good administration of the questionnaire, I gathered seventy teachers in a training day (forty female and thirty male) .In doing so I catered for providing a relaxed and secure atmosphere. This helped me to leave out any unpredicted ambiguity and made the teachers ready to answer the different questions. This was also meant to avoid bias related to fast responders . Of course it goes without saying that the names of the teachers were not required to preserve anonymity. Studies have shown that response rate is affected by anonymity policy of a study.

The questionnaire consisted mainly of questions revolving around the teachers' knowledge about the listening comprehension , the frequency of teaching LC, devising relevant materials and their insertion to fit in the teaching context. The

questionnaire may seem short but it fulfilled the target objectives. As a general rule, long questionnaires get less response than short questionnaires. One of the most effective methods of maximizing response is to shorten the questionnaire. More important than length is question content. Questions should be meaningful and interesting to the respondent . A subject is more likely to respond if involved and interested in the research topic. In this respect ,The questionnaire was developed to directly address the goals of the study. The present questionnaire consisted of precise and concise items the analysis of which is below:

Item 1

How do you find the listening skill when compared to the other skills (speaking , reading , writing) ? Justify your choice.

Easy 10

average 20

difficult 40

	Number of teachers	Percentage
EASY	10	14%
AVERAGE	20	28%
DIFFICULT	40	57%

Table 01: Listening comprehension compared to other skills

Concerning the first item , we obtained different answers . A glance at the table suggests that forty teachers , a majority of 57% , consider listening to be a difficult skill . This constitutes a solid argument for them not to teach it . This category is made up of ITE graduates . Their period of formation (training) was limited to one year .This made of them slaves of the book ,where listening activities are not explicitly stated. They have a prejudice against listening and never take initiatives to try things , which is unreasonable.

On the other hand , twenty teachers (28%) find listening just average. Most of these teachers are BA holders and seem to have profited from their university courses in the field. However, only ten teachers (14%) consider listening to be an easy skill to teach .These hold an experience of more than fifteen years . Eight of them are male and the reason probably is that they devote much time to research in order to improve their teaching techniques.

Item2

According to you, is there any difference between listening and listening comprehension? Justify

Yes	27
NO	43

	Number of teachers	Percentage
Yes	27	39%
NO	43	61%

Table 02: Difference between listening and listening comprehension

When asked about the difference between listening and listening comprehension, twenty seven participants (39%) could make the difference . This category claims that there's difference between listening and listening comprehension and they could cite some examples. In this context, they linked listening to 'listen and repeat' destined to pronunciation mainly , and listening comprehension to texts. It's worth noting that this category included university graduates as well as experienced teachers.

On the other hand , forty three teachers (61%) expressed themselves by simply finding no difference . This group of participants are ITE graduates. Again we can easily deduce that the majority confuse between listening and listening comprehension . This situation reflects to a great extent the ignorance of listening comprehension by most teachers.

Item3

Do you teach listening comprehension ? If yes , how often ?

YES	15
NO	55

If yes , how often?

Usually	00
often	4
sometimes	6
rarely	5
never	55

	Number of teachers	Percentage
USUALLY	00	00%
OFTEN	4	5.71%
SOMETIMES	6	8.57%
RARELY	5	7.14%
NEVER	55	78.57%

Table 03 :The frequency of teaching listening comprehension

This question is meant to get the frequency of teaching the listening comprehension among our teachers .The results indicate that fifty five teachers (78.57%) never teach it . These are ITE graduates and are blindly applying the book to the letter . Most of them are married ladies and this presupposes that they don't have enough time for brushing up their English and their teaching techniques . Their justification is that they simply don't teach listening comprehension because the book doesn't contain such activities.

Those who often or sometimes deal with listening comprehension , four and six , represent only 5.71% and 8.57 respectively . These are university graduates as well as

ancient (experienced) teachers. They are aware of the importance of the integration and balance of the four skills(listening , reading , speaking , writing).

From these obtained results, we can deduce that listening comprehension is simply neglected and the teachers who are not dealing with listening are not blamed for the reasons mentioned previously. This item matches with the first, in that it explains that when teachers consider something difficult, they simply don't run the risk of trying it.

Item4

When teaching listening comprehension, how much time do you allot it?

40mn 00

30mn 02

10mn 03

05mn 08

	Number of teachers	Percentage
40mn	00	00
30mn	02	2.85
10mn	03	4.28
05mn	08	11.42

Table 04 : Time allotted to listening comprehension

Through this question , we wanted to know how much time is devoted to the teaching of listening comprehension . Only two teachers allot 30 minutes to LC whereas, three others allot ten minutes to that lesson . They represent 2.85% and 4.28% percent respectively . These again are university graduates and seem to have profited from their knowledge in the field and that's why they are teaching the LC. Eight teachers (11.82%) allot 5 minutes to LC and they are on their turn ancient and experienced teachers . The majority of teachers (81.42%) did not answer this question , which matches with the previous item where it was found out that seventy percent don't teach listening comprehension . The results suggest how meager is the span of time teachers allot to LC, if taught at all.

Item5

According to you , what are the different stages of a LC lesson ?

Through this question , we wanted to inquire the teachers' knowledge about the different stages of a LC lesson . To our surprise , fifty one teachers (72.85%) could not provide us with answers in compliance with our literature overview.Their answers reflected a total ignorance of this . Only nineteen teachers (27.14%) replied that there were three stages .These are pre-listening ,while-listening and post-listening. The second category included university graduates and experienced teachers . Again this item allowed us to deduce that teachers ignore a lot about the importance of inserting listening comprehension in their courses .

Item6

What is , according to you , prior knowledge ?

A- Information about key words	6
B-Information given before activity	60
C-Information about performing an activity	4

Through this question , we targeted the teachers knowledge about ‘prior knowledge’ ,being very important for the comprehension of a text . Luckily , sixty teachers (85.71 %) defined it correctly and matched it to information given before an activity . This category includes all university graduates and ancient teachers . Ten teachers , however , chose the wrong answers .These represent the proportion of 14.28 %. These probably did not read the question well and might have been misled by the word ‘information’ present in the three options.

Item7

Do you think that prior (background) knowledge can help the listener understand better the message? How ?

YES	16
NO	06

	Number of teachers	Percentage
YES	16	22.85%
NO	06	08.57%
NO OPINION	48	68.57%

Table 05: prior knowledge and listening

Again the answers of the teachers reflected an ignorance of the listening skill .Most of them preferred not to give an answer for the simple reason that they don't teach it .These are forty eight and represent 68.57% . There are sixteen (22.85%)teachers who seem to be initiative takers and provided satisfactory replies . However six teachers (08.57%) expressed that prior knowledge had no role in listening comprehension . Neither of the university graduates was in this last category.

Item8

When you teach reading , do you check your pupils' prior knowledge?

If yes , state some examples

YES 58

NO 12

	Number of teachers	Percentage
YES	58	82.85%
NO	12	17.14%

Table 06 : Checking prior knowledge

Through the first part of the question, we wanted to know if the teachers really account for the background knowledge of their pupils . The great majority of fifty eight teachers (82 .85) gave a positive answer against twelve teachers (17.14). However ; in the second part, all the responses' focus was on speaking , not listening . Examples of these included elicitation and discussing a chart or a picture . This again reflected the neglect of the listening in this phase of pre-reading where LC would fit in a profitable way.

Item9

Are you in favour of including a LC session ? Justify your answer

YES 30

NO 40

	Number of teachers	Percentage
YES	30	42.85 %
NO	40	57.14 %

Table 07 : Inclusion of a listening comprehension session

Through this question , we wanted to know to what extent our teachers were ready to teach listening comprehension . Thirty teachers (42.85 %) showed their readiness to do so. They thought it would be an easy matter especially if they got some more guidance and assistance . This category included mainly the BA holders as well as experienced teachers . On the other hand , forty participants (57.14 %) rejected the idea .They are teachers who resist change because it's disturbing .In that , it's a risky adventure as it requires a lot of efforts . It's worth noting , however, that

both categories raised concerns about time (frequency per unit and duration) and where the LC would fit in the teaching context .

Item10

Do you test your pupils in listening comprehension?

YES 06

NO 64

	Number of teachers	Percentage
YES	06	8.57%
NO	64	91.42%

Table 08 :Testing listening comprehension

This question was meant to check if our teachers happen to test their pupils using a listening device. In fact the teachers' answers were expected to a great extent since it seems unreasonable to test pupils in an area of learning which they are not taught . Sixty four teachers(ninety one percent) gave a negative answer against six (eight percent) who gave a positive answer. The latter might be explained by a misunderstanding of the question .

Conclusion:

After analyzing the questionnaire, we were able to draw the following conclusions. The teachers showed great interest in the topic under investigation and this is explained mainly by the amount of answers they gave . The Response rate is the single most important indicator of how much confidence you can place in the

results. These reflected that the listening comprehension is the ‘forgotten skill’ in the middle school, compared to the other skills .The data we gathered throughout this questionnaire reinforced to a great extent the different aspects of our hypothesis of the topic under investigation. Indeed , in spite of the importance of the listening skill, our teachers showed a limited knowledge of the skill . This doesn’t permit them to take initiatives and devise listening materials or at least adapt them from other sources.

I.II : THE EXPERIMENT

Introduction

The aim of the study was to investigate whether an additional training in listening skills would have any effects on the reading skills of 9 AF students . The following research question was posed: Is it possible to detect any relevant connection between the improvement of listening and reading skills? The assumption claimed that students would benefit from a listening course to transfer text processing skills to other areas such as reading.

II.1 THE CONTENT AND RATIONALE OF THE LISTENING COURSE

For the greater part of the course the material used was often adapted to make it more suitable by modifying the tasks . This was for the sake of including the tasks I wanted to work with. A selection of passages (and tasks) was taken from the following two published books:

- *Simple Listening Activities* by Jill and Charles Hadfield, Oxford University Press, 2000.
- *Simple Reading Activities* by Jill and Charles Hadfield, Oxford University Press, 2000.

The material in these two books fit the level of 9AF and the different aspects of the syllabus were accounted for .These include the functions, structures and the

theme. The main guidelines for selecting and producing materials were authenticity. The reason for this is the concern to focus on receptive skills and foster the development of text processing strategies . Thus an authentic and varied input of spoken/written language is essential to both listening and reading skills (texts) . The same criteria apply to listening and reading tasks.

In the listening comprehension lessons some extra attention was given to pre-listening activities to provide context and activate students' own experience and background knowledge. The type of tasks can make students aware of the fact that successful comprehension does not equal 'understanding everything'.

The following activities were included in both the listening and the reading lessons:

- true/false statements

- comprehension questions

II.2. TOPICS

Including a wide selection of topics helps to avoid student's fatigue : variety in topics keep them interested and alert. Students had the possibility to listen to a range of language modes : conversations and short passages. Practical relevance of the topic was always considered: the thematic and structural links of listening and reading in addition to the considerations mentioned above. In addition to this, teaching aids always proved to be stimulating and did a great deal towards arousing interest, while reducing frustration.

II.3. THE RESEARCH METHOD

The experiment was based on testing students' reading comprehension at the beginning as well as the end of the course. The pre- and post- reading tests were administered for both groups. The results of the test of the experimental and control group were compared task by task. . In addition to this, the activities performed in each reading lesson were also scored ,for the sake of observing the student's

progress in reading comprehension . At the beginning of the course a pre-test (appendix 1) was administered in both groups which consisted of a text and two activities: true/false statements and comprehension questions . At the end of the course , both groups were given a reading comprehension test(appendix2) containing activities as the previous ones .The test types were chosen for two reasons: reliability and avoiding to add extra difficulties, such as writing .This means that in comprehension questions , I took into account comprehension only. Underneath are the observation grids along with the analysis .

II.4 : THE OBSERVATION GRID

Our aim, through this study, is to spot if there is any effect of listening comprehension upon reading comprehension. In addition to the pretest and post test , we also opted for the use of observation grids in order to observe the students' progress in reading . We have selected the same activities used in the pre and post tests .These were True/False statements and comprehension questions .

The choice of these two activities was not accidental but rather it was deliberate and justified .Comprehension is the main focus of the present study and any exclusion of this part is unreasonable . However ,it should be noted that while correcting the comprehension questions we emphasized comprehension only, without taking into account other mistakes as spelling or other. The second type we selected for the observation grid was True/False statements . The criteria of selection included its direct relevance to comprehension, the ease in its administration and the discarding of needless difficulties such as writing . For the sake of variety ,The two activities included referential and inferential questions .Finally both activities lend themselves to the reliability criterion.

In order to have the pupils cooperation , I carefully explained the objectives of the observation at the beginning of the course .The same importance was given to the explanation of the instructions for both activities .The main pattern of comprehension was that I walked among the rows and checked that the pupils understood the task and that they were working .

Table 09 **Observation grid 1:** The first twenty pupils are girls ; the rest , boys .

individual students	**Scores of activity one true/false**	**Scores of activity two comprehension qqs**	**The mean**
1	14	12	13
2	08	12	10
3	12	8	10
4	10	12	11
5	12	08	10
6	10	06	8
7	08	06	7
8	08	12	10
9	10	14	12
10	14	12	13
11	10	12	11
12	14	14	14
13	10	14	12
14	12	10	11
15	10	10	10
16	14	08	11
17	12	14	13
18	12	12	12
19	08	10	9
20	12	08	10
21	08	08	8
22	12	14	13
23	16	16	16
24	16	14	15
25	08	12	10
26	10	12	11
27	10	10	10
28	04	08	6
29	06	08	7
30	12	10	10
31	08	14	11
32	08	10	9
33	06	04	5
34	12	12	12
35	10	14	14
36	12	08	10
37	08	06	7
38	08	10	9
39	06	08	8
40	10	12	11
Mean	**10.29**	**10.65**	**10.47**

What could be observed here is little significant progress .However , the learners showed great interest in the tasks carried out in class.

Table 10 **OBSERVATION GRID 2**

individual students	**Scores of activity one true/false**	**Scores of activity two comprehension qqs**	**The mean**
1	14	12	13
2	08	12	10
3	10	16	13
4	10	10	10
5	14	10	12
6	06	08	7
7	10	06	8
8	10	14	12
9	14	12	13
10	14	14	14
11	16	12	14
12	14	16	15
13	12	16	14
14	14	14	14
15	10	12	11
16	14	12	13
17	14	16	15
18	16	12	14
19	12	10	11
20	12	14	13
21	08	06	7
22	12	16	14
23	14	18	16
24	14	16	15
25	14	10	12
26	12	14	13
27	12	12	12
28	10	06	8
29	08	10	9
30	10	12	11
31	10	14	12
32	12	12	12
33	08	06	8
34	14	12	13
35	16	16	16
36	10	10	10
37	08	08	8
38	10	06	8
39	10	08	10
40	12	12	12
The Mean	**11.70**	**11.30**	**11.50**

For the second session , the learners were more and more interested and motivated. The progress is also a little bit more significant .More learners got better results .

Table 11 **OBSERVATION GRID 3**

	individual students	Scores of activity one True / False	Scores of activity two comprehension qqs	The mean
1		14	14	14
2		10	12	11
3		12	14	13
4		12	12	12
5		12	10	11
6		10	08	9
7		10	10	10
8		10	14	12
9		12	16	14
10		14	14	14
11		14	12	13
12		16	16	16
13		12	14	13
14		16	14	15
15		16	12	14
16		14	14	14
17		14	16	16
18		12	14	13
19		14	10	12
20		12	12	12
21		08	04	6
22		10	14	12
23		18	16	17
24		18	16	17
25		16	12	14
26		14	14	14
27		10	14	12
28		06	08	7
29		10	10	10
30		14	12	13
31		16	12	14
32		12	10	11
33		08	06	6
34		14	14	14
35		14	16	15
36		14	10	12
37		08	08	8
38		08	06	7
39		12	12	12
40		14	10	12
		12.49	**12.05**	**12.27**

For the third session , we noticed more interest and more involvement.The results are also more remarkable and individual scores improved significantly.

Table12 **OBSERVATION GRID 04**

	individual students	Scores of activity one True/False	Scores of activity two comprehension qqs	The mean
1		14	14	14
2		10	14	12
3		12	16	14
4		12	12	12
5		10	16	13
6		08	10	9
7		10	08	9
8		12	14	13
9		14	16	15
10		16	16	16
11		12	16	14
12		16	18	17
13		16	14	15
14		16	16	16
15		12	14	13
16		14	12	14
17		14	18	16
18		14	14	14
19		14	10	12
20		12	16	14
21		04	08	6
22		16	14	15
23		20	16	18
24		18	14	16
25		12	16	14
26		14	12	13
27		16	10	13
28		10	04	7
29		10	10	10
30		12	14	13
31		12	16	14
32		16	10	13
33		08	06	7
34		10	18	14
35		18	16	17
36		14	10	12
37		08	06	7
38		06	06	6
39		12	14	13
40		10	16	13
				12.82

Compared to previous sessions and the pre-test, it's evident that the learners made significant progress . Good scores were achieved by the majority of them .

Through the different lessons , I catered for the development of the listening ability by creating listening lessons that guided the learners through three stages :pre-listening ,the listening task and post-listening.

At the beginning of each lesson , I engaged learners in a pre-listening activity . This established the context and activated the background knowledge by encouraging the learners to think about and discuss what they already know about the content of the listening text. It should be noted however that the learners at this stage are relatively poor as far as the background knowledge is concerned . So this phase fulfilled its aim to a great extent especially for the weak ones .

The listening tasks were then launched one after the other .The instructions for these were given a special importance in terms of explanation . While I read the passage , the pupils were listening to get information . Two types of behaviour should be noted here : the teacher ‘s rate of delivery and the wait time . The reading was made at a normal speed and some time was allotted before the correction phase, for the purpose of fixing the answers .

Correction naturally succeeded to the task , being the most important phase of an activity as it is here that pupils fix their acquisition . During this phase , it’s worth noting the involvement of almost all pupils in a competitive and profitable correction. This enthusiasm was exploited in creating a warm ‘discussion’ about the listening

passage .This was considered as a post listening activity for the first part of the lesson.

Now that the pupils were supposedly armed with a pre-reading (familiarity with both the techniques and the theme along with some background knowledge) ,they are taken through a reading comprehension phase, being the second part of our lesson .It is this part that was observed and evaluated for the sake of detecting any impact of listening comprehension upon reading comprehension . It included a reading text followed by two activities that were performed by pupils using handouts , provided for the purpose of grading them . A number of criteria were taken into account regarding the choice of the reading materials .The reading texts (appendix 3) were congruent with the level of learners and relevant to the goals and expectations of the pupils at this age .This was for the sake of keeping motivation and attention high . The texts were also authentic and reflected reading in real world . Because of this , they were not modified or simplified and ambiguity was left on purpose to urge the pupils to read , think and find the answers .While the pupils worked , I went around for checking that they were performing the tasks .In the correction phase , there was a great interest and competitiveness among pupils . While analyzing the pupils' answers we obtained the following data that we inserted into two main categories: the pupils who made a significant progress through the different lessons(category 1) and those who were stagnant and maintained their initial level (category 2).

Category 1

	Number of pupils	percentage	girls	percentage	boys	percentage
	27	67.51%	13	48.14%	14	51.85%
Below 10 in Pre-test	12	44.44%	6	22.44%	6	22.22%
10 and over in Pre-test	15	55.56%	7	25.92%	8	29.62%

Table 13

This table represents the pupils who made significant and remarkable progress . It's clear that that they have profited from listening comprehension in order to improve their reading comprehension proficiency .Through the different lessons their progress was regular and remarkable . From this table we can also deduce that the influence of the gender variable is excluded because no major difference occurred or was affected by this .

Category 2

	Number of pupils	percentage	girls	percentage	boys	percentage
	13	32.5%	7	53.84%	6	46.15%
Below 10 in Pre-test	7	53.84%	2	15.38%	5	38.46%
10 and over in Pre-test	6	46.15%	5	38.46%	1	7.69%

Table14

This category represents the pupils who remained stagnant or made no significant progress . They are thirteen and represent 32.5 % .This category reveals also that gender was not a variable that might have affected their performances .The reasons for this stagnation might be linked to the unfamiliarity of the teacher or the nature of the work itself .

II.5 : THE PRETEST AND THE POSTTEST

For an easier comparison, the scores of the pre-test and the post-test were compared and one basic statistical procedure was applied: calculating the mean for each group in each test. The data are presented in a table format. First I have looked at the results of the pre- test to define the reading proficiency level of both groups . In the first column of table 1 and 2 students' individual scores on the pre-test are listed: 40 individual scores in the experimental group and 41 individual scores in the control group. For each group the mean score on the pre-test was calculated by adding up the individual scores and divided by the total number of scores. This gave us information about the central tendency of the scores . In addition to this, the ‘t’ test, which is the guarantee of validity of any experiment , was applied on the post-test in order to reveal the effect of the independent variable upon the dependent variable.

The data and calculated figures are presented below:

Table 15 ***Calculating the mean of the experimental group in the pre-test:*** The first twenty pupils are girls ; the rest ,boys .

Individual students	**Scores of activity one True /False**	**Scores of activity two Comprehension questions**	**The mean**
01	12	12	12
02	08	12	10
03	12	11	11.50
04	10	10	10
05	10	08	09
06	06	07	06.5
07	08	06	07
08	12	12	12
09	12	11	11.50
10	14	13	13.50
11	10	09	09.50
12	16	14	15
13	10	08	09
14	12	11	11.50
15	08	10	09
16	12	09	10.50
17	14	13	13.50
18	12	13	12.50
19	08	07	07.50
20	08	08	08
21	08	05	06.50
22	10	12	11
23	14	15	14.50
24	12	14	13
25	10	08	09
26	08	09	08.50
27	08	10	09
28	06	07	06.50
29	08	06	07
30	12	10	11
31	12	11	11.50
32	10	10	10
33	06	08	07
34	10	11	10.5
35	12	16	14
36	14	08	11
37	08	05	06.50
38	06	08	07
39	10	07	08.50
40	10	07	08.50
41			
The mean			**09.75**

Table 16 ***Calculating the mean of the control group in the pre- test***

Individual students	**Scores of activity one True /False**	**Scores of activity two Comprehension questions**	**The mean**
01	10	08	09
02	06	08	07
03	04	05	04.50
04	12	10	11
05	08	09	08.50
06	14	13	13.50
07	04	06	05
08	16	15	15.50
09	10	09	09.50
10	08	11	09
11	12	13	12.50
12	14	10	12
13	10	07	08.50
14	06	09	07.50
15	08	07	07.50
16	06	10	08
17	12	11	11.50
18	16	14	15
19	14	10	12
20	08	12	10
21	16	15	15.50
22	08	07	07.50
23	10	14	12
24	12	13	12.50
25	04	06	05
26	04	08	06
27	06	11	08.50
28	12	09	10.50
29	10	14	12
30	10	09	09.5
31	10	13	11.50
32	08	05	06.50
33	14	11	12.50
34	04	07	05.50
35	16	13	14.50
36	14	13	13.50
37	12	11	11.50
38	02	08	05
39	06	09	07.50
40	04	06	05
41	04	09	06.50
The mean			**09.68**

The following table(17) presents a summary of the means to help to interpret the initial reading test results of the experimental and control group:

	Experimental group	Control group
Mean	**09.75**	**09.68**

Table 17

Looking at the *means* it is apparent that there is no significant difference between the two groups regarding their initial reading comprehension .The results also confirm the different information we got .The two classes were homogeneous in terms of level and gender . The scores of the post-test, which was administered at the end of the course, were analysed the same way as the first test. The results and the calculated figures are presented in the following tables:

Table 18 ***Calculating the mean of the experimental group in the post- test***

Individual students	**Scores of activity one True/False**	**Scores of activity two Comprehension questions**	**The mean**
01	16	13	14.50
02	12	14	13
03	16	15	15.50
04	12	12	12
05	14	12	13
06	08	12	10
07	10	12	11
08	12	13	12.50
09	18	15	16.50
10	18	15	16.50
11	14	16	15
12	16	17	16.50
13	14	16	15
14	16	17	16.50
15	14	13	13.50
16	14	13	14.50
17	18	17	17.50
18	16	13	14.50
19	12	13	12.50
20	14	15	14.50
21	10	13	11.50
22	16	15	15.50
23	18	18	18
24	16	14	15
25	14	15	14.50
26	14	14	14
27	12	13	12.50
28	08	10	09
29	10	12	11
30	16	12	14
31	16	13	14.50
32	12	15	13.50
33	12	16	14
34	16	14	15
35	18	17	17.50
36	12	13	12.50
37	10	08	09
38	12	14	13
39	14	13	13.50
40	12	14	13
41			
The mean			**13.87**

Table 19 ***Calculating the mean of the control group in the post- test***

Individual students	**Scores of activity one True /False**	**Scores of activity two Comprehension questions**	**The mean**
01	12	13	12.50
02	04	10	07
03	06	07	06.50
04	12	10	11
05	12	08	10
06	14	11	12.50
07	06	09	07.50
08	14	10	12
09	08	11	09.50
10	10	08	09
11	10	13	11.50
12	12	09	10.50
13	14	08	12
14	08	10	09
15	08	10	09
16	10	11	10.50
17	10	12	11
18	14	11	12.50
19	16	09	12.50
20	08	11	09.50
21	18	14	16
22	10	05	07.50
23	10	11	10.50
24	12	14	13
25	06	08	07
26	02	07	04.50
27	08	12	10
28	14	11	12.50
29	08	13	10.50
30	12	11	11.50
31	10	10	10
32	08	06	07
33	12	09	10.50
34	08	07	07.50
35	18	14	16
36	16	15	15.50
37	08	10	09
38	06	07	06.50
39	04	04	04
40	10	05	07.50
41	08	06	07
The mean			**09.97**

Table 20 summarises the results of the post- test of both groups in order to provide an easier comparison.

	Experimental	*Control*
Mean	**13.87**	**09.97**

Table 20

Comparing the means , one can deduce that the experimental group outperformed the control group. The experimental group did better by **16.4 %,** although in the pre-test this difference was negligible . These results confirm further the pupils' progress made through the different lessons that we observed . We can also deduce that there's no preponderance as far as the feedback of girls and boys is concerned . In order to exclude the effect of any other variable and hence confirm the impact of listening comprehension on reading comprehension , we have used the 't' test below .

The t- test :

The t- test is the guarantee of the validity of experiment based on a two entities– comparison. Once applied; it reveals – with a very tiny error probability – the effect of the IV (independent variable) on the DV (Dependent Variable).

To calculate the value, the following formula need to be applied:

$$t_{N1+N2-2} = \frac{(X_1 - X_2)\sqrt{(N_1+N_2-2)\,N_1N_2}}{\sqrt{(N_1 S_1^2 + N_2 S_2^2)(N_1+N_2)}}$$

The obtained result (with 5% error margin) must equal or exceed the tabulated value (calculated with the Degrees of Freedom) to affirm, confirm or infirm the effect of the IV on the DV, and hence reject the null Hypothesis Ho **.**

X_X = individual score .
Xn = group mean (average).
X^2_x = squared score .
Nx= standard of subjects.
Sx = standard deviation (sample variance).
The standard deviation is a virtual value assigned to probable difference of level a among the subjects**.**

The t test is applied on the post- test .

Pre- test:

Expermental group **control group**

$\sum X_1 = 390.$ $\sum X_2 = 397$

$\sum X_1^2 = 152100$ $\sum X^2_2 = 157609$

$$X_1 = \frac{\sum X_1}{N_1} = \frac{390}{40} \qquad X2 = \frac{\sum X_2}{N2} = \frac{397}{41}$$

$X_1 = 9{,}75$ $X2 = 09.05$

Post test:

$\sum X_1 = 555.$ $\sum X_2 = 409$

$\sum X_1^2 = 7883$ $\sum X_2^2 = 4313.5$

$$X_1 = \frac{\sum X1}{N1} = \frac{555}{40} \qquad X2 = \frac{\sum X_2}{N2} = \frac{409}{41}$$

$X_1 = 13.87$ $X2 = 09.97$

Table21 : Square scores of both groups

Experimental Group	Squared score X^2_1	Control group	Squared score X^2_2
15	225	9	81
13	169	8	64
16	256	7	49
12	144	11	121
13	169	9	81
9	81	12	144
9	81	7	49
13	169	13	169
17	289	9	81
17	289	9	81
15	225	12	144
17	289	13	169
15	225	12	144
17	289	8	64
14	196	9	81
15	225	8	64
18	324	11	121
15	225	13	169
13	169	13	169
15	225	9	81
8	64	16	256
16	256	8	64
18	324	11	121
17	289	13	169
15	225	7	49
14	196	5	25
13	169	8	64
9	81	12	144
11	121	10	100
14	196	11	121
15	225	11	121
14	196	7	49
8	64	11	121
15	225	8	64
18	324	16	256
13	169	15	225
9	81	13	169
9	81	7	49
14	196	4	16
13	169	8	64
		7	49
$\sum X_1 = 555$	**$\sum X_1^2 = 7883$**	**$\sum X_2 = 409$**	**$\sum X_2^2 = 4313$**

The sample variance (standard deviation):

Experimental group:

$$S_1^2 = \frac{\sum X1}{N1} - X^2_1$$

$$S_1^2 = \frac{7883}{40} = 13.87 \text{ x } 14.33$$

$$S_1^2 = 197.07 - 192.37$$

$$S_1^2 = 4.7$$

Control group

$$S_2^2 = \frac{\sum X^2 2 - X^2 2}{N2}$$

$$S_2^2 = \frac{4313.5}{41} - (9.97 \text{ x } 9.97)$$

$$S_2^2 = 105.20 - 99.40$$

$$S_2^2 = 5.5$$

The t value

$$t_{N1+N2-2} = \frac{(X1 - X2)\sqrt{(N1+N2-2)\,N1N2}}{\sqrt{(N1\,S1^2 + N2\,S^2 2)\,(N1+N2)}}$$

$$t_{40+41-2} = \frac{(13.87 - 9.97)\sqrt{(40+41-2) \times (40 \times 41)}}{\sqrt{(40 \times 4.7 + 41 \times 5.5) \times (40+41)}}$$

$$t_{81-2} = \frac{3.9 \times \sqrt{79 \times 1640}}{\sqrt{188 + 225.5 \times 81}} \qquad \frac{3.9 \times \sqrt{55760}}{\sqrt{413.5 \times 36}}$$

$$t_{79} = \frac{3.9 \times 236.13}{\sqrt{14886}} \qquad \frac{920.9}{122.13} \qquad = 7.54$$

The t value is 7.54 . According to a degree of freedom (whereby DF = N1 + N2- 2) The critical value is 7.54 > 02.06 . H 1 is accepted , because the mean for the experimental group is significantly higher than for the control group . the Ho is rejected, so there is only a 1% probability that the observed mean difference, occurred by chance alone . In other words we have a 99% probability that it was due to factors other than chance.

Conclusion:

In this section, I will summarise the points I have already made throughout the previous chapters and highlight crucial pedagogic implications of the experiment .But before that , some factors have to be considered in the interpretation of results .

The number of students who have taken part in the experiment was relatively big .The experiment should have covered a longer time period although this is difficult to arrange since, for the ministry of education, the groups are well defined in September . In an ideal case, working with two experimental and two control groups for at least one year would increase the reliability of the research. Motivation, attitude, intelligence of the students cannot be directly observed but must be kept in mind as they are key elements in language learning and have a strong influence on language performance. For the sake of a more relevant comparison of listening and reading strategies, a similar experiment should focus on other language processing strategies . The possible transfer of a particular comprehension strategy might be easier to observe than another one.

The central pedagogic claim of the present paper is that we should teach for transfer. 'All good teaching is teaching for transfer' (Rivers). By giving meaningful tasks which are motivating and challenging and based on authentic language input we can turn our students into active listeners/readers. Besides teaching bottom-up strategies , teachers should encourage students to exploit their background knowledge

to help them infer and draw conclusions. This can be achieved through the insertion of the different phases of the listening comprehension process. If 'comprehensible authentic input' is an important factor in foreign language learning in the classroom, then tasks are means of grading the language input as well as providing context for listening .

Based on my own classroom observation, listening activities can increase comprehension of both listening and reading . The combination of the two is generally weak in our schools .However, an insertion of the listening comprehension may contribute in making things much better in the classroom .

Within this work , I have tried to describe a framework for listening development that we could apply to our schools. This isn't of course the only way to develop our teachers and students listening or to structure listening comprehension to fit in , but it is a way that I have personally found to be interesting and motivating . Following from what has been said above two possible directions of further research may be proposed.

As part of the development of the skills in FLL, a more focused research could be carried out such as the impact of listening or speaking on writing . Through this a deeper understanding can be gained on how these skills operate and what other factors they are influenced by . Another broader area of research is the question of how a listening course can change the two major components of students' attitude : motivation and self-confidence.

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Appendix 01

Unit number		Number of Skills				
		List comp	Writing	Consolidate	Reading	Other
1	How do you do?	-	1	3	3	1
2	You must give way	1	2	3	3	-
3	I'm the most beautiful	-	2	4	4	1
4	It started many years ago	1	1	4	3	-
5	It's made in Algeria	1	1	4	2	-
6	First they are sorted out	-	2	4	4	1
7	Have you tried this infusion	-	1	5	4	1
8	You can apply for this job	-	1	5	3	1
9	Are they flying or swimming?	-	2	5	4	1
10	As strong as a horse	-	1	5	5	1
11	I was listening while…	-	2	4	4	1
12	It's a machine that washes…	-	1	5	4	1
13	How long have you been there	-	2	6	3	2
14	You won't believe me if I …	-	1	5	4	1
15	What are we going to do now?	-	1	5	4	1
TOTAL		List comp	Writing	Consolidate	Reading	Other
		03	21	67	54	13

Table showing 9AF skills in the book 'Spring 02'

Appendix02:

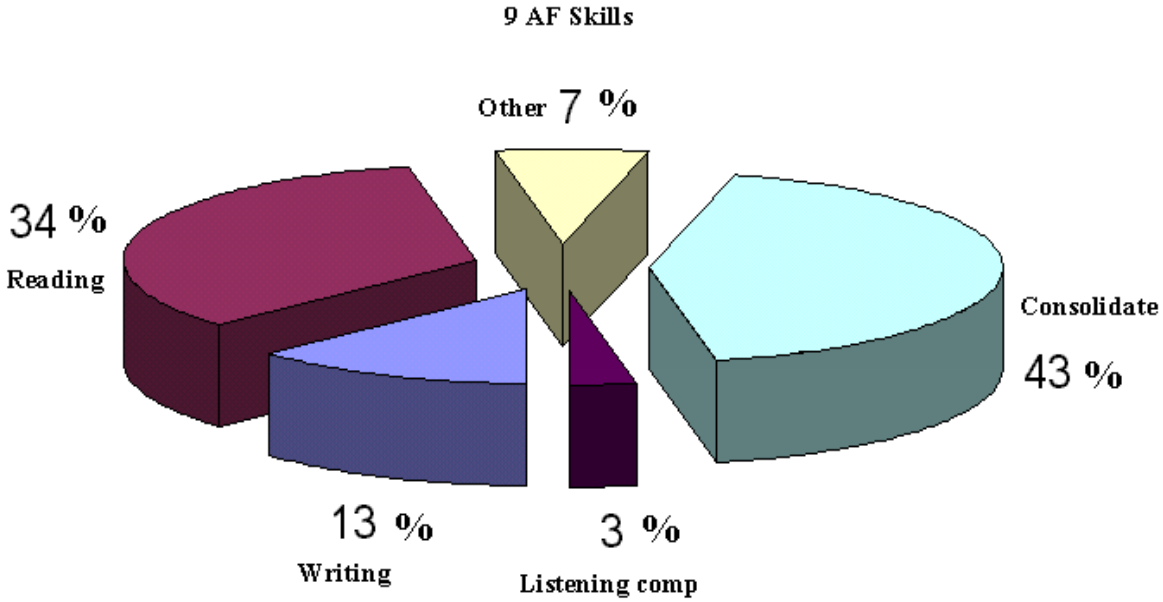

Chart 1

-This chart gives the percentage of each skill.

APPENDIX 03

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Item 1

How do you find the listening skill when compared to the other skills(speaking , reading , writing)? Justify your choice.

Easy ☐

average ☐

difficult ☐

Item2

According to you, is there any difference between listening and listening comprehension? Justify

Yes ☐

NO ☐

Item3

Do you teach listening comprehension ? If yes , how often ?

YES ☐

NO ☐

If yes , how often?

Usually ☐

often ☐

sometimes ☐

rarely ☐

never ☐

Item4

When teaching listening comprehension, how much time do you allot it?

40mn ☐

30mn ☐

10mn ☐

05mn ☐

Item5

According to you , what are the different stages of a LC lesson ?

Item6

What is , according to you , prior knowledge ?

A- Information about key words ☐

B-Information given before activity ☐

C-Information about performing an activity ☐

Item7

Do you think that prior (background) knowledge can help the listener understand better the message? Justify

YES ☐

NO ☐

Item8

When you teach reading , do you check your pupils' prior knowledge?

If yes , state some examples

YES ☐

NO ☐

Item9

Are you in favour of including a LC session ? Justify your answer

YES ☐

NO ☐

Item10

Do you test your pupils in listening comprehension?

YES ☐

NO ☐

APPENDIX 04 : Text used for the pre-test

RIDING TO WORK

More and more Americans are going to work on bicycles . Why are more people riding bicycles to work ? There are many reasons.

First , bicycles don't need gasoline . Therefore , they cost less to use . Also bicycles don't need much space on the road and it's easy to find a place for them . It's good for health to ride a bicycle . People who always drive their cars need to practise sport .

More and more Americans are riding to work on their bicycles . They are leaving their cars at home .

APPENDIX 05 : Text used for the post-test

THE KING

" The king is dead," said John Lennon , the English singer and member of the famous Beatles in the 1960's . Elvis Presley was really "the king" of 'rock and role' music .At the news of his death on August 16 ,1977 , thousands of people gathered outside his home in Memphis .

Elvis Presley was born in Tupelo ,Mississippi , on January 8 ,1935 . At the age of 13 Elvis and his family moved to Memphis , Tennessee . There , Elvis recorded his first song in 1954 . After that , many things happened quickly .He sold millions of

cassettes , served in the U.S. army and went to Hollywood where he participated in 33 films .

Elvis gathered the music of the black people and the countryside . His songs started a new period in American music . " The King is dead ," said Lennon. "Long live the King ."

APPENDIX 06

TEXTS USED IN THE OBSERVED READING COMPREHENSION LESSONS

TEXT 01:

HOCKEY

Hockey is a winter game . The playing field is ice .Two groups of six players each hit a small flat object across the ice with their sticks .The players wear heavy clothes.

Hockey is not a gentle game .It's fast and wild .Sometimes there are fights between the players .There are three twenty-minute periods in hockey . Every minute is full of action .

It's not easy to make points in hockey .Ten points is very high . Many of the hockey players in the U.S. come from Canada .French Canadian names are not unusual among U.S. hockey players .

TEXT 02 :

Water

Water is the life blood of our earth .It's in every living thing .It's in the air .It runs through the mountains and valleys .It forms lakes and oceans .Water is everywhere .

Nature has a great water system .Rain water finds its way to streams and rivers . Rivers lead to the ocean . At the mouths of the rivers , fresh water joins the salt water of the ocean .Here at the mouth of the river , there ‘s much important plant and animal life .Pollution destroys this life , however . We have to clean our streams and rivers . Man has to work with nature , not against it .

TEXT 03

ENGLISH FOR INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION

You are a doctor of medicine from Japan .You are at an international meeting in Switzerland .You want to communicate with a doctor from Senegal .What language do you speak with him ? The answer is probably *English* .

Today , nearly 900 million people around the world use the English language . Only half of these people speak English as their first language .

Why is English useful for international communication ? For one thing ,many books and papers in special fields are in English. As a result , specialists in these fields often learn English .Specialists from different countries can use their English for international communication . English is truly a world language .

TEXT 04

GRAY POWER

In the United States ;’old age’ begins at 65 .There are 22 million men and women age 65 and over in the U.S. Many of these men and women are healthy and

strong .They want to work .They want to be useful .They want to enjoy their golden years .

Twenty two million people have a powerful voice .Groups of old people are taking action .As a result ,there are more laws now to help old people in America. The government is giving more importance to their needs .The gray power movement is a success .