Effectiveness of Using Technology Supportive Materials for Developing Listening Skills among School Children

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Abstract

Listening occupies a central place in everyday communication as most of our knowledge of the world is derived from listening input. Despite the centrality of listening, it has received an unfair treatment in second language classrooms. This paper discusses why it is imperative to develop listening skills among learners. Besides, it aims to study the effectiveness of using technology supportive materials for developing listening skills in English among school students. Two groups — pre-test and post-test design — was followed in the study. The experiment was conducted for 30 days. Students of two sections of Class VIII constituted the sampling group. An analysis of the data was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. It is found that the use of technology supportive materials is more effective than the traditional method for developing listening skills in English among school students.

Introduction

Listening is one of the basic language skills that plays a key role in almost all activities in our lives. It is a medium through which people develop an understanding of the world and of human affairs. That is why, listening is a skill which we all need to develop.

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Unlike hearing, which is a passive physiological activity, listening is an active cognitive process. The difference between hearing and listening can be as big as the contrast between night and day. Hearing happens automatically, requires no deliberate effort and happens because our ears are open. On the other hand, listening, too, is a deliberate activity but requires energy and effort. It demands willingness, interest and desire to understand.

The behaviourists' school strongly supports the role of 'stimulus' in eliciting 'response' in language learning. Theories on English as a second language also recognises the importance of the role of learners' interest, attitude and motivation as instrumental to effective language learning. Therefore, it can be argued that materials to be used in language classroom ought to be interesting and also thought-provoking. In this context, technology supportive materials i.e., animated tales may be considered as a source of productive materials for promoting language learning. So, this researcher wanted to see the effectiveness of using technology supportive materials for the development of listening skills in English.

What Do Previous Studies Say?

Many teachers believe that listening is a natural process, so they need not teach listening skills to learners. As a result, there has been a paucity of research into listening (LeLoup and Ponterio, 2003; Clement, 2007; Vandergrift, 2007). However, the review of literature shows that listening can be taught and evaluated (Ober, 2001).

Funk and Funk (1989) suggest to language teachers that listening can be taught. According to them, for creating good listeners, firstly, teachers have to provide a purpose for listening, give proper guidelines and use teaching methodology that promotes positive listening habits in the classroom.

Thompson, Leintz, Nevers and Witkowski (2004) suggest Integrative Listening Model (ILM) for teaching listening skills. This listening model means a systematic developmental approach. ILM includes four stages: preparing for listening, applying the listening process model, assessing listening effectiveness, and establishing goals for future listening. It is found that good listeners plan to listen, deal with filters and methodically apply the listening process.

Chang and Read (2006) examined the effects of four different forms of listening support on listening comprehension of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in college students. The participants in the study were 160 business majors at a college in

Taipei, Taiwan. They were all taking a required semester-long course in English listening procedure. The results showed that the most effective type of support overall was providing information about the topic followed by repetition of the input.

Chen (2009) investigated the impact of strategy instruction in a regular college EFL class in Taiwan. Rather than examining a cause-effect relationship, this study focused on exploring learners' listening strategy development over a 47-week span. The participants were 31 non-English major students enrolled in an EFL listening course, and their language proficiency levels varied. The instruction was integrated as an extension of the listening curriculum, and metacognitive, cognitive, and social-affective listening strategies were taught in the strategy instruction. Within each strategy category, the researcher demonstrated selective strategies that had been proven effective.

Renandya and Farrell (2010) carried out a study, in which they provided ample listening inputs, exposed students to a variety of listening texts and spent a considerably long span on listening activities. The control group was given listening inputs like the earlier students were given. The experimental group was exposed to extensive listening without bothering about strategies. The results showed a noticeable difference between the development of listening skills of the two groups. The experimental group was found to be better at listening than the control group. Finally, the researchers concluded that in order to significantly refine the listening skills of students, teachers need to expose them to varied meaningful, realistic and enjoyable listening texts without being distracted by listening strategies, which are hard to gain access to.

Wagner (2010) reported that the visual components of spoken texts are useful to the listener in comprehending aural information. For proving the above assumption, an experimental study, the effect of the use of video texts on EFL listening test-taker performance, was carried out. A quasi-experimental non-randomised group design was used to investigate how the use of video texts affected L2 test-taker performance. An experimental (video) group and a control (audio-only) group were created. The two groups were given a pre-test and a post-test. The videos used for the experimental group were designed and created specifically for this study by the researcher. A total of eight video texts were used (one dialogue and one lecturette text for the pre-test, and three dialogue and three lecturette texts for the post-test). Multi-variant Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) was used to compare the two groups' performance, and it was found that the video (experimental) group scored 6.5 per cent higher than the audio-only (control) group on the the overall post-test. This difference

was statistically significant. The results of the study suggest that non-verbal information in the video texts contributed to the video group's superior performance.

The Processes of the Study

Objective and Hypothesis of the Study

The objective of the present study is to find out the effectiveness of using technology supportive materials for the development of listening skills among school students.

The hypothesis of the present study is that there exists a significant difference between mean scores of listening skills developed through the use of technology supportive materials and mean scores of listening skills developed through traditional method in English with regard to pre-test and post-test scores.

Methodology of the Study

In the present experimental study, the researcher had used two-group pre-test and post-test design. The relative effectiveness of the use of Technology Supportive Materials (TSM) and Usual Learning Method (ULM) for the development of listening skills in English of Class VIII students was studied in the present study. In this study, ULM and TSL were considered as independent variables and the development of listening skills in English was considered as a dependent variable.

Sample

In the present study, the researcher had followed the random sampling method. The researcher took two sections of Class VIII of Kendriya Vidyalaya, Malda, i.e., Section A as a control group and Section B as an experimental group. A total of 62 students were there in the entire sampling group at the beginning of the experiment. However, 59 students were present in all stages of the experiment. The details of the sample of the present study are given below:

Table 1
Description of the Sample

Purposively selected schools	Name of the learning stage	No. of the sections/ classes taken for experiment	Name/ Category of sections	No. of students	Sections forming the treatment groups
Kendriya Vidyalaya, Malda	Class VIII	2	Sec- A	30	Control Group
			Sec- B	29	Experimental Group

Control and Experimental Group background

It is important to consider the background of the control and experimental groups in the context of English as a second language as the teaching materials and methods that are suitable in the inner circle countries may not be fully suitable in the outer and expanding circle countries (Kachru, 1992). In West Bengal, English is taught as a compulsory subject from grade one in schools. The control group salected for the study is from a similar background. All students in the group are from KV, Malda, West Bengal. They are in their early teens and have been learning English for 7-8 years. However, they get exposure to English only at school.

Materials Used for Intervention

Here, animated *Panchatantra* tales were used for developing listening skills. These animations are available on www.youtube.com. The selected animated tales are designed by Rajashree Production, especially for children.

Data Collection Procedure

In the beginning of the present research, a pre-test was conducted in the classroom to know the level of proficiency in listening skills in English. After the results of the pre-test, a 30-day teaching course was designed. It includes the use of animated tales to improve the listening skills so that students are able to comprehend speeches and try to speak English in their everyday life. At the end of the course, a post-test was conducted and the results of the pre-test and the post-test were compared.

Data Analysis

For the present research work, the researcher has used descriptive statistics like mean, standard deviation (SD), graphical representation of data, etc., and inferential statistics like 't' test for the analysis of data. Effectiveness of TSM over ULM for the development of listening skills in English with regard to pre-test and post-test scores is shown with the help of a table.

Table 2

't' Test Results of Control and Experimental Groups at Pre-test Level.

Level of test	Groups	N	Mean	SD	SEM	't' value	Table value of 't' at 0.05 level	DF	Sig
Pre-test level	CG	30	55.23	13.912	1.767	1.861	0.98	120	*
	EG	29	55.38	8.824	1.139				

't' Test Results of Control and Experimental Groups at Post-test Level								
Level of test	**Groups**	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**SEM**	**'t' value**	**DF**	**Sig**
Post-test level	CG	30	58.13	12.393	1.574	4.840	120	#
	EG	29	61.63	8.963	1.157			

The table states that there exists no significant difference between the pre-test results of the control group and the pre-test results of the experimental group. Because, from the same section (i.e., Section-A) of Table 2 (Part-I), it is evident that the obtained 't' ratio between the pre-test scores of the control group and the pre-test scores of the experimental group is 1.861; and this is less than the table value of 't' at 0.05 level of confidence for 120 DF. For 120 DF, the table value of 't' at 0.05 level of confidence is 0.98. Since the table value of 't' is more than the obtained 't' ratio between the pre-test scores of the control group and the pre-test scores of the experimental group, so the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hence, it is concluded that at the initial stage of treatment there exists no significant difference between mean listening skills (m=55.23) of the control group and that (m=55.38) of the experimental group. But there exists a significant difference between the post-test results of the control group and that of the experimental group. It is found that the obtained 't' ratio between the results of the control group and that of the experimental group is 4.84, and this 't' ratio is more than the table value of 't' at 0.05 level of confidence for 120 DF. For 120 DF, the table value of 't' at 0.05 level of confidence is 0.98. Since the calculated 't' ratio between the mean results of the control and experimental groups is more than the table value of 't' at 0.05 level of confidence, so the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, it is inferred that at the post-test stage of treatment, there exists a significant difference between the mean scores of listening skills (m=55.23) of the control group and that (m=61.63) of the experimental group. From Part-I of Table I, it is found that at the pre-test level there exists no significant difference between the control group and the experimental group with regard to their mean listening skills scores, but at the post-test level, there exists a significant difference between the control group and the experimental group with regard to their mean listening skills scores.

Conclusion

Active and effective listening is a key to academic, professional and social success. That is why, it is imperative to develop listening skills. Fortunately, listening skills can be

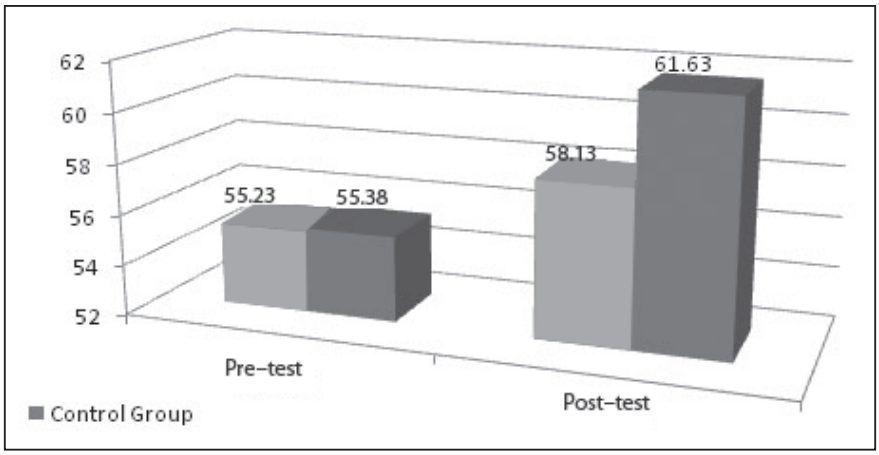

Figure.1 Mean level performance of control group and experimental group showing the development of listening comprehension skills in English.

trained/developed. However, there are no foolproof ways of developing listening skills. The old saying that practice makes a man perfect applies to listening skills as well. Teachers may try different strategies and techniques to help their students get rid of the various listening problems and inculcate good listening habits in them. A teacher can administer various exercises, like the ones discussed above, to make his learners better listeners.

The present study at the same time highlights the effectiveness of the use of technology supportive materials over Usual Learning Method (ULM) for the development of listening skills in English at the elementary stage. The data analysis referring to the experimental effect has been made using 't' test as well. Data analysis done at the mean level and 't' test level show that there is a significant difference between the control and the experimental groups in terms of development of listening comprehension in English. Taking into consideration all these inferences, it is summarised that the use of TSM is more effective than ULM for developing listening comprehension in English at the elementary stage.

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