



A Comparative Study on the Use of Two Discrete Pre- and While-Listening Strategies

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Abstract: Listening is considered as one of the most adverse skills among ESL / EFL language skills due to distinct concerns such as the listening phases, physical conditions whilst listening, expectations from the listener and the required knowledge a listener needs to own so as to apprehend the aural input. At this point, the use of L2 listening strategy use comes into prominence with the aim of lowering listening anxiety and ameliorate ESL/ EFL learners' listening comprehension proficiency. To this end, this research study implemented the use of two discrete pre- and while-listening strategies on EFL learners at university preparatory classes. Sixty-four EFL learners at a state university school of foreign languages in Türkiye participated in this research study. The two strategies which were applied throughout the treatment were KWL (Know – Want to Know – Learn) Chart and Schema Map. The experimental stage proceeded within 10 listening sessions by means of these related listening strategies. Data was collected qualitatively through learners' pre- and post-reflections in order to discover learners' perceptions with regard to each while-listening strategy in the written form. In other words, experimental design, through which the effects of two discrete interventions were analyzed, was employed. Findings from both group of participants reveal their perceptions, difficulties, ways to survive and be better listeners whilst listening stage.

Keywords: Listening, Strategy, Schema, Perceptions

Introduction and Literature Review

Listening could be defined as the capability to specify and apprehend the input which one receives from others (Yagang, 1993). A proficient listener encapsulates abilities such as specifying and comprehending words they hear, utilising their background knowledge to understand the input, interpreting what they hear, identifying discourse markers and guessing the meaning of discrete syntactic structures.

There exist distinct problems which ESL (English as a Second Language) / EFL (English as a Foreign Language) listeners experience. In some contexts, listeners have difficulty in comprehending the aural input due to the fast speech rate of the speaker. Additionally, they may be unfamiliar to everyday conversations and the collocations or expressions utilised within. Other listening difficulties occur when listeners have not learnt some or most of the structural features within a listening text or due to a disorganized content. Other adversities are experiences since speakers perform grammatically incorrect utterances or when listeners are unfamiliar to the speaker's accent. Furthermore, physical elements such as noise coming from outside or the unclear voice of the speaker could be denoted as listening difficulties (Yagang, 1993).

An alternative to the listening adversities above could be specified as the means and purpose of ESL / EFL listening. In most ESL / EFL contexts, learners are exposed to various listening texts since they are required to respond to post-listening questions and commonly to be tested (Ho, 2018). This requirement from learners leads to a hardship on their listening process and boosts listening anxiety. At this point, there emerge a considerable number of concerns which language teachers need to be attentive with. According to Dozer (1997), one point is, teachers should select authentic materials and the texts they utilise should be related to what their learners have listened to before. In addition to this, the researcher argues that listening tasks should allow learners to acquire listening comprehension proficiency rather than be tested.

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Furthermore, it was suggested that the listening process should embrace both top-down and bottom-up phases. Above all, it was emphasized that listening strategies should be taught to and utilised by learners as long as it was aimed to teach listening. This last suggestion could be considered as the point where ESL / EFL listening strategies come into prominence.

In accordance with the suggestions above, Clark (1980) and Tsui and Fullilove (1998) emphasize the significance of strategy use whilst listening. These researchers argue that listeners who are provided with the opportunity to perform strategies during listening could be more efficient listeners and reduce their listening adversities. Listening strategies could be defined as the order of actions taken by ESL / EFL learners with the aim of apprehending, perceiving and responding correctly to the aural input. Previous research encapsulates L2 listening strategies within three essential categories named as cognitive, meta-cognitive and socio-affective strategies. The initial group of strategies introduced as ‘cognitive strategies’ could be related to all mental actions generated so as to learn listening and comprehension, keep the aural input in mind and utilise it. (Buck, 2001). Meta-cognitive strategies, on the other hand, comprise techniques and a self-evaluation of listeners whilst trying to manage their listening process (Rubin, 1990). The final group embraces socio-affective strategies which relate to interaction with others and learners’ socio-psychological concerns (Xu, 2011).

A relevant issue that has been associated with L2 listening strategies in recent literature is the listening process which incorporates pre-, while- and post-listening stages. This notion of L2 listening could be additionally considered as a means to enhance ESL / EFL learners’ listening comprehension ability and lower their listening anxiety. According to this standpoint, pre-listening is the primary phase of listening through which learners prepare for the listening performance. Listening strategies such as predicting, guessing, discussion and pre-learning could be specified as some of the actions listeners could take whilst pre-listening. The secondary stage defined as ‘while-listening’ comprises learner activities such as note-taking, chart-filling, drawing pictures or responding to comprehension questions. The final phase named as ‘post-listening’ could relate to the utilization of the information from the while-listening phase and performing this knowledge by means of strategies such as discussion, role-play or chart drawing.

In accordance with the literature above, two L2 listening strategies which associate pre- and while-listening stages have been identified. These strategies named as ‘K (know) W (want) L (learn) Charts’ and ‘Schema Maps’ have been introduced as two similar listening strategies which encapsulate learners’ activation of background knowledge so as to apprehend the aural input (upcoming information from listening) and additionally to ameliorate their listening comprehension ability by means of note-taking.

The use of KWL Charts was primarily introduced to language teaching field by Ogle (2011) in terms of teaching reading through activating learners’ prior knowledge on the specific field. This means of pre- and while-listening stages incorporate three distinct parts. The ‘know’ section required listeners to note down what they already know about the listening input. The ‘want’ section involves the points which are needed to learn by listeners. And the final part named as ‘learn’ embraces listeners’ notes which are taken while-listening.

Similar to KWL charts, Schema Maps are an alternative means to serve and enhance L2 learners’ listening comprehension ability by means of engaging learners’ schema and their new learning. This strategy encloses two discrete sections on which listeners are expected to take notes. The initial part is named as the ‘schema’ part where listeners are required to note down their background information related to the listening content. This means listeners are expected to share their schema within the first section of both their KWL charts and Schema maps. The secondary section of schema maps requires learners’ notes associated with their new learning while-listening.

Theoretical Background

The two pre- and while-listening strategies identified above in the review of literature as ‘KWL Charts’ and ‘Schema Maps’ could be considered as associated with Schema Theory in terms of listening. According to Schema Theory, it is avail for ESL / EFL teachers to encourage their learners to activate their prior knowledge related to the listening content. In other words, it could be denoted that ESL / EFL listeners could enhance their listening comprehension ability as long as they recall their previous knowledge and relate it to their newly acquired knowledge.

Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

Listening has been specified as a substantial language skill since it yields the initial data for language learners (Ho, 2018). However, this essential skill may be put into the background especially in contexts where it is merely tested (Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor, 2006). In accordance with this, listening instruction which is taught at the institution where this research study was generated has aimed at applying listening activities so as to test EFL learners’ listening comprehension proficiency level. In addition to this restrictive practice, learners’ high level of L2 listening anxiety was taken into consideration and it was found avail to constitute a listening environment where they would gain confidence and perform listening by means of strategies. In correspondence to this notion, it was aimed to investigate the answers to the two research questions below:

1. What are the first group of learners’ views and perceptions on the use of KWL Charts whilst listening?
2. What are the second group of learners’ views and perceptions on the use of Schema Maps whilst listening?

Methodology

Participants

Sixty-four EFL learners at a state university school of foreign languages in Türkiye participated in this research study. Having been exposed to an English instruction of five days a week, learners were expected to perform a proficiency test so as to identify learners with similar scores. Aged between 18-20, all participants had a prior English background with an elementary degree, however a needs analysis was generated and it was specified that they had a high level of listening anxiety and needed such an experimental listening phase before the end of their first semester.

Context

The study was generated at four preparatory classes at a state university in Türkiye. This could be defined as an EFL learning context where learners are exposed to twenty-four hours of EFL instruction with technological tools such as computer, smart board and cd player. All learners are given listening instruction by the same language instructor who teaches solely English during classes. Language Hub course book is the only course material that is utilised in this context.

Data Collection Instruments

This study aimed to explore learners’ views and perceptions of pre- and while-listening phases prior to and subsequent to the treatment. To this end, they were expected to reflect their views of listening experiment through the use of KWL Charts or Schema Maps. Correspondingly, data by learners was gathered by means of their written reflections before and after the experiment.

Data Collection Procedure and Treatment

The initial phase of treatment was started by means of an informative meeting for learners. Aims, procedures, materials, tasks were specified to learners and additionally how this treatment targeted to support their listening comprehension proficiency was denoted. Subsequent to this phase, learners were expected to write their views of L2 listening, their listening adversities, strategies and needs as the initial means of data collection.

After the first phase, treatment schedule was delivered to learners which aimed to assist them to see their further listening tasks. The treatment comprised 10 listening sessions. English File pre-intermediate level course book was utilised as the listening material. At the beginning of each listening session, in each of the two groups, learners were given five key words which were related to the listening text. Then, they were required to write down their background knowledge within words or phrases onto either the KWL charts or schema maps. After reflecting their schema or prior knowledge by means of these tools, they listened to the text once and were told to take notes on either the ‘learn’ section in the KWL chart or the ‘new learning’ section in the schema map. Following this, they were given listening comprehension questions and told to respond to these questions whilst listening. This listening practice phase proceeded for 10 sessions and at the end of the tenth session, learners were expected to write their views and perception of L2 listening as post-reflection.

Findings

Two research questions constituted the essential concern in this study and answers to these questions were gathered from participants by means of their written reflections.

RQ1. What are the first group of learners’ views and perceptions on the use of KWL Charts whilst listening?

Table 1

KWL Chart Learners’ Perceptions of Listening Before the Listening Practice Treatment

Positive Views		
Learners who...	<i>f</i>	<i>P (%)</i>
1. get prepared to concentrate	3	9
2. believe they can understand the listening text	2	6
3. feel fine when they understand the general idea	1	3
4. feel well when they hear distinct accents	1	3
Negative Views		
Learners who...	<i>f</i>	<i>p (%)</i>
1. have difficulty in following the text due to speech rate of the speaker	32	100
2. feel they can never understand L2 listening texts	29	91
3. cannot concentrate whilst listening to long texts	27	84

4. do not have a strategy to understand the text	27	84
5. lose motivation when they cannot understand the text	27	84
6. focus on each word individually and miss the upcoming speech	26	81
7. feel bad due to unknown words	26	81
8. feel anxious before listening	25	78
9. have difficulty in answering listening task questions	22	69%

Table 1 findings demonstrate learners' L2 listening perceptions before the experiment was generated. According to the data gathered, almost one-tenth of learners get prepared to concentrate for the listening text. Additionally, less than 10% of them believe they can understand the listening text, feel fine when they comprehend and hear discrete accents by the speaker.

In terms of negative views, exactly all of the participants experience adversities due to the fast speech rate of speakers. Over 90% of them feel they can never apprehend the listening text. Furthermore, more than 80% of learners have difficulty in concentrating on long texts, do not utilise listening strategies, lose motivation when they cannot comprehend, focus on each word individually and feel bad due to unknown aural input. Additionally, over one-third of them feel anxious before listening and find it demanding to respond to listening comprehension questions.

Table 2

KWL Chart Learners' Perceptions of Listening After the Listening Practice Treatment

Positive Views		
Learners who...	<i>f</i>	<i>p (%)</i>
1. have got rid of their prejudice against listening	32	100
2. believe they can understand the listening text	32	100
3. feel positive about the advantages of notetaking on KWL charts	28	88
4. wish to benefit from KWL charts in the future while listening	21	66
5. feel fine when they understand the general idea	21	66
6. feel calm and self-confident before listening	21	66
7. feel well when they hear distinct accents	19	59
8. can concentrate well during listening thanks to notetaking	15	47
Negative Views		
Learners who...	<i>f</i>	<i>p (%)</i>

1. have difficulty in following the text due to speech rate of the speaker	12	38
2. have difficulty in answering listening task questions	9	28
3. cannot concentrate whilst listening to long texts	9	28
4. do not have a strategy to understand the text	9	28
5. lose motivation when they cannot understand the text	9	28

Table 2 designates KWL listeners' listening perceptions subsequent to the treatment which comprised 10 listening practice sessions. According to these findings, it was obtained that all KWL learners got rid of their negative feelings about listening and believe they can comprehend what they listen. 88% of learners found it useful to utilise KWL charts whilst listening. Furthermore, 66% of them believe in the future use of KWL charts, feel fine when they understand the general idea and have no anxiety before listening. Almost half of them feel well when they are exposed to discrete English accents and benefit from notetaking whilst listening.

On the other hand, negative views by learners indicate that nearly one-third of learners still had difficulty in catching the text due to the fast speech rate of the speaker and over one-fourth of them had adversity in responding to listening questions and concentrating on long texts. Additionally, the same percentage of them do not utilise listening strategies and lose motivation when they miss the upcoming speech.

RQ2. What are the second group of learners' views and perceptions on the use of Schema Maps whilst listening?

Table 3

Schema Map Learners' Perceptions of Listening Before the Listening Practice Treatment

Positive Views		
Learners who...	f	p (%)
1. get prepared to concentrate	1	3
2. believe they can understand the listening text	1	3
3. feel fine when they understand the general idea	1	3
4. feel well when they hear distinct accents	1	3
Negative Views		
Learners who...	f	p (%)
1. do not have a strategy to understand the text	32	100
2. feel they can never understand L2 listening texts	29	91
3. have difficulty in following the text due to speech rate of the speaker	27	84

4. focus on each word individually and miss the upcoming speech	27	84
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Table 3 designates the second group of learners' listening perceptions before the listening practice sessions. According to the findings, it was specified by learners' positive views that 3% of them get prepared to concentrate, are positive about their listening comprehension, feel fine when they understand the text and are exposed to various accents.

On the other hand, negative views by schema map learners reveal that almost one-third of them do not utilise a listening strategy. Besides this, over 80% of them feel hopeless about their listening comprehension development, have adversity due to the fast speech rate of the speaker and miss the whole text by focusing on words individually.

Table 4

Schema Map Learners' Perceptions of Listening After the Listening Practice Treatment

Positive Views		
Learners who...	<i>f</i>	<i>p (%)</i>
1. have got rid of their prejudice against listening	32	100
2. believe they can understand the listening text	32	100
3. feel positive about the advantages of notetaking on schema maps	28	88
4. wish to benefit from schema maps in the future while listening	21	66
5. wish to use schema maps outside the classroom	21	66
6. feel the listening practice tasks will enhance their listening scores in class	21	66
Negative Views		
Learners who...	<i>f</i>	<i>p (%)</i>
1. have difficulty in following the text due to speech rate of the speaker	12	38
2. have difficulty in answering listening task questions	9	28
3. cannot concentrate whilst listening to long texts	9	28
4. do not have a strategy to understand the text	9	28
5. lose motivation when they cannot understand the text	9	28

Table 4 indicates schema map group of learners' views of L2 listening subsequent to the listening practice sessions. According to the findings in this table, it could be stated that all learners are positive about listening skill. Additionally, over one-fifth of them wish to utilise schema maps outside the classroom and believe in the positive effect of schema maps on their listening scores.

In terms of their negative views, around one-tenth of learners still have negative attitude towards their own listening ability, are hopeless about their future listening development and do not use a listening strategy.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research study targeted to explore what EFL learners at university preparatory classes perceived about L2 listening before and after a strategy treatment. To this end, two discrete L2 listening strategies were taught and performed by the teacher as 10 listening practice sessions. One group were expected to take notes on KWL charts, whereas the second group would note down their schema and listening onto their schema maps. Both means of notetaking were aimed to serve for the same target. In accordance with this, findings obtained from learner reflections reveal a considerable amount of similar concerns in terms of both positive and negative views.

With regard to the perceptions by the first group of participants (who had a listening treatment phase by means of KWL charts), the most common problem encountered by these learners was specified as the difficulty to catch speakers' speech rate prior to the treatment. Additionally, almost all of these learners' beliefs related to their listening comprehension performance was negative. On the other hand, subsequent to the treatment participants got rid of their prejudice against listening comprehension and acquired a sense of belief about this ability. In the light of these findings, it could be denoted that the use of KWL charts while listening helped participants change their attitude towards EFL listening. This finding corresponds to views by Clark (1980) and Tsui and Fullilove (1998) since they strongly argue that the use of strategies whilst listening assists learners overcome adversities while listening. However, around one-third of the first group feel they still have difficulty in listening comprehension tasks, do not have a listening strategy to apply and cannot concentrate while listening. These findings, on the other hand, designate that solely one listening strategy may not be helpful to all listeners. Therefore, more listening practice or a wider variety of listening strategies may be required for further performance in listening comprehension.

In connection with perceptions by the second group of participants (who had a listening treatment phase by means of schema maps), positive attitudes such as wishing to use schema maps outside the class and believing the future benefits of schema maps were reflected. These findings demonstrate that utilizing schema maps while listening assisted those learners to be more confident and hopeful about their listening comprehension proficiency. On the other hand, similar to findings by the first group of participants, around one-third of schema map listeners still felt they had difficulty in listening comprehension and could not concentrate sufficiently whilst listening even after the treatment. This finding could be associated with Yagang's notion of listening adversities which reflects a number of difficulties learners encounter whilst listening. 1993 This reflection signifies that listening anxiety may still continue even after some strategy training, and that every strategy may not be convenient for every type of language learner.

One difference existed at the point where schema map users denoted that they were eager to utilise schema maps and notetaking strategy in their future listening practice. A further point was specified by the same group as the positive effect of schema maps and notetaking on their listening test scores at school.

To summarize, both group of learners' written reflections demonstrate a positive transformation in their view of listening as a result of listening strategy use during both pre- and after-listening stages. In conclusion, implications for ESL / EFL teachers could be made in a way that they should emphasize and perform the use of pre- and while-listening strategies whilst teaching listening. Additionally, reflecting a mindset which encourages listening tasks supporting learning but not teaching could be an enhancement in L2 listening instruction.

Implications

For EFL teachers, it could be highly suggested to use listening strategies whilst the teaching of EFL listening. Additionally, several strategies should be employed so as to meet diverse listening needs of learners. Besides this, generating awareness on the importance of listening skill and informing EFL learners about the benefits of listening strategy use could decrease their level of listening anxiety.

For researchers who would implement further research studies, a wider variety of listening strategies in future research studies could be suggested. Also, the use of same listening strategies in discrete research settings could reflect further findings.

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