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Enhancing Foreign Language Learning through Listening Strategies Delivered in L1: An Experimental Study

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Listening used in language teaching refers to a complex process that allows us to understand spoken language. The current study, conducted in Iran with an experimental design, investigated the effectiveness of teaching listening strategies delivered in L1 (Persian) and its effect on listening comprehension in L2. Five listening strategies: Guessing, making inferences, identifying topics, repetition, and note-taking were taught over 14 weeks during a semester. Sixty lower intermediate female participants came from two EFL classrooms in an English language institute. The experimental class (n = 30) who listened to their classroom activities performed better (t value = 10.083) than the control class using a methodology that led learners through five listening strategies in Persian. The same teacher taught the students in the control class (n = 30), who listened to the same classroom listening activities without any of the above listening strategies. A pre and post listening test made by a group of experts in the language institute assessed the effect of teaching listening strategies delivered in L1. Results gathered on the post intervention listening test revealed that listening strategies delivered in L1 led to a statistically significant improvement in their discrete listening scores compared with the control group.

Key Words: Listening Comprehension, Listening Strategy Instruction, Foreign Language Learning, Instruction, Learning

INTRODUCTION

Listening is a basic skill in first language acquisition and is crucial in English as Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) learning. This skill, despite its importance, has been allocated inadequate consideration in ESL/EFL teaching. The process of employing listening strategies on the part of learners, and explicitly teaching listening skills on the part of teachers, has been overlooked through a strong emphasis on post hoc assessment of the products of listening. Brown (2008), Field (2008a), Goh (2008),

and Vandergrift (2007) described similar instructional issues in major studies of ESL/EFL teaching contexts in Canada, England and Singapore. In English language institutes in Iran, however, the process of the skill of listening is not emphasized despite a wide access to listening materials with accompanying audiovisual technology in the classroom such as CDs, DVD or video. Students consequently attribute their difficulty in listening comprehension either to their inadequate competence or to the linguistic difficulty of stimulus texts. In a discussion of comparable teaching contexts, Graham (2006) observes that continuing difficulty in developing listening skills may lead to a sense of passivity, lack of motivation and a less effective listener. The point here is that the process of listening skill instruction is not given sufficient attention in the classroom and is undervalued globally and in Iran, in particular.

Two prevailing challenges emerge, namely, (i) understanding the listening skill process *per se*, and (ii) choosing the medium to teach listening strategy in the classroom, which may prevent students from improving their listening skills at the lower intermediate level in the Iranian EFL context. Research focusing on explicit listening strategy instruction seems to be crucial in addressing the choice of language used for teaching listening strategies, because the challenge at the lower intermediate language level of Iranian students is to understand the medium of teaching listening strategies. Despite the centrality of understanding the medium of learning strategy instruction for EFL learners at the beginning and lower intermediate levels (Macaro, 2001), most teachers in language institutes in Iran believe that the first language should not be used in the class as it may hinder learning. In the last decade commentators have attempted to point out the contribution of listening skills to developing ESL/EFL learning through explicit listening strategy instruction in the classroom (e.g. Chang and Read, 2006; Goh, 2008; Graham, 1997; 2003; Vandergrift 1997, 2007). However, very few studies pinpoint the 'niche', that is, the measure of potential impact of L1 listening strategy instruction on L2 language listening. Limitations in the existing literature highlight the need for the study of this topic in lower intermediate level EFL contexts in Iran.

Listening Strategy Instruction

Bently and Bacon (1996) suggest that listeners create meaning from oral input because listening, as an active process, is a critical part of language learning generally and particularly for the L2 learning process. A listening comprehension-processing model proposed by Nagle and Sanders (1986), demonstrates that both automatic and controlled processes assist listeners to constitute meaning from oral input. Likewise, evidence from different contexts and input sources in Vandergrift's Interactive-Constructivist model (1999) shows that listeners can deduce meaning actively from oral input. Similarly, Vandergrift (1997), drawing on O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) model of metacognitive, cognitive and socioaffective strategies, provides a very useful and thorough chart of these listening strategies and their definitions. Vandergrift (1992) states that listeners use different listening strategies in response to the nature and demands of the auditory input. The encoding and decoding process, that is, a set of techniques employed by listeners to cope better with the listening tasks, leads to comprehension. These techniques are clustered into strategies that can assist

understanding of the instructional processes, and tools that enhance the performance of the learners and help promote learner autonomy (Chamot, 1995; Macaro, 2001).

Numerous studies (e.g. Carrier, 2003; Chang and Read, 2006; Cross, 2009; Elkhafaifi, 2005; Graham and Macaro, 2008; Hassan, 2000) focus on the kinds of learning strategies foreign/second language learners use during listening. The significance of learning strategy instruction can be traced back to Rubin's (1975) and Stern's (1975) work. These authors argued that 'good' language learner strategies should be employed to assist students struggling to learn a new language. In a similar vein, Hassan et al. (2005) conducted a large-scale review of ESL/EFL studies that focused on learning strategies from many languages. The majority of studies in the review made a reference to learning strategies such as: metacognitive – learning awareness; cognitive – mental learning process; and socioaffective – individual and social interaction behaviour. Hassan et al. (2005) defined learning strategy as any strategy learners regularly use to improve their learning proficiency through carrying out a task. In line with visual supports in improving foreign language listening skills, Chang and Read (2007) investigated the impact of different types of listening support on low-level proficiency learners in EFL learning in Taiwan. Four groups participated in the study. Two groups received listening supports, either a set of pictures or a written background text. A third group received listening input repetition as a listening support. The fourth group was a control group and received no listening support. Students took the listening proficiency test, completed a short questionnaire and were interviewed. The study found that input repetition was the most effective listening support, followed by visuals and text aids as supports.

Two recent studies conducted by Graham and Macaro (2008), and Cross (2009) demonstrated that explicit instruction in listening strategies may facilitate listening comprehension. Graham and Macaro compared the impact of learning strategy instruction on both listening performance and self-efficacy of 68 lower intermediate French learners in England, against a comparison group. A self-efficacy questionnaire was used to measure how confident students were in different areas of listening. They found that learning strategy instruction in listening improved listening proficiency and learners' confidence in listening. In addition, Cross (2009) investigated the impact of listening strategies on EFL advance-level Japanese learners' comprehension in Australia through the use of BBC news videotexts. While three listening strategies including presentation (listening to an oral segment), practice (peer checking/group working), and review (providing students with a news transcript to evaluate listening comprehension) were explicitly taught to the experimental group, the control group was given regular classroom materials without any of the above listening strategies. The study's result demonstrated a significant effect in favour of the experimental group, though the comparison group made significant gains, too. The author maintained that practising the BBC news broadcast and multimedia technology in the classroom provided assistance in second and foreign language learning. However, Cross maintained that listeners would benefit from explicit listening strategy instruction if the following learning limitations were mitigated: (i) inadequate amount of learning strategy exposure; (ii) complexity of learning task content; and (iii) traditional learning

strategy use bias. Similarly, Carrier (2003) conducted an explicit listening strategy study with a group of the American high school ESL students that involved academic listening tasks instruction for six weeks. The teacher modelled the listening strategies and provided opportunities for the students to practise strategies such as selective attention, and note-taking. The study demonstrated a significant improvement in listening comprehension from pre and post listening comprehension test.

Having reviewed the related research literature, it appears that further study of listening proficiency improvement through explicit listening strategy instruction may be useful. Hence, this current study seeks to document the impact of using L1 listening strategy instruction on the development of L2 listening proficiency.

First Language Impact on L2

Considering the influence of L1 on the use of two particular listening strategies i.e., syntactic cues and prosodic cues, Harley (2000) argues that Chinese and Polish students with various levels of proficiency seem to derive assistance prosodically (i.e. information provided by the intonation and stress patterns of the sentences) from L1. When students encounter confusing sentences or they rely on syntax to reconstruct prosodic cues. Supporting the notion of listening strategy development, Field (2008a) maintains that L1 listening strategy *per se* enhances L2 listening through some osmotic processes, as the phonology of target language is manipulated by learners. However, some paralinguistic factors slow down understanding of L2 listening for the beginning and lower intermediate language level learners due to their inefficiency in a target language and this inadequate linguistic efficiency continues to quite a high level of language proficiency. Field (2008b) suggests three causes for the slowing: (i) inadequate vocabulary repertoire and schemata limit L2 listeners to recognise known words in connected speech; (ii) insufficient listening experience leads L2 listeners to apply inappropriate lexical segmentation strategies with the available phonemes; and (iii) in comparison with L1 listeners who maintain a greater working memory capacity to support potential gaps in the co-text, L2 listeners are not able to examine their decoding and/or manage their uncertain word recognition during the real time listening process. Thus, these three factors contribute to the insufficient understanding of what L2 listeners derive from speech signals.

Supporting the learning contribution of L1 to L2, Macaro (2009) proposed a theoretical framework showing that L1 facilitates enhanced learning in L2 from three sources. He argues that predicting, processing and storing knowledge are dovetailed with the cognitive theory used in L1 and L2 language learning through interaction in both short and long term memory (see also Ellis, 2005). Second, the socio-cultural theory supports L1 assistance in L2 learning and emphasizes that both think aloud and engaging in mental commentaries often take place in L1 and contribute to L2 learning. Finally, the code switching theory supports the fact that L1 facilitates the process of L2 learning via linguistic styles (formal and informal) in the real life environment.

Returning to the significance of using L1 in L2 learning development, the findings of some recent research (e.g. Orland-Barak and Yinon, 2005; Carless, 2008) demonstrated

that the running belief among language teachers, who consider L1 as interference (e.g., Kellerman, 1995) in L2 learning development, has been transformed. Experienced teachers, inexperienced teachers and teacher trainers view the use of L1 as a constructive means of scaffolding learning and as an effective means of classroom management (Littlewood and Yu, 2009). This supports the inclusion of L1 into classroom syllabi. As such, the classroom-based research conducted by Brooks-Lewis (2009) challenged the theoretical and practical exclusion of adult learners' L1 in EFL learning on university level students by receiving students' positive feedback on incorporation of L1 (Spanish) in foreign language teaching and learning. The finding of this study showed that students' feedback included how and why they thought the use of L1 enabled them to learn EFL more comfortably and enabled them to recognise the difference between their L1 and English as the target language.

The outcomes of the studies reviewed above show that using L1 facilitates L2 learning and accelerates the process of learning. This learning process strengthens knowledge of listening, which is a basic skill and requires adequate schemata and listening experience.

Purpose of the Study

For Iranian EFL students, amongst all language learning strategies, L1 listening and comprehension skills seem to be undervalued, since this is not explicitly taught in classroom pedagogy. Moreover, developing listening skills is not given due consideration in English language instruction and learning. In Iran, at school level, listening skills are not taught due to the predominant use of the traditional *Grammar Translation Method* (GTM) which focuses only on reading and writing skills. At university level, depending on the field of study, reading skills are mainly taught for 3-5 hours per week for each term. Listening skill is taught only in language institutes, which have a *Communicative Language Teaching* (CLT) approach. Often, despite instruction of listening skill being specified in the syllabus of many English language institutes, teachers do not teach listening skills but test it in the EFL classrooms in Iran. Currently, listening skills are taught through vocabulary introduction in pre-listening to the students and they examine correct responses in post-listening comprehension questions. The process of explicitly teaching listening skills is overlooked, but the product of listening skills is measured through exams involving multiple-choice or true/false comprehension questions, which are a regular feature of classroom practice.

Often these listening approaches are taken for granted, when working with Iranian EFL students. Common strategies focusing on listening questions in EFL language learning in Iranian classrooms comprise three main elements: (i) pre-listening; (ii) listening; and (iii) post-listening. The first element deals with introducing new words in listening input and the involvement of students to seeing and reading the questions before listening. This is followed by listening to a speech and responding to comprehension questions at the same time. Finally, students examine their responses, and through spot-checking of each difficult segment in the listening input, the teacher plays the speech and pauses for a particular part of listening input. This elemental listening approach is problematic because in Iranian EFL learning classrooms, instructional support for

listening skills mainly targets listening skill *product* rather than listening skill *process*. The purpose of this study is researching the effectiveness of teaching listening strategies in developing and improving the listening skills of Iranian EFL students. Unlike the Western education systems, the Iranian education system does not have access to rich multimodal educational technologies. The key research question for this study is: Does listening strategy instruction in Persian for 14 sessions improve students' EFL listening comprehension in an Iranian classroom?

METHOD

The Present Study

Participants

A total of 60 lower intermediate level[1] female students within the age range of 16-28, studying at an English Language Institute in Iran participated in this study. The choice of including only females in this study was opportunistic, as gender segregation in schools is a common practice in Iran. The students had been learning English in the language institute for almost one and a half years. In order to investigate the influence of English language proficiency and to establish a baseline, a screening test was developed and administered. Participants who scored more than 65% overall in the baseline screening test were selected and randomly assigned to a control and experimental class with 30 participants in each class. The next section details the selection process.

Data collection procedures

The study involved a baseline test, an intervention for 14 sessions, and a post intervention listening test. Data were collected during regular class time in two cycles over a period of three months. Data collection began in week 2 of the teaching term to ensure that the researcher and the participants were familiar with each other and had sufficient discussion to clarify the purpose of the listening strategy instruction. This delay also allowed the researcher to explain the use of the Persian language during classroom instruction. This was important because, as a rule, teachers were not allowed to speak L1 during classroom instruction.

Baseline Test

A baseline test was used to screen participants for allocation to experimental and control classes as described above. The baseline screen test consisted of 30 multiple choice listening comprehension items. There were four different sections: (i) 12 questions focusing on Correct Response; (ii) 8 questions on Completion, (iii) 7 questions on Closest to the Meaning, and (iv) 3 questions on Recalling. Multiple choice questions were used in this study in keeping with the standard assessment practices used at the English language institute. Prior to implementing the baseline screen test, it was subjected to reliability and validity testing.

Descriptive statistics were used to determine valid test items in each of the four above-noted sections. Items with scores falling within one standard deviation were retained to

reflect the homogeneity of the test. Three items (one item from each of the sections i, ii, and iv) with scores outside one standard deviation were considered either above or below the lower intermediate students' level and were removed. The reported internal consistency of the listening test was 0.94, which is above acceptable level (Weinberg, 1995).

Establishing the validity of assessment tests is an important part of the research process. Backman and Palmer (1996) suggest that establishing test validity requires an analysis of the degree of correspondence between the test task and the target language use domain, where the learner's ability might be generalized beyond the assessment context to a real life situation. To this end, the content of the validity of the listening comprehension transcription was established by two experienced colleagues and a supervisor in the language learning institute who confirmed the test level to be equivalent to lower intermediate proficiency. The final 27 listening comprehension items were used for assessing pre- and post-test performance in both experimental and control classes.

Pre-test

Determining the participants' baseline listening proficiency was crucial for this study. As Buck (1991) and Mendelsohn (1995) have pointed out, learners need a certain level of linguistic proficiency in order to be competent listeners. Listeners need adequate linguistic competence to make sense of listening inputs (White, 2006). From the baseline screening test, the 27-item listening test was used as a measure of pre-intervention listening proficiency. The nature of both pre- and post-tests is similar to the nature of intervention materials, which focused on the daily conversation.

Each listening question had four response choices from which participants had 30 seconds to choose the correct answer and marked it in the answer sheet provided after listening to a tape recorder. The content of the recording was broadcast by a tape recorder within the class period and the exchanges on the tape were read by middle aged American male/female native speakers. Testing took 25 minutes for each administration. In order to avoid distractions from outside traffic or other noise, the researcher, along with the secretary of the language learning institute, provided the participants with a quiet classroom where students could take the listening test. The post-intervention test was the same listening comprehension test as the baseline listening test.

Table 1 shows the baseline text results including the overall mean and standard deviation (SD) for the experimental and control classes. A paired sample t-test showed no statistically significant differences between experimental and control groups at the beginning of the study, $t(29) = 1.798$, $p = .083$.

Table 1: Mean, standard deviations, and t-value analysis for pre-intervention test

Classes	*Pre-test*		*t-value*	*N*
	Mean	SD		
Experimental	19.43	3.92	1.795	30
Control	18.93	3.98		30

Intervention

The choice of what kind of listening strategy instruction to provide for the participants was mainly based on *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL) developed by Oxford (1990), and LeBauer (2000). The learning strategies were translated into L1 (Persian), and adapted for the Persian context. Relevant examples were prepared by an expert in Persian language and appropriate materials were chosen to capture the interest of high school and college students. During the English language instruction participants were presented with the translated listening strategies in every session. Given the space constraints, the Persian translated version of the listening strategies used for intervention is not reported here. Following Mendelsohn (1995), teachers should encourage learners to employ the same learning strategies that they use when listening in their L1. Participants were given opportunities to practise the listening strategy through different kinds of L1 oral inputs and were encouraged to try the listening strategies in their academic classes. At the outset of every training session, there was a quick recap of the strategies taught previously so that participants would be prepared to use them for effective listening.

The language used for listening strategy instruction did not present an additional challenge for students because it was taught in the students' first language (Persian). The rationale behind this was that the lower intermediate students were not linguistically competent enough in the target language (English) to understand when and how to use the listening strategies. Closely aligned with this idea is Macaro's (2001, 2009) perspective that strategies cannot be taught at the beginning or lower intermediate levels unless teachers shift to students' first language. This also has implications for cognitive overload which can hinder the learning process (see for example, Sweller, 2009).

Participants from both groups received regular English language instruction for two 90 minute sessions on Monday and Thursday of each week during which they practised listening comprehension for 20-25 minutes every session. The control class received regular classes with traditional instruction:

1) Focus on the structure of listening comprehension questions to predict the topic, join in a pair/group, enhance vocabulary through assigning exercises a session before and have the class discuss the questions by asking several students to read out their answers during pre-listening activities (10-15 minutes);
2) for the first time listening, the teacher plays and pauses the tape recorder and asks students to write long phrases (3-5 words) at an appropriate interval and allows time for writing. Then for the second time, students are required to attend to the details of listening. After the third time of listening, students are asked to give a brief summary (10-15 minutes); and
3) students are asked to work in pairs/group on some post-listening activities e.g. responding to a true/false and multiple choice questions and discuss them (10-15 minutes).

Instead, the experimental class received additional guided listening strategy instruction for 20-25 minutes in the regular listening comprehension period. The nature of instructional activities for both control and experimental groups focused on the

recorded audio. The topic of the listening was daily conversation, in general focusing on making a request, asking for an address, greetings, asking about somebody, and reporting a friend's progress. This is because the participants were not yet efficient enough to discuss further daily events in the English language. The length of the audio listening was from 20 seconds to 55 seconds.

In all, the experimental group received 14 sessions along with the normal classroom listening drills. Key aspects of the specific strategies in listening for the experimental group are outlined in Table 2. The intervention involved 14 sessions teaching five listening strategies in the Persian language. Following Vandergrift (1997), in terms of sequences of listening strategy training, there were four stages (32-40 minutes) through which the researcher provided a cycle of L1 listening strategy training for each session: i) introducing/explaining the listening strategy (8-10 minutes); ii) modelling the listening strategy through an example or two (8-10 minutes); iii) giving students a chance to discuss/practise the listening strategy with their peers (8-10 minutes); and iv) evaluating students' listening strategy through spot checking (8-10 minutes). The first three lessons (sessions 1, 2 and 3) were devoted to 'guessing' strategy. Students were taught how to take advantage of context clues in listening comprehension. They practised this strategy through a repertoire of various exercises in their native language. The next three lessons (sessions 4, 5 and 6) were continued to describe the ways in which linguistic/non-linguistic clues helping students practise 'making inference' strategy. To support this, the importance of vocabulary and structure of language, context and situation described and their contribution to comprehend oral input properly were discussed. After that, relevant drills prepared and organized by an expert in Persian language were given to the students to practise this strategy. The specific elements of those drills are outlined in Table 2.

Three lessons (sessions 7, 8 and 9) focused on general background knowledge, such as Persian culture, and world knowledge of current affairs, such as artists, politicians and literature helping students shape prominent influences on what they listened. In addition, identifying keywords received considerable attention in two lessons (sessions 10 and 11). This strategy revolved around sound combinations and images that helped learners recall what they listened to in the target language. There are sometimes words in English for which there are no close or precise Persian translation, and vice versa. Despite the lack of precisely similar words in both English and Persian languages, the principle of this strategy was to: (i) identify a familiar word in one's own or target language that sounds alike but was a new word; and (ii) generate a new visual image as interaction between familiar and new words. This particular emphasis on keywords and repeating them in their minds helps students expand their working memory capacity for future recall. The final lessons (sessions 12, 13 and 14) provided a focus based on LeBauer's (2000) suggestions for improving note-taking strategies (e.g., jot down abbreviations, symbols, gist and figures in contexts and construct meaning). In addition, Oxford (1990) maintained that this strategy revealed understanding of the content of what you hear, but not the writing the note itself. The caveat with the note-taking strategy is that it is often regarded as a strategy used by individuals at an advanced level of proficiency when listening to a lecture. All five listening strategies were used with

students in classroom listening drills during the intervention with the researcher (the first author) directing the intervention.

Table 2: Translated listening strategy instruction sessions

Sessions	Focus	Specific elements	Sources
1	Guessing	Synonyms & antonyms	Oxford (1990)
2	Guessing	Examples	Oxford (1990)
3	Guessing	Synonyms & antonyms, Examples	Oxford (1990)
4	Making Inference	Linguistic clues e.g., knowledge of vocabulary and grammar	Oxford (1990)
5	Making Inference	Nonlinguistic clues e.g., context, text structure and personal relationships	Oxford (1990)
6	Making Inference	Linguistic & nonlinguistic clues	Oxford (1990)
7	Identifying Topics	Relations between text and topics	Oxford (1990)
8	Identifying Topics	Relation between text and topics	Oxford (1990)
9	Identifying Topics	Relation between text and topics	Oxford (1990)
10	Repetition	Pay attention to keywords	Oxford (1990)
11	Repetition	Pay attention to keywords	Oxford (1990)
12	Note-taking	Jot down abbreviations, symbols, gist and figures in contexts	Oxford (1990) and LeBauer (2000)
13	Note-taking	Construct meaning	LeBauer (2000)
14	Note-taking	Jot down abbreviations, symbols, gist and figures in context and Construct meanings	Oxford (1990) and LeBauer (2000)

Post-test

The 27-item listening test was used as a post-intervention test measure of listening proficiency for both experimental and control groups. This test was administered after the 14 sessions of listening strategy instruction in Persian language. The listening test involved playing a tape recording that was made up of four sections. The first section had 11 questions focusing on the '*guessing'* and *making inference* strategies – Correct Response (CR). There is a little difference between guessing and making inference strategies, so we merged them, as guessing follows inferencing strategy. Inferencing strategy includes a broader aspect of linguistic/non-linguistic clues helping students form an educated guess (Oxford, 1990). In this relation, students using linguistic clues in the listening input are able to use synonyms, such as 'starting working hour' (first question) and guess the right answer among four options. An instance of *making inferences* could be personalising the question, such as 'your favourite food' (third question), and infer the right option, such as 'pizza' the name of a food. The second section includes 8 questions on the *identifying topic* strategy – Completion (C). Identifying topic strategy helps students get to the right answer, such as 'gift giving' topic (question 12) and the amount of money ($500) paid for it. This sort of analysis assists students in learning the high cost of the gift in the listening input. The third section involves five questions on *repetition* strategy – Closest to the Meaning. Using repetition strategy, students can remember the key word, such as 'afford' (question 21) for 'having a large house' while attending to the four available options and realise that an affordable house means it can be bought. The last section encompasses two

questions on directing the *note-taking* strategy – Recalling. Note-taking in Persian might help recall enough listening input to respond to the L2 listening questions. For example, question 26 discusses that Jim was poor in math and students listening to this point take a note of 'poor math' in Persian. This note-taking in Persian helps students get to the right answer faster than in English.

RESULTS

Analysing the participants' listening comprehension performance data for discrete strategy use in both experimental and control classes, the number of correct responses to the questions was used as a measure of the participants' listening performance. Our hypothesis was concerned with the degree to which listening strategy instruction in Persian might result in variance in EFL listening performance. We hypothesized that the class receiving the experimental intervention would perform better than the control class on listening comprehension administration. In order to examine the hypothesis, the experimental and control classes were compared using t-tests. The primary analysis indicated the experimental class performed better in listening after receiving the listening intervention in Persian. The overall mean and standard deviation of listening in the experimental class in Table 3 (M = 22.96, SD = 3.17) and control class (M = 18.73, SD = 3.97) of week 9 indicate that the experimental class benefited from the guided listening strategy instruction as t (29) = 10.083, p = .000, suggesting that the listening strategy instruction in Persian had a significant impact on lower intermediate Iranian students in terms of EFL listening proficiency.

Table 3: Overall descriptive and t-value analysis

Classes	*Week 9*		*t-value*	*N*
	Mean	SD		
Experimental	22.96	3.17	10.083	30
Control	18.73	3.97		30

A breakdown of the analysis for each of the listening strategy provides some additional insights.

Guessing and making inferences (11 Questions)

To test the assumption that the guessing and making inference strategy instruction in L1 developed students' listening skill in English, all participants in the experimental and control classes were given the listening test. The first section of listening test includes 11 multiple choice questions focusing on the correct response (CR). The results are set out in Table 4. The paired mean difference in CR within the control and experimental class in week 9 is respectively M = 8.16, SD = .83 vs. M = 10.10, SD = 1.26, suggesting that students receiving guided guessing and making inferences strategies in Persian performed better in EFL listening than did the control group. Indeed, as evidenced in Table 5, these differences were statistically significant through t (29) = 9.032, p = .000, suggesting that L1 listening strategy instruction resulted in variance in EFL listening achievement between the two classes.

Table 4: Paired samples test

Classes	*Week 9*		*t-value*	*N*
	Mean	SD		
Experimental	10.10	1.26	9.032	30
Control	8.16	.83		30

Repetition (8 Questions)

In order to test the assumption that repetition strategy instruction improved students' listening skill, the second section of the listening test, eight multiple choice questions were presented that students repeated a key word after listening to the input. The results of t-test showed in the Table 5 indicated improved performance in the experimental class (M = 7.70, SD = .91 vs. M = 8.13, SD = .93) despite the fact that the higher performance of the experimental class in week 9 was statistically insignificant t (29) = 1.941, p = .062. This suggests that the repetition strategy instruction was not effective.

Table 5: Paired samples test

Classes	*Week 9*		*t-value*	*N*
	Mean	SD		
Experimental	8.13	.93	1.941	30
Control	7.70	.91		30

Identifying topic (5 Questions)

To investigate whether teaching identifying topic strategy in L1 facilitated listening proficiency in EFL, the third section, closing to the meaning (CM) of the listening test consisted of five multiple choice questions used to measure the students' listening comprehension. Table 6 indicates that the experimental class achieved better results than did the control class (M = 3.73, SD = 1.11 vs. M = 2.36, SD = .61). In fact, the difference between the two was statistically significant as the t-test was run t (29) = 1.185, p = .000, suggesting that instruction of identifying topic strategy in Persian had an effect on EFL listening comprehension.

Table 6: Paired samples test

Classes	*Week 9*		*t-value*	*N*
	Mean	SD		
Experimental	3.73	1.11	1.185	30
Control	2.36	.61		30

Note-taking (2 Questions)

In relation to the assumption concerning whether note-taking strategy instruction in L1 facilitated listening comprehension development in English, the last section, the recall (R) of listening test comprised two multiple choice questions. Table 7 showed that the experimental class had greater improvement in week 9 than did the control class (M = 1.03, SD = .66). However, running the t-test showed that the difference was not statistically significant t (29) = 6.63, p = .246, suggesting L1 instruction of note-taking strategy was not effective in EFL listening comprehension.

Table 7: Paired samples test

Classes	*Week 9*		*t-value*	*N*
	Mean	SD		
Experimental	1.03	.66	6.63	30
Control	.83	.69		30

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide evidence that L1 listening strategy instruction helped the experimental class, and improved the students' listening ability in foreign language learning. This finding suggests that interventions using L1 (Persian) as the medium of instruction to explain about complex listening strategies, allow learners to better appreciate the subtleties of listening strategies which can be easily lost when presented in a foreign language, of which the learners have a limited competency. This notion of understanding the medium of learning strategy in beginning and lower intermediate English proficiency associated with a discussion is supported by Field (2008b). Field maintains that L1 learners cope well with some limitations, such as inadequate vocabulary repertoire, listening exposure and working memory capacity as opposed to accommodating the demand of listening input in L2. The results suggest that L1 listening strategy instruction enhances students' listening comprehension in EFL. The interesting result, however, obtained from the control class is that students receiving their regular traditional classroom activities, devoid of any strategy intervention, had not achieved much progress in listening comprehension on the whole.

When deconstructing the data and looking at each of the listening strategy instructions, there is evidence to suggest that the intervention supported students' listening ability. Of the five listening strategies i.e., *guessing, making inferences, repetition, identifying topic and note-taking*, students in the experimental class performed better than the students in the control class in three listening strategies i.e., *guessing, making inferences* and *identifying topic*. This finding is consistent with Graham and Macaro's (2008) finding that the intervention brings about enhanced listening proficiency.

The Impact of Guessing and Making Inferences

The findings suggest that explicitly instructing 'guessing' and 'making inferences' strategies in listening fosters participants' comprehension. It is not unexpected that participants were interested in guessing and making inferences strategies during listening in their own language (Persian). This is because they frequently use this

strategy in their L1 and participants in the experimental class due to receiving additional guided attention to guessing and making inferences strategies, achieved better results in listening comprehension than did the control class. Activating listening strategies in L1 certainly requires explicit listening strategy instruction to integrate and enhance L2 learning. As many learners are not able to use their L1 learning strategy in L2 listening, Mendelsohn (1995, p.135) pointed out that we should 'unlock those first language strategies' so that learners can implement them automatically in L2 learning. Thus, the test result of the CR section in the experimental class confirms that explicit instruction in guessing and making inferences strategies in L1 can facilitate listening comprehension in an EFL context.

Impact of Repetition

Participants receiving the intervention treatment were able to take greater advantage of the repetition strategy than the control class, as shown by the difference in their mean listening comprehension scores. However, the higher performance in experimental class in Week 9 was not statistically significant. It was not surprising that students in the control class demonstrated some improvement in their listening test scores as repetition strategy is one of the traditional strategies used in EFL contexts. The finding shows that students in the experimental class gained much more than did students in the control class, even though the difference between the two was statistically insignificant. This partially, confirms the conclusions of Chang and Read (2006) that focused on the repeated input, in that they pointed out that repetition would be highly effective if combined with using other activities, such as vocabulary and topic introduction to enhance background knowledge. Thus, in the EFL context, students benefit from the repetition of input in connection with other tasks to extend the standard level of language knowledge.

Impact of Identifying Topic

Similar to the guessing and making inferences listening strategies, participants in the experimental class performed better in identifying topics. This result is not surprising because through identifying topics, students are able to obtain clues about the messages in the listening passages. These clues enabled them to search for key words carrying the bulk of the information required for responding to the listening comprehension questions. This result suggests that providing adequate information on the listening topic is more effective than the traditional types of listening such as pre-viewing the questions in pre-listening activities currently used in Iranian language learning institutes. Students during listening do not take the time to understand the topic, but instead pay enough attention to the key words. This finding corroborates the conclusions of Buck (1991) and Chang and Read (2006).

Impact of Note-taking

The result of the note-taking strategy showed that explicit listening strategy instruction in L1 was not statistically significant. The evidence taken from this section of the study was not strong enough as there were only two questions measuring student's note-taking strategy. However, the finding is consistent with the result of Carrier's (2003)

research in that students took advantage of note-taking for guessing at meanings during listening events when comprehension was limited. In the L1 note-taking strategy in listening, students can benefit from their own developed abbreviations and symbols for faster note-taking, and realize that keyword notes can constitute the meaning rather than the whole sentence.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATION

The wide variety of listening tests and tasks that students experience in language institutes and out of the classroom, such as, through the communication technologies – internet, TV and satellite. English language learners need to have strong listening skills to interpret the meaning effectively. While many students are confident in their listening ability in the comfort of their ESL context, they are less confident in comprehending oral information when it comes to EFL contexts. This study suggests that L1 listening strategy instruction such as *guessing, making inferences, identifying topics, repetition and note-taking* can improve students' listening comprehension of information better in an EFL context than just adopting the traditional approach. Practising the structure of listening comprehension questions through pre-listening, listening and post-listening, and focusing on the correction of comprehension questions are only working on the *product* of listening skill *per se*. The result of this study provides a starting point for further research into what kinds of listening strategies students will mostly use to tackle their listening problems in Iran and other Middle Eastern countries. The findings will encourage further qualitative research to enrich rather than impoverish this area as L1 listening strategy instruction is an asset rather than an impediment to student listening achievement in EFL learning situations. As listening becomes intertwined with other delivery modalities, further studies on listening might benefit multimedia-based intervention.

The limitation is that there is potential researcher (instructor) bias. However, using a well-developed guided methodology perhaps reduces the subjective and varied behaviour during the intervention.

Note English language proficiency is virtually equal to Cambridge ESOL Entry Certificate in English (IELTS 4).

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