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THE EFFECT OF INTERACTIVE TEACHING STRATEGY ON EFL LEARNERS' LISTENING SKILL THROUGH INTERACTIVE STORYTELLING

Eman Abbas Yasean Mahmoud[1], Asst. Prof. Batool Assim Hameed[2]

[1,2]Department of English Language, College of Education for Humanities, University of Tikrit

Corresponding Author : EA2400010prt@tu.edu.iq[1]

Abstract

Listening can be considered a unique and an active skill that not all communicators possess since it demands interpretation of the message, reconstruction of the message, and then responding in an appropriate way. This study investigates the effects of interactive teaching strategy on EFL learners' listening through interactive storytelling. We suggest that a new generation of research in this area needs to address the extended question: What is the effectiveness of using interactive storytelling on developing fifth graders' listening skill in English? This study advances our understanding of showing how interactive storytelling can affect EFL learners' listening skill. We conducted a quisi-experimental study of interactive teaching strategy on EFL learners' listening through interactive storytelling enterprises in Iraq, using a sample of fifth preparatory school female students has been chosen. The sample has been divided into two equal groups, i.e. experimental group and control group. Both of them are equalized in age, parents' educational attainment, pre-test and scores of the previous year in English. The findings from the study show that the effect of interactive teaching strategy on EFL learners' listening through interactive storytelling is more complex that was expected and address a controversial belief among practitioners that the study provides evidence for the effectiveness of utilizing interactive teaching strategies, particularly through interactive storytelling, in enhancing EFL learners' speaking skill.

Keywords: Interactive Teaching, Listening Skill, Interactive Storytelling, EFL Learners, Language Acquisition.

I. Introduction

Language serves as a primary means of communication, allowing individuals to share ideas and thoughts. In today's global context, English is recognized as the most widely used language among non-native speakers. As a result, countries, organizations, and individuals invest significant time and resources into teaching and learning English, as it has become essential in various fields. Effective communication in English is crucial for entering the global workforce, accessing a wealth of entertainment, fostering cultural understanding, and connecting with people from diverse backgrounds. (Agha, 2006)

Interactive teaching strategies, particularly through interactive storytelling, can enhance EFL learners' listening skill, opening up opportunities that can positively transform their lives. The researcher believes that effective communication skills, particularly listening skill, are essential for EFL learners to acquire knowledge and succeed in their education. Interactive teaching strategies, especially through interactive storytelling, engage students in a way that enhances these skills. Without effective listening skill, the purpose of language learning is not fully realized.

Therefore, this study has been conducting to investigate the effect of interactive teaching strategy on EFL learners' listening through interactive storytelling among Iraqi fifth graders. Through her twelve years of experience teaching the English language, the researcher has observed that students struggle significantly with listening skill. These challenges may stem from ineffective traditional teaching methods, which ultimately hinder their ability to engage in meaningful communication. Consequently, the researcher recognizes an urgent need to implement new strategies that address the difficulties students encounter in listening comprehension proficiency.

The present study aims at investigating the effect of interactive storytelling on the development of EFL learner's listening skill, exploring the difference in listening scores between the control and experimental groups, comparing the performance of learners taught through interactive storytelling with those taught using conventional methods as well as exploring learners' attitudes towards using interactive storytelling in English language learning.

These aims are supposed to be achieved through answering some questions and verifying some hypotheses: to what extent does interactive storytelling affect the listening skills of EFL learners?, what are the differences in listening scores between the control and experimental groups?, to what extent does interactive storytelling affect the listening skills of EFL learners?, are there statistically significant differences in listening performance between EFL learners taught using interactive storytelling and those taught using conventional methods? as well as what are EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English through interactive storytelling?

The following null hypotheses have been stated there is no statistically significant difference in listening skills between the experimental group and the control group due to the use of interactive storytelling, there is no statistically significant difference in listening scores between the control and experimental groups, and there is no statistically significant difference in learners' attitudes toward learning English between the experimental and the control group.

This study is limited to the prescribed textbook 'English for Iraq' "student's book" units (5, 6 and 7), Iraqi EFL preparatory school students in Al-Mutafauyqat preparatory School for Girls during the second course, for the academic year 2022-2023. It is hoped that this study will focus on interactive storytelling of teaching listening skill for Iraqi EFL preparatory school students and has a practical value for English teachers. This study has also a theoretical value to textbook and curriculum designers since it will add more information concerning using interactive teaching strategy such as interactive storytelling in teaching listening. Also, it has an educational value since it will be useful for learners.

II. Listening Skill

Hu (1995) defines listening comprehension as " the intake aspects of language ,i.e. the means by which one enriches himself and adds to his stock of interest and knowledge". According to Chastain (1988) listening comprehension is the process is internal and thus not subject to direct, external observation, examination and correction.

Norris (1995) carries out that listening comprehension involves two distinct, but complementary processes: 'Bottom-Up' and 'Top-Down.'. Bottom-up refers to decoding the sounds of a language into words, clauses, sentences, etc., and using one's knowledge of grammatical or syntactic rules to interpret the meaning. Top-down processing refers to using background knowledge or previous knowledge of the situation, context, and topic to experience to anticipate, predict, and infer meaning. Listeners use both bottom-up processors (linguistic knowledge) and (top-down processers (prior knowledge) to comprehend.

Underwood (1989) states that "listening is a complex process which involves a number of skills that function together to achieve the goal in the listener's mind." Listeners construct a message from what they are hearing according to certain expectations. Listening as a skill needs little or no effort in mother tongues. It is defined as " the intake aspects of language ,i.e. the means by which one enriches himself and adds to his stock of interest and knowledge" (Hu, 1995).

As mentioned by Buck (2001), listening skill should be learned by the learners of foreign language as the similar method how a child learn his mother tongue. This manner is exposed as the characteristic that language can be learned by a good comprehend of listening. Hamouda

(2013) says that listening is an ability to understand and identify the speech or spoken language that is exposed by other people. The process of understanding someone else's speech is by identifying the speaker's pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, speed and the meaning or the purpose of his speech.

Listening has an important role not only in daily life but also in classroom settings. Most people think that being able to write and speak in a second language means that they know the language; however, if they do not have the efficient listening skills, it is not possible to communicate effectively. (Yıldırım, 2021)

IV. Types of Listening

According to Jeremy (2003), listening comprehension falls in different types such as extensive listening, intensive listening, selective listening and interactive listening.

1. Extensive listening: This type of listening is concerned with promoting overall comprehension of a text and never requires learners to follow every word or understand it. Learners need to comprehend the text as a whole which is called global understanding. Activities in this section must be in harmony with the proficiency level of the listeners. At the developed stage, completing cloze exercises or giving one or two word answers, multiple choices, predicting the next utterances, forming connected sets of notes, inferring opinions, or interpreting parts of the text are some examples

2. Intensive listening: Intensive listening activities are planned to enable learners acquire language form of the text ; lexical and grammatical units that lead to form meaning. So, intensive listening requires attention to specific items of language, sound or factual detail such as words, phrases, grammatical units, pragmatic units, sound changes (vowel reduction and consonant assimilation), stress, intonation and pauses etc. Feedback on accuracy and repetition on the teacher s part promote success here. Paraphrasing, remembering specific words and sequences, filling gaps with missing words, identifying numbers and letters, picking out particular facts, discriminating the pronunciation of the same phoneme in different positions, replacing words, finding stress and boundaries are some good intensive listening practice.

3. Selective listening: It involves listening to selected parts of a text. The focus is on the main parts of the listening material and noticing these parts acts as the key to the listener s, understanding of the meaning of whole of the text through inferring. As the expectation on understanding is focused and has a purpose, in these activities, listeners have the chance of second listening to check understanding and have feedback repeatedly. Listening to sound sequences, documentary, story maps, incomplete monologues, conversation cues and topic listening are examples of selective listening.

4. Interactive listening: This is a very advanced stage of listening practice as it implies social interaction in small groups which is a true test of listening. In interactive listening, learners, either in pairs or in groups, receive new information, identify it continuously. Besides, they have to work out the problems of understanding with each other and formulate responses immediately as it is required to be done in real life. It involves both comprehension and production, and it directly promotes speaking skill.

Listening is a skill to recognize sounds, words and rearrange them in meaningful units. There is an urgent need that a listener should be aware of the target language structure, segmental and super-segmental features to integrate the best form of comprehension.

V. Listening and English as a Second Language

According to second language acquisition theory, language input is the most essential condition of language acquisition. As an input skill, listening plays a crucial role in students' language development. Krashen (1985) argues that people acquire language by understanding the linguistic information they hear. Thus language acquisition is achieved mainly through receiving understandable input and listening ability is the critical component in achieving understandable language input. Given the importance of listening in language learning and teaching it is essential for language teachers to help students become effective listeners. In the communicative approach to language teaching, this means modeling listening strategies and providing listening practice in authentic situations: precisely those that learners are likely to encounter when they use the language outside the classroom.

Listening plays an important role in second-language instruction for several reasons:

First, listening provides comprehensible input for the learner which is essential for any learning to occur.

Second, listeners need to interact with speakers to achieve understanding.

Third, listening exercises help learners direct their attention to new forms (vocabulary, grammar, interaction patterns) in the language (Rost, 1994). Thus listening comprehension provides the right conditions for language acquisition and development of other language skills (Krashen, 1985).

VI. Difficulties in Listening

Azmi et al. (2014) brought five difficulties that are commonly found in the listening activity. These difficulties are the wall that needs to be solved by the students. Those difficulties are:

1. Quality of Recorded Materials: The quality listening materials are essential to make the students understand and can hear the audio clearly. The quality of audio can impact the knowing of learners' listening. Thus, the teachers should be aware to the quality of audio. They need to ensure that the audio has clear sound without any inappropriate voices from the materials.

2. Cultural differences: The cultural differences refer to the diversity of the culture between the listeners' cultural background and the culture brought from the audio. The cultural aspect actually gives a big impact for the listeners because some unfamiliar culture gives unfamiliar words, actions and meanings. For example, the audio plays the activities of Halloween to the students in Indonesia. For some students who do not have any background knowledge about this culture, it will affect them in low understanding. Thus, the teachers should give any explanation before giving the record.

3. Accent: Accent refers to the way or sound how a word is pronounced. Usually country with English a national language has different accent. The biggest English accent used is British and American. For Indonesian students, American English is the common used accent in learning and teaching. Buck (2001) said that students face difficulties in listening when audio has unfamiliar accent. It affects their comprehension of listening because unfamiliar accent gives unfamiliar sound so that most students confuse about the words. Sometime, once the students are faced with British or Australian accent, they hardly catch the flow and meaning of the speech. Thus, the teachers need to give a task related to the common used in learning.

4. Unfamiliar: According to Azmi et al. (2014), the audio which consists of familiar vocabulary can ease the students in comprehending the meaning of the audio. Vocabulary surely plays an essential role in listening because the lack of it leads the students to fail in listening task. Bunch of vocabulary help the students in understanding the pattern, situation, and items said in listening. Yet the students with few vocabularies will cause them fail in listening especially in

comprehending the meaning and goals of it. Thus, the teachers should increase the students' vocabulary in order to ease them in listening. To make the students familiar to the vocabulary, the teachers can use film, songs, and card to teach vocabulary.

5. Length and Speed of Listening: Some students surely face problem in listening where the speakers speak to fast and the length of audio is too long. Azmi et al. (2014) mentioned students with low capacity of English cannot stand for three minutes in listening process. The students cannot keep all the information given in the record when the audio is too long for them. The speed of record also influences the students' understanding. If the speaker speaks too fast, they will hardly catch the words, the meaning of the words and the pronunciation. Once they cannot pursue the audio, they will lose interest in the text part of speech. As the result, they cannot understand the meaning of the speech or message. It is important for the teachers to give an appropriate audio for the students with normal speed and length.

VII. Storytelling

Barzaq (2009) defines storytelling as a knowledge management technique, a way of distributing information , targeted to audiences and a sense of information , she added that stories provide natural connection between events and concepts and finally , she added that visual storytelling is a way of telling stories through images.

"Storytelling is a task shared by storyteller and story listeners, it is the interaction of the two that makes a story come to life" (Peak, 1989). The writer emphasized that the story has its own components; storyteller, story listener and a topic, and most of the stories are taken from real life.

Barzaq (2009) emphasizes that the listener's role is to create a vital images, actions, characters , and events .The story in the listeners' minds based on the teller's performance. Additionally, she cites in (McEwan and Egan, 1995) that storytelling is a linguistic activity that is educative because it allows the listeners to share their personal understanding to other people and that it is a performance art that has been revitalized in recent years, and in these days storytellers perform texts that listeners have learned it from books.

Storytelling is a powerful tool in language learning, particularly in enhancing listening skill. According to Harmer (2004), storytelling serves as an effective form of intensive listening, providing students with engaging material that allows them to predict outcomes and describe characters or events within the narrative.

Valenzuela (1999) emphasizes the significance of stories in education, stating that they help individuals make sense of themselves and their surroundings. Young children often express their understanding of relationships and aspirations through the spontaneous stories they act out during play.

Armstrong (2010) notes that storytelling has traditionally relied on individual authors to create rich worlds and characters. This tradition predates written language and has served as a crucial means of communicating values and shared experiences. Collaborative storytelling has also been common, where one author builds upon another's work or introduces new adventures for existing characters.

Barzaq (2009) identifies several essential functions of storytelling:

1. **Creating Interest**: Stories captivate readers and listeners, making complex information more engaging through suspenseful narratives.
2. **Facilitating Memory**: Concepts embedded in stories are easier to remember than isolated facts, as narratives create vivid mental images that aid retention.

3. **Providing Accessible Information**: Stories simplify the learning process by presenting concrete examples before delving into more complex material.

Storytelling is an interactive performance art form, according to Noorick (2000). The relationship between the narrator and the audience is a significant aspect of storytelling. The teller's actions and words convey a clear message to the audience. The tale should conclude with a brief demonstration to ensure that the messages are presented without bias. Some individuals are more capable of seeing or demonstrating than vocalizing, and words, which are frequently used in stories. To broaden the audience's understanding of the tale that storytellers are attempting to convey, storytelling should incorporate both words and visual examples. According to Gibson (2003), storytelling is an active process that enables children to reconstruct the text while also fostering teacher-child interaction. When necessary, the teacher might use open-ended questions and prompts to assist the child in reconstructing the meaning of the text.

VIII. Research Design

Kombrabail (2012) defined the research design as the blueprint of the research that consists of the details of methods and procedures for acquiring the data needed for solving the problem. According to Creswell (2003), there are three methods to do the research and they are namely qualitative method, quantitative method, mixed method. This study is using the quantitative method and aims to investigate the effect of interactive teaching strategy on EFL Learners' listening through interactive storytelling.

IX. The Experiment Design

The experimental design is a blueprint of the procedures that enable the researcher to test her hypotheses by arriving at valid conclusions concerning the relationship between dependent and independent variables (Best, 1970; Best and Khan, 2006). Experimental research involves the manipulation of one or more independent variables to determine their effect on one or more dependent variables. This method typically employs two groups: **the experimental group**, which receives the treatment, and **the control group**, which is not manipulated. This design helps to establish the nature of the relationship between the variables being studied.

The Experimental design in the current study is 'the quasi-experimental non-randomized control group pre-test, post-test design'. In this design, the experimental group receives the independent variable (interactive storytelling) as shown in the following table:

Table (1): The Nonrandomized Control Group pre and post-tests design

Groups	Pre-Tests	Experiments	Post-Tests
E.G.	Listening Skill	through Interactive Storytelling	Listening Skill
C.G.		Conventional Method	

X. The Population and Sampling of the Study

The population of the present study is limited to fifth preparatory school students during the academic year 2023-2024. The total number of students was (100) divided randomly into two groups: control and experimental.

The sample of this study has selected randomly from Al-Mutafauyqat preparatory School for Girls in Tikrit. The number of students in each group was (50). After eliminating the repeaters in each group, the total number of the subjects was (100), (50) participants in each group. In this school there are two fifth grade classes. Class (A) represented the experimental group while class (B) represented the control group. The subjects number in class A was 54 and the subjects number in class B was 52. After excluding the repeaters in every section, the total number of the sample of the study is 100 students, 50 students in each group, as shown in Table 2.

Table (2): Sampling of the Study

Group.	Section	Original number of students	Number of Repeaters	Number of subjects
E.G.	B	54	4	50
C.G.	A	52	2	50
Totally		106	6	100

XI. Equivalence

The EG and CG were made equivalent in respect of all factors, except for the exposure to the independent variable. This helps in increasing the importance and the sensitivity of the experiment and thereby increasing the probability of detecting the effects that actually occur. So, in order to make both groups equivalent, some important variables have been taken into account, namely, pre-test, time available, and the teacher in each group. Both groups were pre-tested and the same time was spent in each group, and both groups were taught by same instructor.

Although, all the students of the experimental and control groups are in the same gender (all of them are female), all of them are in the fifth grade and they study at the same school Al-Mutafauyqat preparatory School for Girls, but the researcher has controlled these variables to achieve more accurate results. These variables are;
1. The age of the students (in months).
2. The students' level of achievement in listening skill in English language in the previous year.

In the experimental and control groups the students' age has been compared. The age of the students has measured in months. To show if there is a significant difference between the study groups in age, the researcher used t-test formula for the independent samples. The mean X of the experimental group is 188.1600, and that of the control group is 187.1200. The calculated t- value is (0.548), while the tabulated value is (2.012) under (48) degree of freedom at 0.05 level. The comparison has indicated that there are no significant differences between the two groups in age.

Table (3): The T-value of Equalization between the two Groups in the students' Age

Variables \ Groups	No. of Students	Mean X	SD	FD	t- Value Computed	t- Value Tabulated	Level of Significance at (0.05)
Experimental Group	50	188.1600	7.86702	48	0.548	2.012 (0.05)	Not sig.
Control Group	50	187.1200	5.29402				

The final scores from the previous year have been taken from the records of Al-Mutafauyqat preparatory School Management to check the equivalence level of the preparatory school students. The results of t- test value show that there are no significant differences between the means of the two study groups in this variable. The mean score of the students' level of achievement in the previous year 2022-2023 is found to be (69.6400) for the experimental group, and (74.1600) 65.6) for the control group. The calculated T-value is (1.285) whereas the tabulated one is (2.012). The tabulated value is higher than the computed one at the 0.05 level of significance.

Table (4): Show the Mean, SD, and "t" Value of the Students' Level in Listening Skill of the Previous Year (2022-2023)

Variables / Groups	No.	Mean	S.D.	t- Value computed	t- Value tabulated	FD.	Level of significant at 0.05
Experimental	50	69.6400	13.82293	1.285	2.012	48	Not sig.
Control	50	74.1600	10.86922				

XII. Validity and Reliability

According to Lado (1961), validity depends on the linguistic content of the test and on the situation or technique used to test this content. A text that uses a perfectly valid conversational situation but does not test the elements of the language is not valid and vice versa. In this study, the test measures listening skill of preparatory school students, i.e. their ability to listen in a correct way.

There are several types of validity, but the most important of which are content validity and face validity. Therefore, both types were addressed to evaluate the test and come out with a validated test that yields truthful and accurate results.

1. Content Validity

According to Gronlund (1981), establishing content validity includes (a) clearly defining the domain of tasks to be measured, and (b) constructing, or selecting, a representative set of test tasks. Taking all the aforementioned points into consideration, this type of validity was established by making an inventory of all the categories of the communicative functions and their linguistic realizations then choosing frequently used functions and their realizations to be included in the experimental lessons. The items selected were presented to jurors to judge for appropriacy and adequacy of the test to measure what it is supposed to measure.

2. Face Validity:

Face validity is "the degree to which a test appears to measure the knowledge or abilities it claims to measure, it is based on subjective judgement of an observer" (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Taking all the aforementioned points again into account, and in order to establish such type of validity, one version of the test was presented to qualified experts to make sure or judge whether the test is applicable as far as the current study is concerned. Each member was asked to read the situations and give his/her notes, suggestions whether they measure students' listening skills, its efficiency and suitability. The Panel's recommendations and suggestions were accounted for and some modifications were accordingly made.

Reliability refers to the stability and consistency of the measurement of the test scores (Harris, 1969:14). Reliability is a measure of how accurate the findings of a test are. A test has been said to be accurate if its findings are the same when used by different people on various occasions (Richards& Schmidt, 2010: 495). The reliability has been computed by using the re-test reliability method, where the researcher conducted the test on the selected sample. Then after two weeks, the same test was given to the same group of students, by using Kuder-Richardson Formula 21 (KR-21). The correlation is found to be (0.86), and this is considered a high stable coefficient.

XIII. Analysis of Collected Data and Results

As for the results related to the hypothesis that was "*There is no statistically significant difference in listening skills between the experimental group and the control group due to the use of interactive storytelling*", T. Test was used to test the first hypothesis which addressed the differences between the mean scores of students who learn listening skills through interactive storytelling (experimental group) and those who learn through traditional methods (control group)) in the post-test results. Table (4.3) shows the results.

Table (4): Results of T. Test, Standard Deviation, the mean scores of students who learn listening skill through interactive storytelling (experimental group) and those who learn through traditional methods (control group)) in the post-test results.

Group variables	Pre-cont		Post-cont		T-Value	Sig
	Mean	Std. deviation	Mean	Std. deviation		
Vocabulary	4.42	2.0	4.34	2.30	0.168	
Pronunciation	3.85	2.10	4.40	2.37	0.967	
Fluency	3.31	1.94	3.48	1.59	0.171	No sig
Grammar	3.2	1.38	3.51	1.19	0.945	
Total	14.80	4.12	15.74	4.20	0.891	

Results in table 4 showed that there was not a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of students who learn listening skills through interactive storytelling (experimental group) and those who learn through traditional methods (control group)) in the post-test results in the total score and in the four sub skills (Vocabulary ، Pronunciation ، Fluency ،Grammar). This leads the researcher to test the other hypotheses using T. Test to verify them.

XV. Discussion of Results

After analyzing the data, the objective of this study has been achieved, which experimentally examined the effect of using interactive storytelling for Iraq EFL 5th preparatory students' achievement in listening skills as the post-test results indicate that the subjects of the experimental groups who were taught by using interactive storytelling have significantly improved in listening skills. This has been based on a comparative statistical treatment of the subjects' scores on both groups of post-tests.

The statistical analysis of the post-test show that the students' achievement of the control group is significantly lower than that of the experimental group, and using interactive storytelling in teaching listening skill is useful than teaching listening skill according to the communicative approach. So, this leads to achieve the aim of this study, which is to investigate the effect of Interactive Teaching Strategy on EFL Learners' Listening through Interactive Storytelling. So, the results obtained indicate the following:

1. No statistically significant differences were found between the pre-test and the post-test scores of the CG despite the lapse of four weeks of teaching listening skill. In other words, the conversational method applied did not help the learners make better achievement in the post-test scores after the method had been applied.
2. A statistically significant difference was found between the pre-test and post-test scores of EG in favour of the post-test. The results were also reinforced by the significant difference found between the post-test scores of the CG and those of the EG in favor of the EG. These results clearly indicate that explicit training in interactive storytelling was slightly more effective.

Conclusion

With reference to the results of this study mentioned above, the following points were concluded:
1. The present study provides evidence for the effectiveness of utilizing interactive teaching strategies, particularly through interactive storytelling, in enhancing EFL learners' listening skills.
2. Interactive teaching strategies, when integrated into storytelling, foster active learning and engagement, significantly enhancing learners' abilities in listening.
3. Teaching listening through interactive storytelling has proved to be more useful for the EFL students than through the currently used method and it has a positive effect not only on appropriacy, but also on fluency and grammar, and gives learners opportunity to initiate and develop listening skills.
4. Iraqi learners of EFL at preparatory schools are certainly in need for a large repertoire of listening that can improve their communicative ability even if they generally know how to manipulate grammatically correct sentences in a given situation the way they use to reach the goals is often inappropriate and might lead to breakdowns of communication.

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