A Comparative Study on the Effect of Translation Task vs. Summary Task on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners Listening Comprehension Ability

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Abstract
The current study is concerned with combinatory potential of strategy use and listening comprehension in order to promote EFL learners’ listening ability development. Moreover, this study is interested in investigating the effect of translation and summary strategies on the listening comprehension of participants in terms of process and product. Therefore, a mixed method design, applying quantitative and qualitative approaches, is intended to apply to report the results of this thesis. With regard to this, three intermediate learners of English as a foreign language were selected to participate in this study, ranging in age from 18 to 22. To integration translation summary and summary strategies to listening comprehension, the researcher preferred to use the t-test in the form of pretest-instruction-posttest and oxford proficiency test to homogenize the participants within a twelve-week period. The researcher applied descriptive statistics to analyze data quantitatively and questionnaire to analyze data qualitatively. Moreover, the researcher tries to investigate that is there any difference in terms of success between those who received the translation strategy and those who received the summary strategy? The findings confirmed that applying translation and summary strategies to listening comprehension ability make a difference in the learners’ level of achievement. This study also contributed to reveal the superiority and effectiveness of translation strategy.

Key Words: Translation Strategy, Summary Strategy, Listening Comprehension.

Introduction
The growth of international relations of Iranian society with other nations highlighted the greater importance of English language as an international language compared to previous years. Listening is considered as a vital skill in language-learning situations because it overlaps with reading and including the practiced complexities of providing spoken texts. More importantly, dissatisfaction with listening ability in English after studying English in their schools and even passing some courses in universities motivates
the researcher to deal with this issue and one of the suitable solutions regarding this study is to investigate the effect of translation strategy vs. summary strategy on Iranian intermediate EFL learners’ listening comprehension.

Text comprehension is considered as a vital area of listening and reading instruction in language pedagogy which has been investigated from different theoretical perspectives, i.e. the linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural perspective (Kern, 2000).

In relation to listening comprehension, Buck (2003) similarly explained that many cases listeners were able foresee the meaning of a word before decoding its phonemes and being involved in a concrete situation, they could anticipate, using their knowledge, what they would hear.

Rost (2002, p.96) explained how bottom-up and top-down processes operate in listeners as follows: Speech perception and word recognition were the ‘bottom-up’ processes. In listening provided the ‘data’ for comprehension. If the listener did not recognize enough of these bottom-up cues in order to process the speech in real time, he or she would rely more exclusively on ‘top-down’ processes semantic expectations and generalizations. Rost (2002) also provided a definition of text comprehension which integrates both of the text processing models and which nicely summarized the present discussion on this complex process.

Swaffar et al. (1991) pointed out that comprehension questions such as true/false and multiple-choice in listening or reading tests could elicit the examinee's comprehension of isolated parts of a text but offered few clues about their understanding of how these text parts are connected. Quite on the contrary, Kern (2000) proposed that these questions “are useful techniques to help learners clarify the facts of a text” and their use enables students “to go beyond their vague hunches and encourages hypothesis-testing rather than random guessing” (pp. 161-162).

Barzegar and Rahimi (2012) examined reading vs. translation task on Iranian’s lexicon knowledge and found that translation group outperformed the other group. According to Duff (1994), property designed translation task and activities could be employed to enhance the four skills and to develop three qualities essential to all language learning: accuracy, clarity and flexibility.

In a study by Dagiliene (2012), many students were interviewed about the effect of translation activities on language skills, the respondents choose their options as follows: Vocabulary 85%, grammar 40%, writing 35%, speaking 45% and finally listening 20%. This showed that fewer of them believe that translation in listening would be helpful.

**Statement of the Problem**

Strategy use was an important part of the L2 listening experience in order to contribute the learners to reach an advanced level. But, there was gap between input that was received in the form of words and intake in the form of perceived meaning that were successfully decoded by the listeners to understand the intended meaning at all levels of language proficiency.

There had been a change from product oriented to more process oriented listening comprehension and instruction, one part that required more investigation was required to examine the available listening strategies in order to contribute less successful EFL learners in listening comprehension. The other part that needed much investigation was considering the listening strategies differ at various levels at language proficiency.

From an applied perspective, this study might provide empirical support for one strategy over the other strategy in increasing listening comprehension among intermediate EFL learners.
From a pedagogical perspective, this study would provide teachers and educators with a better understanding of the importance of these two strategies. Finally, from a learner-centered view, this study helped intermediate EFL learners understand real spoken language better and alleviate their anxiety. This study had potential to investigate their effect on listening comprehension. From a pedagogical perspective, this study would provide teachers and educators with a better understanding of the importance of these two strategies.

**Purpose of the Study**

The thesis first seeks to investigate the effects of translation strategy and summary strategy on the development of listening ability in two different groups. In addition, the researcher is motivated to:

1. To determine the difference between summary and translation strategies in helping intermediate EFL learners efficiently.
2. To determine the effect of summary and translation strategies instruction on listening comprehension of intermediate EFL learners.

**Research Questions of the Study**

1) Does translation strategy facilitate listening comprehension by intermediate EFL learners?
2) Does summary strategy facilitate listening comprehension by intermediate EFL learners?
3) Is there any difference in terms of success between those who received the translation summary and those who received the summary strategy?

**Hypotheses of the Study**

1) Translation strategy has no effect on listening comprehension of intermediate EFL learners.
2) Summary strategy has no effect on listening comprehension of intermediate EFL learners.
3) There is no difference between summary strategy and translation strategy in listening comprehension of intermediate EFL learners.

**Materials and Methods**

**Participants**

Seventy male and female intermediate university students studying English as an L2 volunteered to participate in this study. Moreover, the study will be conducted with two classes of 35 intermediate EFL learners at Adib Mazandaran University in Sari. The participants will be chosen on the basis of their scores on the Oxford placement test (OPT) to ensure the homogeneity of the participants. The mean and standard deviation of the scores are calculated and participants whose scores range within one standard deviation above and below the mean in the normal distribution curve are selected. All participants were Iranian English native speakers, ranging in age from 18 to 22.

**Instruments**

The first instrument is the Oxford placement test (OPT), consisting of 50 grammar and vocabulary items and two reading comprehension and one writing and two listening comprehension tests which will be administered to the whole students of the two classes in order to homogenize the participants. This test is considered as a pretest to determine their first performance and as a posttest to reveal their final performance on listening comprehension development.
Since the current study intended to assess intermediate EFL learners’ listening comprehension, it was considered that the ideal listening text was chosen from the textbook *Step to Understanding* as a second material. Accordingly, the researcher was motivated to apply eight successive lessons of this book in order to improve the learners’ listening comprehension ability. More importantly, questionnaire, as a third material, was developed to collect participants’ information about their perspectives on application of translation and summary strategy and superiority of the most appropriate strategy. The questionnaire involved three questions regarding translation and summary strategies and the effectiveness of them.

**Research Design**

This study investigated additional features of intermediate EFL learners’ listening that may have impact on their comprehension, especially with regard to strategy use. For research purposes, this study used a quantitative design as the main framework and employed a supplementary questionnaire. Two strategies of translation and summary were employed to assess the level of participants’ listening comprehension. Both were developed to assess the L2 participants’ listening comprehension and their strategy use to develop their listening comprehension.

To provide additional information on university listening comprehension of L2 learners, a follow-up questionnaire was implemented.

The inference from the descriptive analysis of the data collected in the questionnaires was expected to provide information about participants’ perspective on strategy use in listening comprehension. By employing quantitative method and questionnaire to collect data for the study, it was expected to achieve a better understanding of intermediate EFL learners’ in listening comprehension tasks.

**Results**

In order to homogenize participants in terms of their general English language proficiency, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered.

![Table 1: The descriptive statistics of the Participants’ OPT scores](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>75</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>54.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>58.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>63.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>9.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>97.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>34.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>67.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>3298.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of the one hundred participants, seventy were considered as homogenous members. Then the participants were randomly divided into two groups, thirty five in each group. The first group applied translation strategy to improve their listening comprehension and the second group used summary strategy in order to develop their listening ability.
The OPT test was used as both pre-test and post-test. It was given to seventy participants in order to elicit the responses in both groups. Moreover, this pretest-posttest comparison helps the researcher to find out whether the groups hand any change or progress within themselves after the specified period. In order to find out whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test assessment sessions within each group, an independent t-test was conducted.

Table 2: Paired Samples statistics for Group 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>TPRE</td>
<td>33.91</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TPOST</td>
<td>36.18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.442</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the mean scores of pre-test and post-test of the first group. The mean of the Experimental group 1 on pre-test and post-test are 33.91 and 36.18 respectively. In other words, the mean scores of group 1, which received the translation strategy instruction as the treatment, were raised from 33.91 on the pre-test to 36.18 on the post-test, which showed a progress in listening comprehension ability. To determine the effect of the translation strategy instruction on the learners' listening comprehension ability, an independent t-test was run on. Table 4.3 shows the result.

Table 3: Paired Samples Test for group 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>TPRE - TPOST</td>
<td>-2.273</td>
<td>1.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>TPRE - TPOST</td>
<td>-2.273</td>
<td>1.104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is indicated in table 4.3, the obtained p value is 0.000, which is significant (T (10) = -6.829, p<0.05).

Table 4: Paired Samples Statistics for group 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>VAR00001</td>
<td>26.6667</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.81353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VAR00002</td>
<td>28.2500</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.17477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 represents the mean scores of the listening comprehension pre-test and post-test sessions of group 2. The mean of group 2 on pre-test and post-test are 26.66 and 28.25 respectively. As it is obvious, there is a difference between pre-test and post-test in terms of their mean scores.
Table 5: Paired Samples Test for group 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VAR00001- VAR00002</td>
<td>-1.5833</td>
<td>0.66856</td>
<td>0.19300</td>
<td>-2.00811</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 5, the obtained p value is 0.00, which is significant (T (11) = -8.204, p<0.05).

Table 6: Comparison of means obtained in pre-test and post-test by two groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>26.667</td>
<td>33.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>28.2500</td>
<td>36.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean difference on pre and post-tests (Experimental group 1) = 36.18-33.91= 2.27. The mean difference on pre and post tests (Experimental group 2) = 28.2500-26.667=1.5833. Table 6, clearly, suggests that group 1 had higher scores in post-test than group 2 (2.27 > 1.58). Thus, group 1 was more successful on developing learners’ listening proficiency.

The results showed that the participants of group 1 improved greatly on the comprehension test scores after receiving the instruction. The progress made by the students shows the importance of the translation strategy instruction in developing students’ listening comprehension. The two groups were similar in listening comprehension ability before the experiment was started, but there was a significant difference in their ability after the experiment. Despite the short period of experiment, the participants of group 1 improved significantly in their strategy use and listening comprehension after the instruction.

The findings of this study seeking the effect of strategies-based instruction on listening comprehension ability are consistent with those carried out by Duff (1994), Vogely (1995), Schaffner (1998), Vandergraff (1998, 2004), Ozeki (2000), Ross (2000), Kim (2001), Field (2008), Graham et al. (2008), Grab (2009), and Leonardi (2011). In all the mentioned studies, results indicated an improvement on students’ listening comprehension ability.

Discussion

The results provide insights into an investigation of a two-month L2 listening. The study included three stages: the pre-test, instruction and the post-test .The pre-test and the post-test stages involved no instruction. The researcher used OPT test for both pre-test and post-test assessment sessions. During the pre-test and post-test sessions, the learners were asked to listen to audio texts in English and to produce a written recall in their L1, i.e. Persian, regarding translation strategy in the first group and in their foreign language , i.e. English, while using summary strategy in the second group.

The study has also employed t-test and the OPT test as a quantitative methodological instruments for determining the extent of text comprehension. The use of quantitative measure in tandem with a qualitative analysis of the questionnaire provided insights into examination and interpretation of learners’ listening performance as a response to strategy use.
Implications of the Findings for L2 Pedagogy

The study also contributes to the L2 pedagogy by proposing a collection of listening materials that can be potentially used for developing and improving listening comprehension abilities of L2 English learners of different proficiency levels. Moreover, the collection of listening materials involved questioner and application of English listening book. Additionally, the audio- and video-materials can serve as the basis for the creation of a textbook on listening comprehension guided through strategy use.

Conclusion

The major issue that this study has attempted to explore is the feasibility of strategy and its integration into such areas as second language acquisition research and L2 instructional practices. The study supports claims concerning the relevance of strategy use principles and pedagogical approaches for second language pedagogy. The researcher believes that the integration of key strategy concepts into the field of language research and pedagogy can create an alternative view of language learning as a developmental process, and afford further opportunities for interdisciplinary and advancement of academic inquiry within the field of Applied Linguistics.

Acknowledgement

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References