THE IMPACT OF USING AUDIO CD ON READING COMPREHENSION OF PRE-INTERMEDIATE IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

Dr. Morad Bagherzadeh Kasmani[1], Seyedeh Masoumeh Davoudy[2]

[1]English Language Department, Islamic Azad University, Chalous Branch,
[2]MA in TEFL, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon Branch,
IRAN.

[1]kasmankola@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to investigate the effect of listening comprehension skill on reading comprehension as one of the most fundamental issues in language studies. The question this study tries to answer is whether there is a relationship between listening and simultaneous reading. To answer this question, 200 students of translation training program from the Islamic Azad University of Rasht were selected and were tested on OPT test. After OPT, 60 homogeneous students were randomly assigned to two groups, 30 in control and 30 students in experimental group. They were trained and tested on different forms of reading. The data of the study was analyzed through t- test and ANCOVA. The relationship between the variables of the study was proved, rejecting the null hypothesis of the study. With additional documentation into the aspect of aural stimuli and reading, educators will be able to extend and broaden knowledge for the present and future generations.

Keywords: listening, simultaneous reading, reading comprehension, multimedia, listening comprehension

INTRODUCTION

The view of reading as a complex activity has long been a part of experimental psychology. At the turn of the century, Huey (1908/1968) wrote that to analyze reading would be to describe ''very many of the most intricate workings of the human mind'' (p.6). Four decades later, Gates (1949) expressed a similar view, stating that reading is " a complex organization of patterns of higher mental processes … [that]… can and should embrace all types of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning, and problem-solving'' (p.3). Holding to the same position, the authors of a recent report commissioned by the National Academy of Education (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson 1985) have likened reading to "the performance of a symphony orchestra'' (p.7).

Traditionally, listening was viewed as a passive process, in which our ears were receivers into which information was poured, and all the listeners had to do was passively register the message. Today we recognize that listening is an active process, and that good listeners are just as active when listening as speakers are when speaking.

Active listening is also an interpretive process. Listening used to be thought of as the exact decoding of the message. In fact, listening involves subtle interpretation. This interpretive notion has long been recognized in reading, but it has taken a long time for it to be accepted in terms of listening. Its acceptance directly affects our notions of correctness- it requires an acknowledgement of the inherent variation in listeners' comprehension of what they hear, and of the importance of context and non-linguistic variables in this interpretation.

Finally, it is important to note that listening is not merely an auditory version of reading, just as speech is not simply a spoken version of writing.

Among the unique features of listening are the following:

1. It's usually ephemeral, one-shot nature.

2. The presence of a rich prosody (stress, intonation, rhythm, loudness and more), which is absent from the written language.

3. The presence of characteristics of natural fast speech, such as assimilation, making it markedly different from written language.

4. The frequent need to process and respond almost immediately.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Much interest has been shown in the past in comparing the nature and quantity of information comprehended through reading and listening. Perhaps the only reasonably consistent finding has been that reading and listening skills seem to be correlated (Young, 1936; Goldstein, 1940; Spearritt, 1962; Abrahms, 1966).

In Iran the government has spent a lot of time and money on teaching English. However, there are many problems which affect the process of learning and teaching this language successfully.

The problems can be attributed to learners, textbooks, methodologies, and teachers. The problems related to textbooks suffer from problems such as lack of authenticity, originality, and appropriate activities (Bagheri 1994).

As far as the authors know, a few native English speakers permitted to teach in Iran. Therefore, Iranian students don't have the opportunity to benefit from native speakers' teaching language. We can see only a few English speaking foreigners in the country who are tourists or belong to business sectors. Moreover, the places you may find the tourists are limited to tourist sites, hotels, or business companies. Therefore, students have no contact with foreigners except for a few cases (Zahra vaezi)

According to Jahangard (2007) students' aural and oral skills are not emphasized in Iranian prescribed EFL textbooks. Teachers put much less emphasis, if any, on oral drills, pronunciation, listening and speaking abilities than on reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary.

In Iran, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) and is practiced within a context-restricted environment where language learning is shaped largely by classroom practices, including the use of particular textbooks and the teacher's management of classroom work, without substantial support from social contexts outside the classroom.

First, there is imbalance between the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and the teaching of writing.

Secondly, the textbooks are not methodologically in line with current worldwide theories and practices of language learning (see Williams 1983; Sheldon 1988; Brown 1995; Cunningsworth 1995; Harmer 1996; Jahangard 2007).

There were a lot of studies on reading comprehension skill and listening comprehension skill separately. It is not much the same for both of them together. How can listening comprehension skill influence reading comprehension skill? It is worth clarifying if listening to a text while it is being read may improve reading comprehension or not.

Studies exist in the field of listening and reading comprehension, but a study in the area of how reading and listening simultaneously to the text impact struggling readers is needed.

Listening and reading with understanding are receptive decoding skill. It is clear that, it is possible to hear, but not listen. Similarly, it is possible to listen, but not to understand. When the student hears something while he is simultaneously reading he may not need to use listening comprehension skills very much-when listening to materials he knows by heart- he does at least have to rely on his ear. However, hearing familiar material certainly has value as a sort of easy transition between listening for perception and listening for comprehension, nor between listening as a supplement to reading (Ur.P. 52).

Listening to a text and reading it at the same time is something that is frequently done in the foreign language classroom. The teacher reads out a story, and the students follow his words in their textbooks. This is certainly a valid technique for presenting new material and aiding reading, and it does help the students to get used to how the language sounds, and to the correspondence between orthography and pronunciation. Consequently, a lot of listening material and various types of activities and teaching aids in teaching listening comprehension have been proposed by many teaching practitioners. Among them, tape recorders as audio-aids have been the one which has been mostly used in language teaching situations.

On the effectiveness of such aids on the listening comprehension, some observations and pieces of research have been carried out by scholars such as: Muller (1980), Gunther (1980), Edasawa (1990), Kellerman (1992) which mostly indicated that pure listening activities are more effective than the other types of activities. There has been another study by Schepis, Margaret Ladd (1995) which looked at the effectiveness of audio-enhanced at three variable speeds on the reading comprehension of adult Japanese students learning English as a second language. The results did not indicate any superiority of the simultaneous mode of the subjects under the experimental conditions.

Also another study has been conducted by Patricia et.al. (2004) that explored the impact of book-rich classroom environments and home reading, with and without an "audio model" on reading motivation, comprehension, and fluency. In this study, the use of "audio models" provided particular benefits for students learning to speak English. Therefore, the purpose and intension of this study is to investigate the relative advantage and disadvantage of some techniques and materials such as audio-enhanced program within the context of specific needs in EFL students at the intermediate level.

METHOD

Participants

In order to test the hypothesis of the study, 200 students majoring in English translation of Islamic Azad university Of Rasht were given an Oxford Placement Test (OPT). Those whose scores ranged from 10 to15 out of 20 were selected to participate in the study. The participants in this study with an age range of 18 to 25 both male and female were in the pre-intermediate level. The participants were randomly assigned to two groups: one control group that received no listening learning activities and one experimental group that received listening learning activities. The researchers themselves taught the treatment of the experimental groups in 10 sessions.

Instruments

Eleven reading passages related to reading instruction in English were selected. All passages were of similar levels of difficulty. The simultaneous reading, as it is used in this study involves the learners listening to the audio CD and reading the text at the same time.

The textbook for both experimental and control groups were "Top Notch" pre-intermediate level by "Joan Saslow and Allen Ascher". The units of the mentioned book were taught for both experimental and control groups. Each unit consists of a passage and related exercises.

Procedure

This part of the study consists of three stages. First, 200 university students participated in this study. In order to check their level of proficiency, the subjects were required to take an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) that included 60 multiple choice questions.

According to their English language proficiency scores, 60 male and female learners (those whose scores ranged from 10 to 15 out of 20) were selected to fulfill this study. Then these participants were divided into two groups. Second they were divided in to two 30 member groups on the basis of their obtained scores. As a result of this procedure, 2 homogenous groups experimental and control groups were designed.

During the third stage which lasted 10 sessions, the learners were involved in real group activities. In each session they read a passage and did its related exercises. The classes were conducted according to the lesson plan for the experimental groups.

Meanwhile the control groups received the whole class instruction. That is, it was taught in a teacher-centered context to their lesson plans. The lesson plans for the control groups focused on reading the same passages and doing that related exercises.

Both the experimental and control groups' lesson plans addressed the same instructional objectives and were based on the same reading passages and exercises.

The study was conducted with the learners in a classroom and each session lasted between 1 hour to 1 hour and a half. Since the learners were known to the researcher and told about the way of teaching the texts it was considered an ideal location. Learners were taught each passage about half an hour or more and were asked to listen to the audio CD while reading, comprehend and pick out the main ideas in the passage. When the learners had finished reading, they were asked to answer the questions included in each passage.

RESULTS

The results of the reading comprehension test were obtained from the participants' scores on the comprehension questions. An independent sample T-test was performed to analyze the scores on the Reading Comprehension Test. The alpha level was set at 0.00 for all the analyses.

Table 1 describes the whole statistics of all the tests administrated in the research project and of the participants who answered the questions in the two different environments. A in the first row stands for Group A or the experimental group who had access to audio CD in the classroom. B in the second row stands for group B or the control group who had no access to audio CD in the classroom.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the tests administrated in the main study

	CODE		*N*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*Std. Error Mean*
R1	dimension1	A	29	3.5862	.50123	.09308
		B	28	2.2500	.75154	.14203
R2	dimension1	A	30	2.5667	.50401	.09202
		B	29	1.5862	.50123	.09308
R3	dimension1	A	30	3.4000	.49827	.09097
		B	29	1.9310	.59348	.11021
R4	dimension1	A	29	3.4138	.98261	.18247
		B	29	2.1724	.71058	.13195
R5	dimension1	A	29	3.6897	.80638	.14974
		B	27	2.2593	.52569	.10117
R6	dimension1	A	31	3.7419	.72882	.13090
		B	32	2.5313	.50701	.08963
R7	dimension1	A	29	3.8621	.69303	.12869
		B	30	2.7000	.46609	.08510
R8	dimension1	A	30	3.6667	.47946	.08754
		B	29	2.1379	.69303	.12869
R9	dimension1	A	26	5.8077	.80096	.15708
		B	30	2.5333	.68145	.12441
R10	dimension1	A	30	4.0667	.82768	.15111
		B	27	2.0370	.75862	.14600
R11	dimension1	A	29	3.5517	.50612	.09398
		B	26	1.7308	.53349	.10463

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of independent sample T-test on two groups means

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
									Lower	
R1	Equal variances assumed	5.013	.029	7.923	55	.000	1.33621	.16865	.99823	1.67418
	Equal variances not assumed			7.869	46.840	.000	1.33621	.16981	.99456	1.67785
R2	Equal variances assumed	.088	.768	7.490	57	.000	.98046	.13090	.71834	1.24258
	Equal variances not assumed			7.491	56.952	.000	.98046	.13088	.71836	1.24255
R3	Equal variances assumed	1.291	.261	10.310	57	.000	1.46897	.14248	1.18366	1.75427
	Equal variances not assumed			10.279	54.657	.000	1.46897	.14290	1.18254	1.75539
R4	Equal variances assumed	4.644	.035	5.513	56	.000	1.24138	.22518	.79029	1.69246
	Equal variances not assumed			5.513	50.996	.000	1.24138	.22518	.78932	1.69344
R5	Equal variances assumed	4.959	.030	7.800	54	.000	1.43040	.18339	1.06273	1.79806
	Equal variances not assumed			7.915	48.511	.000	1.43040	.18071	1.06714	1.79365
R6	Equal variances assumed	1.617	.208	7.674	61	.000	1.21069	.15776	.89523	1.52614
	Equal variances not assumed			7.631	53.371	.000	1.21069	.15864	.89254	1.52883
R7	Equal variances assumed	1.809	.184	7.581	57	.000	1.16207	.15328	.85513	1.46901
	Equal variances not assumed			7.532	48.826	.000	1.16207	.15428	.85200	1.47214
R8	Equal variances assumed	1.173	.283	9.882	57	.000	1.52874	.15470	1.21896	1.83852
	Equal variances not assumed			9.822	49.643	.000	1.52874	.15564	1.21606	1.84141
R9	Equal variances assumed	.000	.984	16.532	54	.000	3.27436	.19806	2.87727	3.67145
	Equal variances not assumed			16.340	49.434	.000	3.27436	.20038	2.87176	3.67695
R10	Equal variances assumed	.845	.362	9.615	55	.000	2.02963	.21110	1.60658	2.45268
	Equal variances not assumed			9.659	54.978	.000	2.02963	.21012	1.60854	2.45072
R11	Equal variances assumed	.759	.388	12.986	53	.000	1.82095	.14023	1.53969	2.10222
	Equal variances not assumed			12.948	51.616	.000	1.82095	.14064	1.53869	2.10322

** P< .05

Tables 2 present the means and the standard deviations of the Reading Comprehension Tests with and without multimedia using two different texts. As shown by table 1, the mean score for group A with audio CD was higher than group B. Then a T-test was conducted to establish whether or not the differences were significant. As seen in table 2, the T-test results show that there is a meaningful distinction between the means of the two groups in the tests.

The researchers used statistical test and analysis of covariance in order to analyze the data and generalize the results of the study to the statistical population. The obtained results are shown below.

The Main Hypothesis of the Research

The analysis of covariance was used in order to test the hypothesis. The results are shown in the following table.

Table 3. Within Groups Factors

Group	Value label	N
1	experimental	30
2	control	30

Table 4. Test of Between- Subjects Effects

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean of square	F	The level of Significance
Corrected Model	9.555	3	3.185	6.299	0.01
Intercept	11.234	1	11.234	22.216	0.00
group	0.49	1	0.49	0.97	7.56
pretest	2.40	1	2.40	4.74	4.94
Joint group and pretest	0.51	1	0.51	1.01	7.52
Error	31.353	57	5.06		
Total	746.248	60			
Corrected Total	40.909	59			

a. Determined coefficient=0.531 (adjusted determined coefficient = 0.524)

In Figure 1 results show that statistical interaction is not significant because (F = 0.01) is less than alpha level ($P \leq 0.5$). The interaction between covariate and independent variable is significant.

In tables 4-6, the amount of correlation coefficient between the variables of pretest and posttest in both control and experimental groups is significant because their level of significance is less than 0/05.
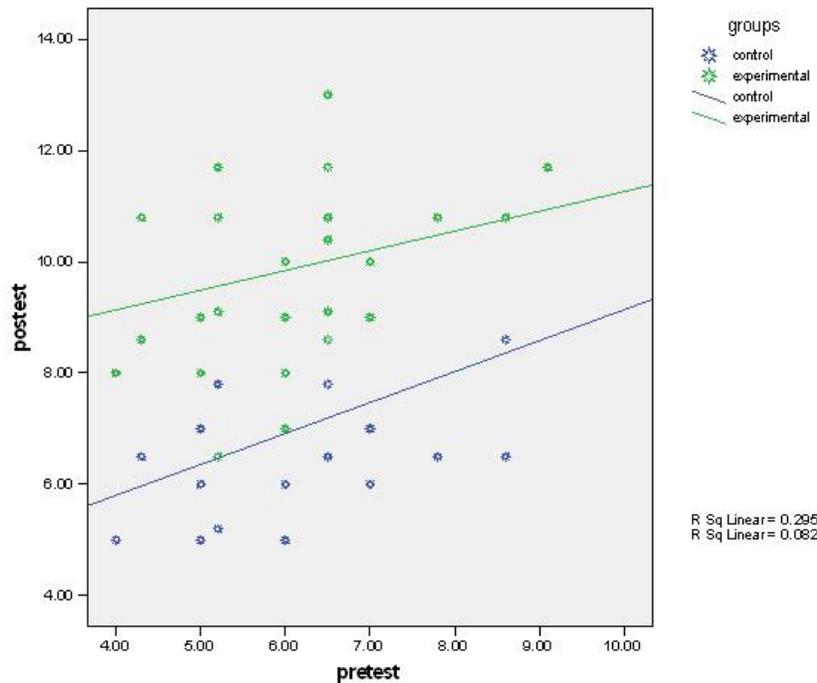
Figure 1. Scatter plot of pretest and posttest for experimental and control group

Table 5. Correlation and Coefficient between pretest and posttest of experimental and control group

Variables	Group	Correlation coefficient	N	Sig
Pretest posttest	control	0.42	20	0.046
Pretest posttest	experimental	0.54	20	0.032

The results of the covariance analysis are shown below.

Table 6. Leven's Test for Equality of Error Variances

Fisher's exact test	df_1	df_2	Sig.
726.0	1	58	676.0

The results show that the statistical data did not question the equivalence of covariance error.

Table 7. ANCOVA

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	9.505	2	4.752	9.534	0.00
Intercept	11.291	1	11.291	22.652	0.00
pretest	2.31	1	2.31	4.63	4.99
group	9.447	1	9.447	18.952	0.00
Error	31.404	57	4.98		
Total	746.248	60			
The Corrected Total	40.909	59			

a. determined coefficient =0.421 (adjusted determined coefficient = 0.407)
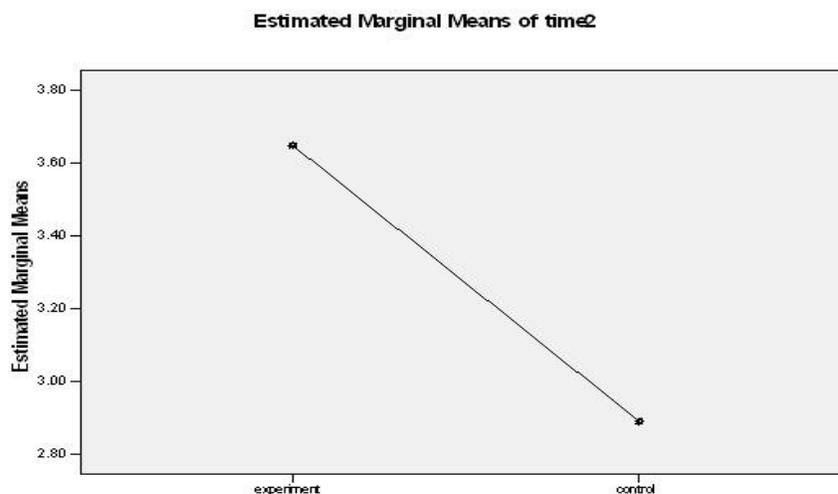
アシエン ヅロナル オホ ソセアル サイネセズ アナド ヒウメニテズ

Figure 2. Means of posttest plot

The results in the first row are boldfaced. They show that covariate random variable in alpha level is less than 0.05 which is significantly related to dependant variable. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. That is, there is a significant relationship between listening and simultaneous reading. So listening affects simultaneous reading.

Table 8. Descriptive Indices for posttest score of control and experimental group

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	0/95 confidence interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
experimental	3.649	1.23	3.403	3.895
control	2.890	1.23	2.644	3.136

The results shown above are as follows: The group source (labeled CODE * VAR 00001 on the SPSS output) evaluates the null hypothesis that the population adjusted means are equal. The results of the analysis indicate that this hypothesis is rejected, $F_{(4, 118)} = 27.792$, $p < 0.05$ and therefore listening affects simultaneous reading.

DISCUSSION

This paper focused on the effects of audio CDs including native speaker voice on L2 reading comprehension. Two groups participated in the project and then texts were used to make sure of the results yielded during the project. Group A received the texts without audio CD while reading and group B received the texts with audio CD while reading the texts.

Then the independent sample T-test was used ten times to analyze the results. The SPSS software was used satisfying the aim of analyzing the results. The t-test results showed significant effect for listening to audio CD while reading on L2 reading comprehension for all of the ten texts. This analysis supports the modality effects of the cognitive theory of multimedia learning. Studies have reported the superiority of a combination of audio, picture, and video in comparison to text only when presenting new knowledge (Mayer and Moreno, 1998). According to the modality principle, the audio and/or video gloss simultaneously engages both the visual working memory and auditory working memory, while texts involve only the visual working memory; therefore, audio and text can help with the application of

available cognitive capacity and should consequently lead to more content recall. The results of this study indicated the superiority of audio and text over text only.

The difference was statistically significant in the two learning conditions. This could be along with the previous studies (Lomicka 1998; Salaberry 2001; Ko 2005; Constantinescu 2007) which have reported that using a multimedia environment is to some extent better than working in traditional areas without multimedia. For this study, it can be said that the audio information presented via audio CD might act as a facilitator for the participants when taking the comprehension tests. As the results show, using multimedia has a considerable effect on students' reading comprehension ability and especially on low-pre-intermediate students.

One of the possible difficulties may be the fact that using educational multimedia environment in low-/pre-intermediate levels in Iran is so rare, if any. The institutes are mostly book-based and the universities are teacher-centered in Iran, and unfortunately in both of these learning environments using multimodality is not common. This is because of the fast progress of science around the world which teachers inside the country cannot match with.

Different studies investigated the effects of multimodality on reading comprehension ability. The majority of them were in line with the Dual Coding Theory of Paivio (1971,1990).

Learner variables and situational variables were not considered in this study mainly because they need a vast area of research to be followed.

Different studies tried to examine vocabulary acquisition along with reading comprehension (e.g Laufer & Hulstijn 2001; Al-Seghayer 2001; Akbulut 2007; Constantinescu 2007). This integration of vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension seemingly led to focus more attention on vocabulary acquisition and little attention on reading comprehension. Therefore, the researchers in this study decided to set aside the vocabulary acquisition and put all their efforts into investigating the effects of using multimedia on reading comprehension of low-/pre-intermediate students which seems to be unique in this case.

CONCLUSION

Previous studies have examined the effects of multimodality on L2 vocabulary learning and reading comprehension. These studies have supported the effectiveness of multimodality in facilitating L2 reading comprehension. However, no study in second language acquisition has examined audio annotation. This paper focused on this issue by comparing audio-text with text-only glosses in terms of their effects on L2 reading comprehension. The researchers tried to examine the students at a low-pre-intermediate level which was lower in comparison to the upper-intermediate and advanced levels which have usually been under investigation. So the study was unique from this point of view. The result of the study demonstrate that audio text is more effective than text only in facilitating L2 reading comprehension especially in low-/pre-intermediate levels. Therefore, big responsibility lies on the shoulders of curriculum developers and teachers who should incorporate audio-text in their curriculum and their lesson plans.

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In the next article, the impact of religiosity and locus of control on language achievement of Iranian EFL students is presented by Alireza Amini. Free Intermediate English reading texts for EFL and ESL | B1 and B2 texts with vocabulary guides and exercises for classroom and private study. Â Intermediate English reading resources. CEFR / TELC levels A2 B1 or B2 (Threshold - intermediate). IELTS levels 4 - 6. ACTFL levels Advanced-low – Advanced-mid. Readability. Most Linguapress Intermediate texts score as follows on the Flesch-Kincaid scales: Grade : between 6 and 8, Readability level : either. 60 - 70 Plain English or 70 - 80 Fairly easy. To Understand Flesch Kincaid scales, see the Linguapress Readability guide. The present study is an attempt to investigate the impact of two different types of pre-reading activities of 1: glossary of unknown vocabulary items and 2:content related support on EFL learners' performance on reading comprehension across low proficiency (LP) and high proficiency (HP) levels. 80 language learners with an age range of 18-28(male and female) participated in this study. Each level consisted of two experimental groups. One experimental group received glossary of unknown vocabulary items while the other group received content related support (in written form) with the aim of acti