

**Improving EFL Preparatory Stage Students' Listening
Comprehension Skills Through Listening Strategies Explicit
Instruction**

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Abstract

The current study aimed at exploring the impact of listening strategies explicit instruction (LSEI) on enhancing EFL preparatory stage students' listening comprehension (LC) skills. This study had a pre-post, quasi-experimental design to assess the students' LC skills before and after the LSEI sessions. In this context, a total of 70 first year EFL preparatory stage students were assigned to an experimental group (EG) and a control group (CG), each comprising 35 students. Over a period of 6 weeks, the EG students were instructed to utilize specific listening strategies (LS) when engaging with listening activities and tasks, while the CG students didn't receive any instruction. To collect data, a pre-post LC skills test was used to assess the participants' LC skills before and after the treatment. The independent t-test results showed that the students in the EG significantly outperformed those in the CG in respect of the LC skills posttest. In addition, paired-samples t-test results showed that the EG students' mean score on the LC skills posttest exceeded their mean score on the pre-test. Based on the study's results, LSEI had a constructive impact on enhancing first year EFL preparatory stage students' LC skills.

Key words: *Listening strategies explicit instruction, listening comprehension Skills, EFL preparatory stage students.*

Introduction

Over the past two decades, there has been a significant transformation in the realm of language learning and teaching, with a stronger focus on learners and their learning processes rather than on teachers and their instructional methods. Concurrently, this shift in focus has led researchers in the field of foreign language (FL) learning to prioritize understanding how students assimilate new knowledge and the strategies they utilize to comprehend, acquire, or retain that information.

Listening is considered the foundation upon which all other skills are built, serving as the main avenue through which students improve their initial engagement with their target language and culture. If students fail to engage in active listening, they are likely to experience multiple obstacles in grasping the speaker's content; therefore, the objective of successful communication will inevitably be unfulfilled. Listening constitutes an essential skill necessary for individuals to communicate in their daily lives, as it is vital for providing content and meaningful feedback.

Listening comprehension (LC) entails students' awareness of the spoken language. It does not simply involve a direct word-for-word translation; instead, it demands a deeper grasp of the meaning. This can aid students in participating more efficiently in communication, interacting, and receiving adequate understandable input for acquiring the target language, while also motivating them to enhance their other foreign or second language (FL/L2) skills (Renukadevi, 2014).

According to FL/L2 acquisition theory, language input represents the most important condition for acquiring a language. Without grasping the input at the suitable level, learning is impossible. In the process of language acquisition, listening is

regarded as an essential method for obtaining a FL/L2. Listening involves a multifaceted process where listeners should employ a wide variety of knowledge sources, encompassing both linguistic and non-linguistic elements, to rapidly interpret incoming data. Consequently, developing listening skills is challenging and necessitates significant training for effective implementation (Vandergrift and Goh, 2012; Hamouda, 2013).

Throughout the history of language instruction, teaching methodologies, textbooks, and grammatical frameworks have been identified as the key elements contributing to effective learning. Recently, the emphasis in language teaching has shifted towards the learner's role in the educational process. This shift is grounded in the various "styles" and "strategies" employed by learners. Wasilewska (2012) asserted that the implementation of language learning strategies (LLS) along with their guided practice in a classroom environment can enhance efficient language acquisition and elevate students' comprehension of the overall processes involved in language learning.

Strategy-based instruction (SBI) serves as a framework that facilitates and tracks EFL/ ESL learners' LC. Ngo (2019) stated that SBI is dedicated to equipping students with strategies for listening that allow them to become more skilled listeners. This entails the cultivation of "personal knowledge related to listening, problem-solving, directed attention, planning and evaluation, and monitoring". It has been deemed a more effective method for improving students' LC.

Vandergrift (1999) categorized listening strategies (LS) into "metacognitive" (MS), "cognitive" (CS), and "socio-affective" strategies (SAS). MS refer to the mental processes involved in managing language acquisition, which encompass planning, monitoring, and assessing one's comprehension. These activities

entail reflecting on the learning process, such as focusing attention selectively and overseeing comprehension. CS encompass mental processes employed to utilize language in completing a task, which involves applying specific techniques such as explanation and deduction to the learning activity. SAS encompass collaboration with fellow learners or the instructor for clarification, as well as utilizing particular methods to alleviate anxiety. These strategies involve activities like seeking clarification through questioning, working together, minimizing concerns, and providing self-encouragement. It is crucial for EFL learners to employ suitable LS to enhance their listening skills and adopt particular strategies that align with their individual learning requirements.

LS are crucial for enhancing FL/L2 LC. Experienced FL/L2 listeners make use of a wider array of strategies and implement them more often and efficiently than their less experienced counterparts. The connection between students' utilization of LS and FL/L2 listening instruction has been substantiated through empirical research in the literature (e.g. Chen, 2009; Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari, 2010; Yeldham, 2016; Milliner and Dimoski, 2021). According to these studies, the adoption of strategy instruction facilitates EFL/ESL students in achieving improved control of their LS. SBI plays a significant role in encouraging students to utilize LS, thereby boosting their confidence in listening and inspiring them to learn effective listening techniques.

The Problem of the Study

The listening skill is often regarded as a considerable obstacle for EFL learners, and it has been documented as one of the most challenging skills in relation to reading, speaking, and writing, especially for those EFL learners with comparatively

lower levels of English proficiency. A potential explanation for this is that listening is primarily defined as a transient, irreversible, and multi-faceted process (Renandya & Farrell, 2010; Rost, 2013).

Ahmed (2022) noted that EFL learners experience various obstacles while listening. These obstacles include understanding the oral discourse, keeping their attention on what is being said in LC classes, understanding the content when they encounter unfamiliar terms, grasping the intended message, main idea identification, forecasting comprehensive details from the speakers, rephrasing information using their own expressions, pinpointing specific information, drawing conclusions, locating referring terms, and determining related vocabulary.

Despite the critical role of listening practice in language teaching, English language courses predominantly prioritize reading and writing, while listening has largely been neglected. This issue is particularly prevalent in EFL contexts, where English is taught as a school subject and utilized solely within the classroom environment. Sekhri and Nandita (2018) posited that EFL students are learning English in environments that do not prioritize it as primary language. Consequently, these students have limited chances to listen to authentic language, which results in their unfamiliarity with how native speakers communicate with one another. As a result, students often encounter significant challenges in comprehending English that is spoken to them. In addition, the quality and amount of language input they obtain from their educational resources and teachers within the restricted classroom time is inadequate to represent genuine spoken and written language in use.

Further, LC necessitates heightened concentration, and a swift understanding is equally essential. During the act of

listening, numerous factors must be attentively considered. These include context, facial expressions, and body gestures, all of which play a crucial role in aiding listeners to grasp the messages conveyed by speakers (Ziane, 2011).

According to Vandergrift (2007), many ineffective listeners lack sufficient understanding of the actual issues that arise during listening. One of the key methods to address these challenges and enhance comprehension skills is to guide learners in effectively applying the appropriate skills and strategies. This necessitates the implementation of strategy-based instruction, where listeners are given opportunities to confront the difficulties they face and manage their listening process. This approach aids in improving their comprehension level, which in turn allows learners to achieve success in language acquisition and alleviate their anxiety.

In an effort to document the problem identified in the ongoing study, the researcher conducted interviews with six teachers who were responsible for teaching English to first year preparatory stage students. They emphasized that the students reveal shortcomings in their LC skills. Furthermore, the teachers indicated that they employ traditional teaching methods to develop listening skills. Moreover, they unanimously concurred that a restricted vocabulary and insufficient grammar knowledge hinder students' ability to comprehend the nuances of spoken language. Also, the teachers revealed that the students' dependence on their prior knowledge to understand new information, coupled with insufficient background knowledge, results in comprehension failures. As a result, The students encounter challenges with informal vocabulary, idiomatic phrases, and intricate grammatical constructions.

Furthermore, the problem of the ongoing study was validated by conducting a pilot study that included a LC test. On the 13th of February 2025, the researcher conducted a LC test to 37 first year EFL preparatory stage students (not part of both the EG and CG). The results indicated that a majority of students (87%) frequently encounter difficulties in LC as a result of several factors, such as restricted vocabulary, unfamiliar accents, fast speech rates, and insufficient exposure to authentic language. These difficulties can markedly hinder their proficiency in understanding spoken English and restrict their overall progress in language learning.

In addressing the aforementioned challenges and issues, educators and EFL instructors should explore alternative strategies to be implemented that will enhance students' interest and promote their engagement in overcoming these difficulties. Implementing LSEI is a highly effective teaching resource that EFL instructors can use to boost EFL students' LC.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of the ongoing study can be outlined as follows: the first year EFL preparatory stage students do not possess the essential LC skills and encounter various challenges while listening, including difficulties in comprehending oral discourse, maintaining focus on the spoken content, understanding unfamiliar terminology, identifying the spoken form of words, unknown contexts and accents, anticipating comprehensive details from the speakers, rephrasing information in their own words, pinpointing specific details, drawing conclusions, as well as elevated anxiety levels. Therefore, the ongoing study explores the impact of LSEI on enhancing the first year EFL preparatory stage students' LC.

Purpose of the Study

The ongoing study aimed to enhance the first year EFL preparatory stage students' LC through LSEI.

Questions of the Study

To address the aim of the ongoing study, the ensuing question was devised:

1. Does LSEI have any significant effect on enhancing the first year EFL preparatory stage students' LC?

Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses put forth for this study is detailed as follows:

1. A statistically significant difference would exist in the mean scores of the CG and the EG on the overall LC skills and sub-skills post-test, favoring the EG.
2. A statistically significant difference would exist in the mean scores of the EG on the overall LC skills and sub-skills pre-posttests, favoring the posttest.

Significance of the Study

The ongoing study would facilitate fulfilling the following:

1. Stressing the critical role of boosting the first year EFL preparatory stage students' LC.
2. Analyzing the potential effects of LSEI on enhancing the first year EFL preparatory stage students' LC.
3. Supplying EFL teachers with a relevant framework for developing students' LC skills using LSEI.
4. Providing EFL course designers with an innovative method for instructing LC skills.
5. EFL course designers have the opportunity to integrate teaching and learning activities pertaining to LSEI as a core

aspect of the listening activities at different educational levels.

6. Facilitating opportunities for other researchers to undertake further investigations into the effect of LSEI on enhancing EFL students' LC at different educational levels.

Delimitations of the Study

The ongoing study was restricted to the following considerations:

1. Seventy first year EFL preparatory stage students enrolled at Mohamed Mekkawy Preparatory School, Aswan.
2. The EFL listening comprehension skills that are part of the English language syllabus offered to the first year preparatory stage students.
3. The second semester of the academic year 2024/2025.

Definitions of Terms

Listening Strategies Explicit Instruction (LSEI)

Strategy instruction involves teaching students various strategies to facilitate their learning, making it enjoyable, and ensuring its transferability to new contexts. It assists students in not only comprehending what they hear more effectively, but also in addressing challenges that arise during their listening activities (Oxford, 2011).

In the context of the ongoing study, LSEI is defined operationally as “instructing the first year EFL preparatory stage students to use various techniques, steps, and plans which, when responding to specific listening tasks and activities, facilitate and enhance their LC”.

Listening comprehension (LC)

LC involves “the ability to identify and comprehend what others are communicating. This procedure encompasses comprehending a speaker's pronunciation, their grammar and vocabulary, as well as grasping the meaning” (Hamouda, 2013).

In the context of the ongoing study, LC is defined as “the ability of the first year EFL preparatory stage students to listen for specific information, guess the meanings of words from context, check predictions, listen for detail, and listen for gist properly using various listening strategies”.

Review of Literature

Listening Comprehension

Language acquisition is a protracted and complicated journey that demands knowledge of basic vocabulary, grammar, phonological aspects, and functions of communication, alongside the four fundamental language skills e.g. listening, reading, speaking, and writing that are employed to meet the communication requirements of learners. Among these four skills, the combination of listening and speaking is arguably the most commonly utilized for various language functions.

Listening is a crucial language skill, and as a result, it warrants a high level of importance among the four skill domains for language students. LC is a multifaceted and dynamic process wherein the listener should distinguish between different sounds, grasp vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpret intonation and stress, retain the information acquired from all these aspects, and contextualize it within both the immediate and broader sociocultural context of the statement (Vandergrift, 1999).

The importance of listening skills in foreign language learning cannot be overstated, as the fundamental requirement for

language acquisition is the appropriate reception of language input. Students can only achieve language acquisition when they are exposed to and can absorb adequate understandable input. Rost (1994) affirmed that listening is essential in language classes as it offers input for learners. As a skill for input, listening significantly contributes to the language development of students. Therefore, language acquisition primarily occurs through the reception of comprehensible input, and the ability to listen is a fundamental element in obtaining understandable language input. In the absence of comprehensible inputs at the suitable level, learning cannot effectively occur.

Listening is a crucial component of communication, as it is reported that, out of the total time dedicated to communication, "listening accounts for 40-50%; speaking for 25-30%; reading for 11-16%; and writing for approximately 9%" (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). In addition, Hasan (2000) emphasized that listening comprehension creates the appropriate environment for language acquisition and the enhancement of other language skills. Consequently, listening is crucial not only as a receptive skill but also for the advancement of spoken language proficiency.

Moreover, is advantageous for learners' pronunciation. This means that increased exposure to spoken English allows learners to better understand and adapt to its intonation, stress patterns, redundancy, and clusters (Bouach, 2010). Also, Wilson (2008) identified additional motivations for listening, including information acquisition, pleasure, assessment, and critique. Furthermore, another purpose of listening is to enhance speaking abilities by refining pronunciation.

LC is viewed as an essential priority skill in all language education frameworks to foster and advance additional skills. It

is characterized as an active skill rather than a passive one. Listeners have the capacity to employ both their previous knowledge and linguistic understanding to comprehend what they hear and to interpret the spoken language. It entails recognizing the acoustic structures of a FL/L2 along with their variations, and comprehending the definitions of specific words along with the structure of the sentences they are found in (Wagner, 2010; Tyagi, 2013).

The significance of listening comprehension cannot be overstated, as it is the process by which we obtain input, and without its understanding, learning is not achievable (Rost, 1994). In addition, The act of listening greatly influences the development of speaking abilities. This means that we cannot advance our speaking skills without also improving our listening capabilities. If a student possesses strong listening skills in the English language, it will be quite simple for him to listen to the radio, engage in study, watch movies, or converse with individuals from other countries. Learners should engage in extensive practice and gain exposure to English to cultivate this skill. There exists a correlation between listening to a language and acquiring it. Therefore, learners require maximum exposure to the English language (Doff, 1995; Ziane, 2011).

To conclude, proficient LC skills empower learners to track their understanding, detect obstacles, and implement compensatory strategies. Moreover, it promotes focus, perseverance, and confidence in learning a language. The relevance of listening comprehension can be outlined through various key elements: it provides the groundwork for language acquisition, it is indispensable for the advancement of communication skills, it improves cognitive skills, it is associated

with academic success, and it is essential in evaluating language proficiency.

Despite its significance in FL learning, LC instruction has often been disregarded and insufficiently addressed in many EFL programs. Osada (2004) indicated that listening has not garnered much focus from both educators and students, as they are generally less aware of its significance. Within classroom settings, it appears that teachers focus on assessing rather than facilitating LC skills. In the meantime, it appears that students are acquiring listening skills rather than LC. Consequently, it continues to be the most disregarded and least understood component of language learning.

Acknowledging the critical role of LC in language learning and its associated complexities, the ongoing study seeks to support the first year EFL preparatory stage students in utilizing effective LS when processing oral texts, in order to mitigate listening challenges and obstacles. It is anticipated that the results of this study will offer valuable insights into the instruction and acquisition of LC skills.

Listening Strategies Explicit Instruction

A considerable number of ESL/EFL teachers are intrigued by the disparity in learning rates among their students. They also find themselves questioning why some classroom assignments are considerably simpler for certain students than for their counterparts. One explanation for this disparity is linked to the LS that ESL/EFL learners implement to fulfill their needs or tackle the tasks given to them. Research indicates that the utilization of strategies enhances effectiveness in language acquisition. In other words, the greater the awareness learners have regarding the strategies they implement (the rationale

behind their use), the more proficient and capable they will become (Oxford, 1990; Cohen, 2003).

LLS refer to particular actions or behaviors employed by students to improve their learning and self-direction. Additionally, LLS are adaptable, straightforward to instruct and adjust, and are influenced by various factors including age, learning style, and the stage of learning (Oxford, 1990). Hismanoglu (2000) asserted that every language learner employs LLS either intentionally or unintentionally when they are processing new information and carrying out activities. In language classes, students are immersed in a problem-solving atmosphere where they are likely to confront unfamiliar input and complex assignments from their teachers. Consequently, it is essential for learners to seek the most efficient methods to accomplish the required tasks, which necessitates the use of LLS.

Moreover, proficient language learners understand the strategies they employ and the reasons behind their usage. Similarly, adept language learners choose strategies that are effective for particular tasks. Less proficient learners possess an awareness of their learning strategies, but they tend to use them arbitrarily, without a meticulous selection or emphasis on a specific strategy for a particular assignment. LLS instruction serves to improve EFL students' overall learning experience by fostering an understanding of effective LLS, illustrating the link between strategy application and language tasks, and by expanding the students' existing repertoire of LLS (De Araúz, 2009).

Furthermore, Hidayanti and Umamah (2018) demonstrated that language learners with higher proficiency are more likely to utilize their prior knowledge along with strategic choices to identify and comprehend the listening context. Also, they utilize

strategy deployment and gain additional advantages from the direct instruction of strategies provided by teachers. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to incorporate strategy instruction into the learning process, as merely listening without comprehending the context is not adequately effective.

According to Oxford (2011), the explicit strategy instruction can be viewed as an “entirely informed strategy training”, where strategies are identified, illustrated, instructed, and exercised. Students become aware of the contingent advantages of metacognitive knowledge and strategies in both academic and real-world listening contexts. Such strategies elucidate their purpose and effectiveness, thereby facilitating the retention and transfer of these strategies to different tasks and contexts.

Since LLS are evidently teachable, it appears necessary to incorporate modules on teaching strategies into the syllabi for students. These modules, presently referred to as Strategy Based Instruction (SBI) models, have been created by numerous researchers (Oxford, 1990; O' Malley & Chamot, 1990; Cohen, 1998; Chamot et al., 1999). The primary distinction between various SBI models is that certain models involve independent training, whereas others are incorporated within the courses.

Strategy instruction models aim to encourage proficient learning and to cultivate self-directed learners adept at managing themselves. SBI models ought to be incorporated within the teaching context. The most encouraging results indicate that SBI trainings, which are related to content, address the real issues faced by students. When the teachers implement the SBI, students should recognize their unique structures in strategy utilization and focus on enhancing those that require improvement (Chamot 2004).

LS are categorized within LLS which are perceived as techniques, procedures, or intentional activities performed by learners to facilitate their learning, processing, and retention of both schematic and linguistic knowledge (Chamot, 2005). Furthermore, listening strategy instruction (LSI) is considered a method for boosting learners' skills in making choices and coordinating suitable strategies that align with their listening goals and requirements, thereby enabling them to understand more effectively (Cohen, 2011b). In addition, LSEI represents a student-oriented approach in which students receive instruction on the appropriate timing, methods, and reasons for the direct application of LS in individual or integrated sessions. LSEI fundamentally encompasses the cultivation of awareness, demonstration, practice, and assessment of LS, along with the application to new listening activities.

There has been a great deal of emphasis placed on the research focused on the implementation of learning strategies and training that pertains to teaching listening within the classroom environment. Among the significant studies undertaken to boost learners' English listening skills, the use of LS is broadly acknowledged as one of the most efficient approaches. Earlier research has indicated that LS may be instructed to expand the strategic options available to learners, ultimately helping them to become skilled listeners (Goh, 1998; Vandergrift, 1998).

Within this field, researchers have undertaken the task of exploring the models of LS instruction and validating its impact on enhancing students' listening performance (Cross, 2009; Siegel, 2011). According to previous research, teaching listening strategies may provide students with essential skills, thus improving their awareness of listening strategy application and supplying them with the necessary abilities to perform listening

tasks (Goh, 2002; Goh & Taib, 2006; Graham, Santos, & Vanderplank, 2008).

Significant focus has been directed towards analyzing the effectiveness of LS instruction from a longitudinal viewpoint. Graham, Santos & Vanderplank (2008) explored French EFL learners' evolution of LS and listening performance over a period of six months. The results revealed significant variations in the strategies employed by learners with higher proficiency compared to those with lower proficiency, and there was a notable consistency in the strategies utilized throughout the duration of the study.

Chulim (2008) explored Mexican university students' use of LS. The findings indicated that the strategies most frequently used focused on highlighting particular information, while note-taking and prior knowledge were the strategies least employed. No significant differences were observed among the students regarding the application of listening strategies. Mohseny and Raeisi (2009) investigated the correlation between Iranian EFL learners' use of LS and their language proficiency. The statistical analysis indicated a notable positive correlation between LS use and proficiency level.

Cross (2009) explored the LSI effectiveness in enhancing Japanese ESL learners' LC. The experimental group was provided with LSI "which included the presentation, practice, and review of listening strategies", while the control group received traditional instruction without any explicit strategy guidance. The results indicated that the experimental group exhibited markedly superior performance compared to the control group.

Yang (2009) carried out research to explore how metacognitive listening strategy training affects the improvement

of LC. The results emphasized the crucial importance of metacognitive strategies in assisting learners to engage in listening activities more efficiently and to discern proficient listeners from their ineffective counterparts. Additionally, it can be implemented in listening classes to enhance students' LC.

Zhang (2012) explored the impact of strategy training on Chinese EFL students' listening comprehension. The results revealed that using listening strategies may have a beneficial impact on the learners' LC. Bozorgian and Pillay (2013) explored how teaching listening strategies in the L1 influenced ESL listening comprehension. The results showed that employing L1 to teach listening strategies significantly enhanced students' LC skills.

Golzadeh and Moiiinvaziri (2017) examined the correlation between Iranian EFL learners' listening anxiety and their awareness of metacognitive strategies. The participants included learners with upper intermediate and advanced proficiency levels. The researchers administered the "Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire" (MALQ) and the "Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale" (FLLAS) to collect the necessary data for this correlational study. The results indicated that a negative relationship was found between the learners' listening anxiety and their utilization of metacognitive strategies.

Further, Xu and Huang (2018) investigated the intermediary effect of listening metacognitive awareness on Chinese EFL learners' listening anxiety and listening performance. The results revealed that listening metacognitive knowledge reduces learners' listening anxiety and improves their listening performance.

In a related area of investigation, Mohamadpour, Talebinejad, and Tabatabaei (2019) explored the metacognitive

strategy instruction effectiveness in decreasing Iranian EFL learners' listening anxiety. The researchers used the "Integrated Experiential Learning Task" (IELT) model, and the "Metacognitive Pedagogical Sequence" (MPS) model to teach LS to the two experimental groups respectively, whereas the traditional product-oriented listening instruction was used to teach the control group. All students received instruction from the same teacher, and identical listening comprehension materials were utilized across all groups. The study findings indicated that both IELT and MPS were effective in alleviating listening anxiety. However, it was determined that MPS was superior in decreasing the listening anxiety among the learners.

Fathi, Derakhshan, and Torabi (2020) investigated the LSI effectiveness in improving Iranian EFL university students' LC, listening anxiety, and listening self-efficacy. The participants of the study were randomly allocated to an experimental group, which received the LSI, and a control group, which received conventional teaching without any strategy guidance. To collect data, the researchers administered the listening section of the "International English Language Testing System" (IELTS), a "Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale", and a "Second Language Listening Self-Efficacy Questionnaire" before and after the intervention. The results of the study showed that LSI significantly improved learners' LC and decreased their listening anxiety. In addition, the participants' listening self-efficacy was not substantially improved by LSI.

To summarize, earlier studies have validated that LSI boosts learners' LC and diminishes their listening anxiety. Nevertheless, for strategy instruction to yield positive results, learners should apply and utilize these strategies in comparable situations and tasks where they were initially acquired. Thus, merely being

aware of the strategy is insufficient. Learners should understand how to apply it to themselves. Additionally, it is important for learners to grasp the practical application of the strategy in their own context. Upon examining the relevant literature, it appears that there is a necessity to carry out such studies within the Egyptian educational environments. So, the ongoing study explores the impact of LSEI on enhancing EFL preparatory stage students' LC.

Methods

The current investigation adopted a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest, comprising a CG and an EG. Testing was conducted for both groups prior to and subsequent to the experiment's implementation.

Participants

The present study included 70 first-year EFL preparatory stage students from Mohamed Mekkawy preparatory School in Aswan. These students are of the same age, language proficiency, and originate from the same cultural background. Moreover, the researcher explained the study's objectives to them and assured that any information shared would be treated with confidentiality.

Instruments and Materials

To meet the aims of the present study, the researcher constructed and employed the instruments and materials mentioned below:

The List of Listening Comprehension Skills

The ongoing study focuses on the listening comprehension skills that are part of the English language curriculum offered to the first year EFL preparatory stage students, the second semester

of the academic year 2024/2025. Appendix (1) contains the definitive version of the list of LC skills.

The EFL Listening Comprehension Skills Test

The researcher developed an EFL Listening Comprehension Test (LCT), as illustrated in (Appendix 2), to assess the first year EFL preparatory stage students' LC. The test consists of five questions; each question targets one LC sub-skill, with (5) marks allocated for each question. The LCT total mark is (25). In the five LCT questions, the students listen to different conversations and circle the appropriate answer to the given questions.

The LCT test was provided to five TEFL specialists to verify its validity. The jury concluded that the test was valid for meeting the study goals and proposed no further changes. The test was piloted on 30 first year EFL preparatory stage students (not included in the EG or the CG). The purpose of this piloting was to ensure that the LCT was clear and to measure the time required for the test's completion. Moreover, by determining the square root of the test reliability coefficient, the LCT validity coefficient was verified. Consequently, the validity coefficient of the test was determined to be (.84), which is regarded as falling within an appropriate range. Based on that, the test is acknowledged as valid and is able to accurately measure the participants' LC before implementing the LSEI sessions and following its completion. Furthermore, to verify the LCT reliability, the test-retest method was applied. The students were subjected to test on the 19th of February 2025. A retest was administered two weeks later. The correlation coefficient was (0.80).

The LSEI-Based Program

Designed to enhance the LC of the first year EFL preparatory stage students, the LSEI-based program was executed in the second semester of the academic year 2024/2025. Covering a duration of six weeks, the program featured six sessions, with a two-hour allocation for each session. During the first session, the researcher provided a concise discussion on the significance of teaching listening strategies and presented the first year EFL preparatory stage students with a broad description of the LSEI-based program for the complete strategy instruction duration. Throughout the remaining sessions, the students were instructed on how to forecast aural content and lexical items, infer and deduce unfamiliar vocabulary meanings, anticipate new elements of the text, employ contextual clues to comprehend the aural material, and use textual markers to predict complex content and subsequent information. In addition, The students received guidance on utilizing cues and noting keywords during listening exercises, employing discourse and text markers to improve their understanding, and identifying stressed content words in spoken language. Appendix (3) illustrates the final version of the LSEI-based program incorporated in the ongoing study.

Results of the Study

The conclusions drawn from this study are conveyed in line with the proposed hypotheses, utilizing the “Statistical Package for Social Sciences” (SPSS) version 23. Below is a concise summary of the results:

Hypothesis (1)

The first hypothesis proposes that “a statistically significant difference would exist in the mean scores of the EG and the CG

on the overall LC skills and sub-skills post-test, favoring the EG". The ensuing table illustrates the EG and CG groups' statistics on the LC post-test.

Table (1): the EG and CG groups' statistics on the LC post-test.

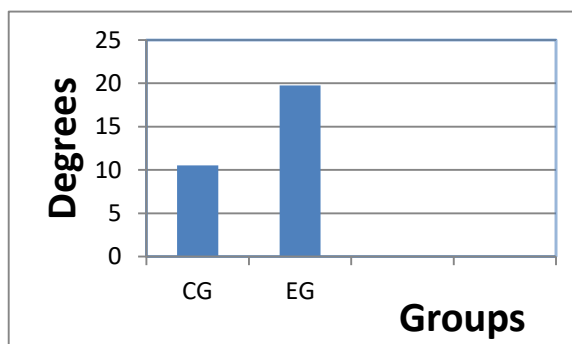
Skill	CG		EG		t-value	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Listening for specific information	2.08	.50	3.82	.82	10.67	0.01
Guessing the meanings of words from context	2.28	.45	3.97	.56	13.66	0.01
Checking predictions	1.97	.56	3.88	.52	14.58	0.01
Listening for detail	2.17	.45	3.94	.53	14.88	0.01
Listening for gist	2.02	.74	4.11	.67	12.24	0.01
Total	10.54	1.03	19.74	1.37	31.52	0.01

Table (1) indicates that there is a significant difference at (0.01) between the CG and EG mean scores on the LC posttest, favoring the EG.

Comparing the mean scores of the CG and EG on the LC posttest shows that the CG students' mean scores on the LC posttest are (2.08, 2.28, 1.97, 2.17, and 2.02 respectively), while the EG students' mean scores on the LC posttest are (3.82, 3.97, 3.88, 3.94, and 4.11 respectively). As indicated in Table (1), the mean score achieved by the EG students on the overall LC posttest is higher than the mean score of the CG. The calculated t-value is (31.52), indicating significance at the 0.01 level. These values signify the considerable improvement of the EG students concerning their LC over the CG. This finding presented statistical evidence supporting the first hypothesis.

The difference between the CG and EG mean scores on the overall LC posttest is illustrated as shown in Figure (1).

Figure (1): The CG and EG mean scores on the overall LC posttest.



Hypothesis (2)

The second hypothesis states that “a statistically significant difference would exist in the mean scores of the EG on the overall LC skills and sub-skills pre-posttests, favoring the posttest”. The ensuing table illustrates the EG statistics on the overall LC skills and sub-skills pre-posttests.

Table (2): Results of the EG on the LC pre-posttests.

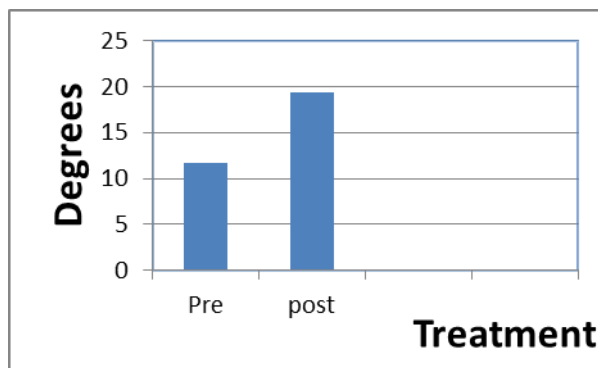
Skill	LC Pretest		LC Posttest		t-value	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Listening for specific information	2.17	.38	3.80	.79	10.58	0.01
Guessing the meanings of words from context	2.34	.53	3.91	.56	12.57	0.01
Checking predictions	2.42	.60	3.71	.51	9.64	0.01
Listening for detail	2.45	.50	3.88	.52	11.43	0.01
Listening for gist	2.34	.48	4.05	.63	12.86	0.01
Total	11.74	.91	19.37	1.53	26.29	0.01

Table (2) indicates that there is a significant difference at (0.01) between the EG mean scores on the LC pre-posttests, favoring the posttest.

Comparing the mean scores of the EG mean scores on the LC pre-posttests shows that the EG students' mean scores on the LC pre-test are (2.17, 2.34, 2.42, 2.45, and 2.34 respectively), while their mean scores on the LC posttest are (3.80, 3.91, 3.71, 3.88, and 4.05 respectively). As indicated in Table (2), the mean score achieved by the EG students on the overall LC posttest is higher than their mean score on the pre-test. The calculated t-value is (26.29), indicating significance at the 0.01 level. Based on that, the second hypothesis is corroborated.

The difference between the EG mean scores on the LC pre-posttests is illustrated as shown in Figure (2).

Figure (2): The EG mean scores on the overall LC pre-posttests.



Presented in the following table is the effect size of the LSEI-based program concerning the LC of the EG students:

Table (3): The effect size of the LSEI -based program on the EG students' LC

Skill	t-value	μ^2	Effect size
LC	26.29	.95	Large

Table (3) demonstrates that the eta square (η^2) value is (0.95). It is clear that this value surpasses (0.14), indicating a substantial effect size of the LSEI -based program on improving the EG students' LC. The (η^2) value signifies the substantial impact of the experimental treatment applied in this research. As a result, the LSEI -based program remarkably enhanced the first year EFL preparatory stage students' LC.

Discussion

The central goal of the ongoing study was to enhance the first year EFL preparatory stage students' LC by employing a LSEI-based program. The findings of the current study indicated that LSEI allowed the EG students the opportunity to reflect on the theme of the text they will be listening to, ascertain the category of textual content, ascertain the words that they recall and are already aware of, along with the terms they intend to investigate. In addition, LSEI enabled the EG students to identify the word category "part of speech", verify the grammar, examine the broader context "typically the conjunction relationships", and attempt to infer the word and validate their inference.

In addition, the EG students, who engaged in the listening tasks within the LSEI- based program, demonstrated the ability to consider the subject matter presented in the text, concentrate on the title, reflect on their own understanding, contemplate the nature of the text (i.e. lecture, news article), forecast what they anticipate hearing about. Moreover, the students were instructed

to disregard any information that appears irrelevant, utilize key terms and expressions, and practice rephrasing information. Furthermore, the students commenced selecting the primary concept, essential words, intonation, and various hints present in the text and take notes of the specific details.

In summary, after employing the LSEI-based program, the first year EFL preparatory stage students exhibited positive perspectives on employing different LS, including the pursuit of opportunities to practice listening as extensively as possible, considering their listening skills development, retention of vocabulary and their meanings to adequately respond to listening exercises, comprehending the grammar of sentences during listening activities, translating the material they read to ensure clarity in comprehending the message, and summarizing and recalling the essential points necessary for understanding the listening texts.

Conclusions

The current study investigated the impact of LSEI-based program on developing the first year EFL preparatory stage students' LC skills. Findings indicated that the students' LC skills were cultivated as a consequence of engaging with the LSEI-based program. A potential way for teachers to assist their students in developing listening competence is by implementing "systematic strategy instruction", which could additionally contribute to the advancement of autonomous language learners. When teachers possess knowledge and comprehension regarding the process of developing listening skills, it will assist students in becoming proficient and effective listeners.

It is essential for teachers to offer students chances to apply the new LS in order to incorporate them into the language learning process. Students can adopt the strategies while

undertaking a range of listening activities and tasks. Adopting listening strategies raises their consciousness regarding the listening process, thereby leading to enhanced performance.

In light of the conclusions drawn from the ongoing study, the LSEI-based program has a significant positive effect on the first year EFL preparatory stage students' LC. Furthermore, it serves as a valuable resource for enhancing their listening skills. Ultimately, it empowers students to navigate different listening scenarios with confidence.

Recommendations of the Study

Based on the results of the present study, the following suggestions are offered:

- EFL preparatory stage students who receive instruction on how to approach a listening task and are provided guidance on managing the auditory input will have a higher likelihood of processing it effectively.
- EFL preparatory stage teachers should prioritize the systematic and deliberate enhancement of all language skills, especially the listening skill.
- Teaching listening skills ought to be a crucial element that effectively considered by EFL course designers.
- Increased listening activities should occur both within and beyond the classroom, with an emphasis on the process of listening rather than merely providing opportunities for it.
- The assessment of listening skills ought to concentrate on task-oriented activities that involve EFL learners in more genuine, real-world scenarios, as well as significant tasks.

Suggestions for Further Research

- Examining the elements that promote the acquisition and utilization of LS among EFL secondary stage students.

- Determining the LS that yield the best results in the EFL classroom in relation to the proficiency levels of students.
- Examining the effect of online tools “discussion boards, weblogs, and e-mails” on EFL students’ LC.
- More research is essential to analyze any conceivable relationships between the employment of LS and other determinants that impact strategy application.

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