The Development of Undergraduate Students' English Listening Comprehension Using the Preparation-Familiarization-Assessment Process

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Abstract

Not only has listening, over a few decades, been considered as an essential skill for effective interactive communication, but it has also been required by those who learn English as a foreign/second language for their accurate interpretation and responses. This study therefore aimed to develop students' English listening comprehension using the Preparation-Familiarization-Assessment Process as referred to the PFA Process and to study factors affecting listening fluency achievement. The subject of this research included 34 freshman students majoring in Business Management at Thepsatri Rajabhat University, Thailand. The research was carried out as a one group experimental study in the second semester of academic year 2018. The instruments for the study involved the PFA Process, pre-posttest and semi-structured interview. The data were analyzed by mean, standard deviation, t-test and document analysis. The factors affecting students' listening fluency achievement were collected by semi-structured interview. The results indicated that the students' listening comprehension was significantly improved at .01 level. For the factors affecting students' listening fluency achievement, it was found that repetition, background knowledge and vocabulary awareness were effective aspects to support their success in listening tasks.

Keywords

Listening comprehension, Factors affecting listening achievement, The PFA Process.

การพัฒนาการฟังเพื่อความเข้าใจของนักศึกษาโดยใช้กระบวนการ
Preparation – Familiarization – Assessment Process

กุสุมา เรืองพัฒนกูล

อาจารย์ประจำสาขาภาษาอังกฤษ หลักสูตรภาษาอังกฤษ คณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์

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บทคัดย่อ

การฟังไม่เพียงเป็นทักษะที่จำเป็นสำหรับการสื่อสารที่มีประสิทธิภาพมากกว่าทศวรรษ แต่ยังเป็นทักษะที่ต้องการสำหรับผู้ที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศหรือภาษาที่สอเพื่อการตีความหมายและการตอบสนองที่แม่นยำถูกต้อง ดังนั้นงานวิจัยนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์ เพื่อพัฒนาการฟังภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจโดยใช้กระบวนการ Preparation – Familiarization – Assessment หรือเรียกย่อว่า PFA Process และเพื่อศึกษาปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการฟัง กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 1 สาขาบริหารธุรกิจ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเทพสตรี จำนวน 34 คน การวิจัยนี้เป็นการศึกษากลุ่มทดลองเดี่ยวและดำเนินการวิจัยในภาคเรียนที่ 2 ปีการศึกษา 2561 เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยประกอบด้วยกระบวนการ PFA แบบทดสอบก่อนและหลังเรียน และการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง สถิติที่ใช้การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล ได้แก่ ค่าเฉลี่ยส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน การทดสอบค่าที และการวิเคราะห์เอกสาร สำหรับปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการฟังใช้การสัมภาษณ์เก็บข้อมูล ลโดยการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง ผลการวิจัยพบว่า การฟังภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจของนักศึกษาพัฒนาขึ้นอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .01 ส่วนปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการฟังคือ การฟังซ้ำ ความรู้เดิม และความรู้คำศัพท์

คำสำคัญ

การฟังเพื่อความเข้าใจ ปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการฟัง กระบวนการ PFA

Statement and Significance of the Problems

English listening is one of the four micro skills essential for effective communication in the international community. It is necessary for acquiring insight and information and achieving success in communication with others (Hayrapetyan, 2016). The effective communication will be arisen when listeners are able to understand what they are listening to and give appropriate responses orally (Tavil, 2010). In Thailand, students have learned and used English as a foreign language (EFL) for many decades but the majority of graduates are unable to communicate English effectively especially in real situations with international speakers (Boonkit, 2010). The cause of their inability to communicate English might be incomprehensible listening to interlocutors. Jafari & Hashim (2012) mentioned about the factors affecting students' inability of listening English that include text genre and length, complexity of syntactic structure, limited second language (L2) vocabulary, phonological problems, unfamiliar accents, fast speech rate, and lack of background knowledge. Hence, students are unable to produce any responses to international speakers when they suffer aforementioned problems since they need to employ syntactic structure to organize the utterance they are hearing and retrieve their background knowledge to interpret what is transferred by speakers (Gulec & Durmms, 2014). Considering previously mentioned factors, they can be grouped into two aspects, linguistic knowledge (e.g., phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic) and nonlinguistic knowledge (e.g., background knowledge or topic familiarity) category (Stæhr, 2009). To facilitate listening instruction and improve students' listening comprehension, instructors can adopt a variety of listening teaching approaches and suitable supplementary materials that support and enhance students' knowledge in both aspects.

To enhance students' listening comprehension, some research was conducted focusing on familiarization. Wasuntarasobhit & Chinkumtornwong (1999) conducted the study to improve their students' listening comprehension through familiarization with

features of spoken English. The measurement was corrected from comparison between the outcome of the pretest and posttest. During the experiment, the students were intensively trained in recognizing three specific pronunciation features: stress, linking and vowel reduction. The result revealed that most of the students earned higher posttest scores and therefore it could be mentioned that familiarization with spoken English training was an effective technique for improving listening comprehension. Additionally, Adank et al (2009)investigated the relative processing cost associated with comprehension of an unfamiliar native accent under adverse listening condition. The result of the study found that the listeners who were assumed to be familiar with Standard English and unfamiliar with Glaswegian English made more errors and showed slower response time for moderate signal-to- noise ratios for Glaswegian English sentences than Stand English sentences. In accordance with the first aforementioned research, the researcher focused on improving students' listening comprehension through familiarization with pronunciation listening practice. Therefore, it could be considered that familiarization with listening practice facilitated students' listening comprehension achievement. Spigler & Wilson (2017) also supported this idea that "The more often we encounter and object, for example the more often we see a particular face or hear a particular voice, the more familiar it becomes" (pp.1-17).

To facilitate students' familiarization with speakers' communicating, the preparation of linguistic knowledge on lexical, syntactic and semantic aspect of English is a crucial element for interpreting the meaning of speakers' conversation. Vocabulary and syntactic structure should be taught to students explicitly in order to accelerate them to memorize the meaning of vocabulary and structure. Emerick (2019) stated that explicit instruction was essential for learners to develop competence in second language listening. The students are able to interpret what the speakers mention when they recognize the meaning of L2 words. Vandergrift and Baker (2015) indicated that successful listening comprehension depends on a language users' knowledge of L2 words. Hence, once words are recognized and associated with the listeners' literal meaning, larger semantic units can be built in their mind.

In listening practice operation,the suitable material was an important factor for effective listening instruction. Liubiniene (2009) also suggested that listening practice with suitable materials and a variety of forms are important to develop students' listening skill. Authentic material produced by real native English speaker such as videos versus audios was an interesting aid suggested by some researchers. Safranj (2014) applied the authentic aid as movies to conduct the study in advancing students' listening comprehension. The result found that a majority of research participants enhanced their listening skills and gained more vocabulary, understood more foreign culture, felt relaxed and had fun while learning via movies in class. Ni (2017) also commented that applying various kinds of listening teaching authentic courseware with adoption of multimedia, combining pictures, texts, and voice together enable students to attain all-around experience, optimize education structure and improve teaching quality. Emerick (2019) also studied about university language teachers' beliefs on explicit teaching and authentic materials in second language (L2) listening instruction. The result revealed that most teachers believed on valuable applying authentic materials for second language listening teaching. Additionally, Edrenius (2018) explored 24 upper-secondary English teachers' attitudes toward authentic materials in listening lessons in Sweden. The result showed that they preferred using authentic material because of its diverse interesting topics and connection of world outside of school. Moreover, the study of Azizah (2016) revealed the effects of the use of authentic materials in teaching listening. The finding displayed that the listening comprehension achievement of experimental group taught by authentic material was significantly higher than the control group used inauthentic material. According to the benefits of authentic material, the researcher thought that visual videos on Youtube were interesting for students' listening practice because they were recordeddialogues of different speakers' English accent and fast speed rate. In this study, the subject group was conducted the pretest with 50 multiple-choices of listening test to prove their listening comprehension problem and the result showed that over 90% of them failed in the test.

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Although there was a large amount of research related to students' listening enhancement, no studies focused on a particular process which was systematically used to enhance students' listening achievement. Consequently, an idea to construct an effective listening teaching process was raised. The three major components of the listening teaching process used in this research were Preparation, Familiarization and Assessment, to be described in details in the research framework.

Objectives of the study

The purposes of this study were:

1. To compare students' English listening comprehension before and after implementing the PFA process.

2. To investigate factors affecting students' listening fluency achievement

Scope of the study

1. The participants

The participants of this study were 34 freshman students majoring in Business Management of Thepsatri Rajabhat University registered for English for Communication Course.

2. Variables

The dependent variable was the PFA process, standing for Preparation, Familiarization and Assessment.

The independent variables were students' listening comprehension and factors affecting listening fluency achievement.

Research Framework

In this study, a teaching process called the PFA process was particularly created to use as the key research instrument for developing students' listening comprehension, comprising three phases, Preparation, Familiarization, and Assessment. The factors

affecting their listening fluency achievement that the students used to support their attempts to do the listening tasks were also studied. The research framework was displayed in Figure 1.

DEPENDENT	INDEPENDENT
PFA PROCESS	**Students' Listening Comprehension**
PREPARATION FAMILIZATION ASSESSMENT	**Factors Affecting Listening Fluency Achievement**
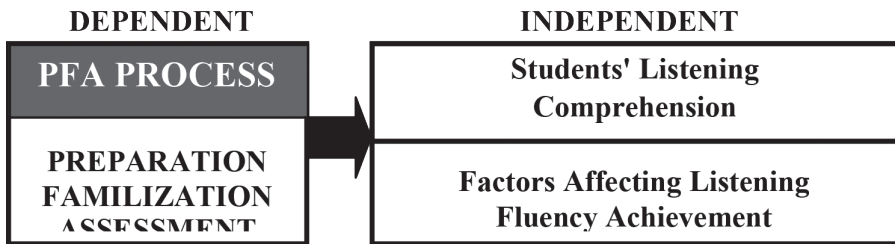
Figure 1: Research Framework

With regard to the PFA process, there were three phases to conduct in the class for each lesson unit. First, the class began with Preparation process which included learning vocabulary, conversational expressions, grammar structures together with writing and reading tasks in students' textbook in order to provide them with the knowledge related to the conversations in the listening tasks. Second, it was the process of Familiarization considered as students' intensive practice that they had to listen to English conversation through watching video clips. Finally, they were individually operated in the Assessment process by taking the interview about the clips. In this task, the students could spend their time freely to watch the clips repeatedly until they were able to answer the questions up to 80% which was the last phase of this process. The PFA process was presented in Figure 2.
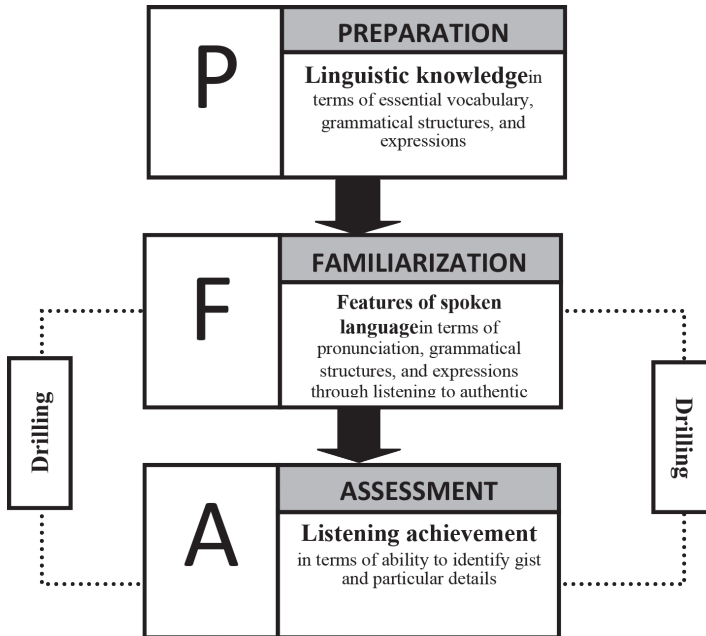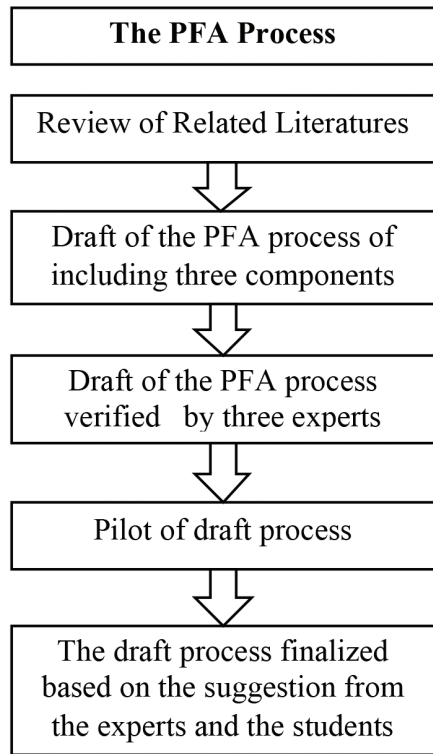
Figure 2: The PFA Process

Research Methodology

1. Instrument

1.1 The PFA Process

This process was designed based on literature reviews that the researcher accumulated from several reading articles related to teaching listening skills. It was classified into three components: Preparation, Familiarization and Assessment. The drafted process was then verified by three experts, having been teaching English to university students for more than 15 years. The process was revised according to the experts' suggestions and then piloted with a group of students prior to the genuine implementation with the subject group. The construction of the PFA process was presented in Figure 3.

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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│         The PFA Process         │
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│   Review of Related Literatures │
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│    Draft of the PFA process of  │
│    including three components   │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                 ⇩
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│     Draft of the PFA process    │
│    verified   by three experts  │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                 ⇩
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│       Pilot of draft process    │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                 ⇩
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│   The draft process finalized   │
│   based on the suggestion from  │
│   the experts and the students  │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
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Figure 3: *The PFA Process construction*

　　　　　1.2 A pre-posttestconsisted of 50 items in relation to the information in 7 video clips concerning the content of 7 lessons (Shopping, Giving Direction, Describing people, Telephoning, Ordering Food, Checking in a hotel and Traveling). It was validated by three experts and revised according to the experts' suggestions. It was then piloted with a similar group of students and came up with a reliability of 0.75.

　　　　　1.3 The semi-structured interviewconsisted of a set of questions asking about the techniques they utilized for interpreting the dialogues. The questions were approved by three experts with more than ten years of experiences in English teaching.

　　2. Data Collection

　　　　There were there stages to collect the data; Pretest, Experiment and Posttest. The first and the last week were the class for pretest and posttest respectively. Therefore,

12 weeks in between were the experimental periods that employed the PFA process in the class. For this course, there were seven units for learning, and the schedule for this subject, English for Communication, was arranged in a set of 3 periods per week. Therefore, it could be divided two weeks for each unit. The first set of period was for **Preparation** and the second set of period was for **Familiarization** and **Assessment.**

After the implementation, the semi-structured interview was conducted with 10 students in Thai about techniques they used to interpret the dialogues or passages in the video clips. The interviews were video recorded and the recording was later transcribed verbatim andtranslated into English.The questions used for interview were:

1. What do you think about the PFA process?

2. What do you use to help you to understand the dialogues in the videos?

3. Data Analysis

The quantitative and qualitative analyses were systematically carried out. The qualitative analysis was drawn from the semi-structured interview pertaining to the factors affecting the students' listening comprehension enhancement. The data were then transcribed verbatim and analyzed by content analysis. To avoid the case of subjectivity, the analysis was reviewed by three experts and revised according to their suggestions. In terms of the quantitative analysis, mean, standard deviation, and t-test were employed in order to investigate the effects of the PFA Process on the students' listening comprehension.

Results

1 Listening Achievement of Students after Implementing the PFA Process
The comparison of the students' listening skill on pretest and posttest was analyzed via the matched sampling t-test. The students' achievement was significantly improved after the implementation of the PFA process at the 0.01 level. Their improvement on English listening comprehension was presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Students' Listening Skill Pretest and Posttest Measurement

Unit	$\overline{X}$		SD		t-test	Sig.
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest		
1	3.94	7.35	2.77	1.92	-12.03	0.00
2	3.82	7.35	2.49	1.47	-11.35	0.00
3	3.82	7.26	2.30	2.18	-11.50	0.00
4	2.32	4.06	1.51	0.92	-9.88	0.00
5	2.18	3.85	1.11	0.86	-9.71	0.00
6	1.97	3.68	1.17	0.88	-9.94	0.00
7	1.94	3.82	1.18	0.76	-8.96	0.00
Total	20.00	37.38	10.42	6.47	-18.60	0.00

The table above demonstrated the students' listening competency illustrated with individual list of seven units before and after implementing the PFA process. As a result, the posttest mean scores of each unit were significantly different from the pretest mean scores after using PFA process at the .01 level. It means that the PFA process positively affected the students' listening comprehension improvement.

2. Factors affecting listening fluency achievement

Ten selected students were interviewed in order to identify the factors affecting their listening achievement. According to the data, there were three main factorswhich were equally important, including repetition, vocabulary awareness, and background knowledge.

2.1 Repetition

From the interview, some of them stated that they talked about the benefits of listening repetition. They were able to understand the dialogues in shorter time because they were familiar with speakers' accent and speaking speed rate in the videos.

Student 1:   "I think there are different English accent. For my first listening dialogue of Unit 1, I couldn't understand at all because I didn't catch what the word they were saying. Then, I replayed the video to listen again and

again. I could know what words they said."

Student 2:   "During listening the dialogue, at first, I knew only of 4-5 words but I could know more and more when I repeat listening on it because some word they had said in the prior dialogue."

Student 3:   "I was hurry to take note what I heard in English and Thai to help me to translate the dialogue. I replayed the video again and again to listen what word is. I could understand the dialogue when I heard them about three to four time.

Student 4:   "At first, I felt really upset because I couldn't understand what they were talking. I replay the video several times for trying to catch what word is. For the next units, I could understand the dialogue faster because I think I became familiar to vocabulary and expression in the videos"

In the administration of the PFA process, another interesting finding was the students' frequency of attempt in listening repetition practice toscrape through the interview exam of seven units. Their times to watch video clips were gradually decreased from unit 1 to unit 7. The data of their attempts were recorded and summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Students' Attempt in Listening Repetition Practice

Unit	Frequency to Watch Video Clips			
	1-3 times	4-6 times	7-9 times	more than 10 times
1	9%	35%	41%	15%
2	15%	53%	32%	-
3	26%	65%	9%	-
4	29%	71%	-	-
5	47%	53%	-	-
6	53%	47%	-	-
7	62%	38%	-	-

The data in Table 2demonstrated the students' frequency to repeated watch the clips in in order to pass the interview exam of each unit. Thus, the students were expected to be patient and well-disciplined through an intensive practice so as to advance their listening comprehension (Safranj, 2014). In the first unit, there were a few students (9%) that could pass the interview task with watching by 1-3 times while the majority of them (35%, 41%) tried to repeat watching the clip more than 4 times and 7 times to reach over the cutoff score. Meanwhile, some of them (15%) spent more than 10 times to pass the first interview. However, from Unit 2 to Unit 7, the percentage of the students who could pass the interview exams within 1-3 times was gradually increased. It could be mentioned that their listening comprehension was improved since they could understand the dialogues faster after passing listening repetition.

2.2 Vocabulary Awareness

Besides the listening repetition, some students mentioned that they could interpret the conversation easier because they could recognize vocabulary and expression they had been taught. Therefore, they could understand the dialogue faster. Their replies are displayed as follows:

Student 5:   "I jot down some vocabulary and phases that I've never known in my notebook. I read them as homework to memorize as much as I could. And I could understand the dialogue easily while listening the dialogue in the clips. I thought that it helped me a lot."

Student 6:   "I tried to memorize the meaning of vocabularies before going to listening class. I believed that I could understand the clips quite fast if I know a lot of vocabularies. And in listening exam, I could understand the clips quite fast."

Student 7:   "I know many words in the dialogues at the first time of listening but in the second time and third time I could more understood the details because I knows more words. I felt good because I could give corrected answers to all interview questions faster than anyone in class."

2.3 Background Knowledge

In addition, the result of the interview implied that they used their own background knowledge to understand the dialogues. Some of them, for example, had a part time job as a waiter/waitress in fast food restaurant Pizza Company and a cashier in 7-11 convenient store; therefore, they could apply their job experience to interpret the dialogue in the unit of Shopping and Ordering Food. Some students' replies are shown as follows:

Student 8:   "Arjarn, you know I am a waiter at Pizza Company at Robinson Department Store. I knew what menu they was ordering in the clips at the first time on watching. It's so easy, ha ha"

Student 9:   "Um… I used to talk with foreigner in English because I am a cashier at 7-11 store. The dialogue of Shopping Unit was quite similar to foreign customers' talking to me in the store."

Student 10:   "I sometime guessed meaning of conversation by seeing the situation such as checking in a hotel, customers normally ask about the price before deciding to stay, or in a restaurant, they have to pay bill when they finish eating. So, I understand what they were talking about."

All in all, according to the results in terms of the students' listening comprehension achievement, it was seen that the activities performed with using the PFA process to develop the students' listening skills yielded positive results. There was significant difference between the achievement scores obtained from the pretest measurement prior to the intervention and those obtained from the posttest measurement following the intervention. The students' posttest achievement scores were higher than their pretest achievement scores. Therefore, the listening training with the PFA process given to the students differentiated the students' achievement level significantly.

Moreover, factors affecting the students' listening achievement that found in the study were listening practice repetition, vocabulary awareness and their own background knowledge. Listening English repetition helped them familiarize with speakers' accent

and speaking speed rate. Thus, they were able to catch up and understand the speakers' saying faster. Meanwhile, vocabulary awareness facilitated them to recognize the meaning of words or phrases to translate the dialogues. Additionally, background knowledge was also useful for their listening compression. Prior knowledge supports them to understand the dialogues faster.

Discussion

This study was set out to investigate the students' listening comprehension development by using the PFA Process and the factors affecting their listening fluency achievement. The following discussion describes in details about students' listening comprehension improvement and the factors affecting their achievement.

1. The effect of the PFA Process on students' listening development

From the students' posttest scores, it could be mentioned that the PFA process positively affected students' listening comprehension improvement. It is reasonable to say that familiarization stage had a crucial role on their listening skill development because they became familiar with the conversational dialogues and different English accents. Thus, providing listening repetition practice could be one techniques for students' listening skill improvement. As stated by Yavuz et al (2015) providing repetition practice in hearing and saying of isolated words and phrases or sentences is a supported activity for teaching listening English in EFL classrooms. Moreover, the study made by Selamat & Sidhu (2013) found that their tertiary students' posttest scores were higher than the pretest score after using Metacognitive Strategies Training Instruction (MetSI) which consisted of listening practice tasks with numerous listening texts. Hence, it was stated that providing a lot of chances of listening even with interview questions yielded effective development for students' listening comprehension.

2. Factors affecting students' listening achievement

The students' opinions above indicated that listening repetition affected their

listening skill improvement. They could know more and more words in the dialogue after spending a lot of time on listening repetition. Consistent with the result of study conducted by Rouhi, Nabavi & Mohebbi (2014), they found that input repetition played significant role in listening comprehension since their subject group's listening skill was improved from being exposed to listening input more than once. Hence, it could be said that repetition was useful activity for practice students' listening effectively. It is fair to say that listening repetition is considered as one of the effective techniques for listening practice in English class as Bruner (2000) also supports that repetition is primarily an important tactic for enhancing learning rather than teaching in a student-centered teaching approach.

Besides, vocabulary awareness was one of the useful supplement to help them understand what the dialogue was talking about. In the PFA process, the class began with learning about vocabulary, expressions, grammar rules and providing them with exercises so that the students would have content knowledge about the topic of each unit. Perez & Desmet (2012) also noted that vocabulary was precisely one of the language components acquired for training in the development of listening skill. Moreover, the result of the study made by Matthews (2018) found that vocabulary knowledge in the aural form is useful for enhancing second language learners' listening capacities.

Based onthe analysis, background knowledge was utilized as a crucial element for listening comprehension. Ngo (2019) stated that background knowledge was another factor affecting students' listening enhancement since it was helpful for inferencing to fill in missing information.Zekiye Müge Tavil (2010) also confirmed that listener needed to use background knowledge to understand the intended message of the speakers.

Recommendations

Recommendations of the Study

In accordance with the findings of the study, two significant recommendations related to research objective 1, are proposed for consideration.

1. On account that Familiarization stage of the PFA Process is time-consuming, instructors should arrange this listening practice as an extracurricular activity in order that students can have more time to improve their English through provided listening tasks.

2. Students should properly manage their own time to practice their listening outside the classes in different contexts from either textbooks or other materials so as to sufficiently strengthen their listening skill.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Since this study focused on only listening skill, the PFA Process should, for further studies, then be carried out on the other three skills, comprising speaking, reading, and writing. Repetition and Familiarization, in my own view, are two effective means that can be used to improve all English skills, especially speaking.

2. Future research could also explore students' satisfaction after the implementation of the PFA Process in order to obtain advantageous details and suggestions for the process development.

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