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Effect of ABL Method on Students' Performance in Listening Skill at Grade-VI

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Abstract

Listening is the first and the most important language skill for the acquisition of language. Effective language teaching can enhance this skill. The researchers attempt to investigate the effects of Activity Based Learning (ABL) method on this skill. The researcher used an experimental design (*pre-test, post-test equivalent group design*) for the study. The targets of the study were: (a) to analyze the effects of ABL on listening, and (b) to investigate the effects of ABL method on the achievements of low and high achiever learners in listening skill. To achieve the objectives, null hypotheses were tested. Fifty male students of grade 6 of G.H.S Tarkha, Nowshera were chosen as a sample by using random sampling technique, divided into two equal groups, control and experimental on their achievements in teacher-made pre-test. Low achievers and high achievers were identified in both groups. Two different procedures were applied in the experiment. The experimental group was treated with “*activity based learning method*” whereas the control group learned through the routine teaching method. The experiment was conducted for seven weeks. Two teachers were selected for the study, possessing almost similar competence and qualification of language teaching. After the experiment, a post-test was administered to both groups. To find the effect of ABL, statistical analysis was calculated by independent sample t-test. The findings of the results showed that both groups had almost the same competence in listening skill on pre-test but on post-test results, the experimental group performed better than the control group. It is suggested that teachers should create conducive environment for the improvement of listening. Therefore, they need to provide exposures and practices to students through various activities on the pattern of ABL method.

Keywords: Listening skill, Activity Based Learning (ABL), Second language,

Introduction

Effect of ABL method on the students' performance in listening skill at Grade-VI was a new study in our area for teaching of English as a "foreign language". Language is considered as a tool of communication and social interaction. Being a tool, English language helps to enhance our knowledge and makes us to interact across the world. English language learning has its own beauty, especially the methods of teaching through which it is learnt. It is the mean of transportation in which all subjects travel. Nowadays, learners require proficiency in English Language and communication skills. These communication skills are interwoven in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Globally, English language has importance and it is now a necessity to get command over English language skills to compete with the world. The word 'innovation' is derived from Latin word '*innovare*' means changing something new. Further, it can be assumed that 'innovation' involves the practical accomplishment of new ideas (Banu, 2012).

Language is regarded as the ability or capacity of human beings, which they attain with the use of intricate scheme of interaction. In this case, language is considered to be a clear model for such format. According to Paik (2008) the demand and value of English language has made itself a compulsion for learners and significant to acquire it in the recent scenario because, it is supposed to be a crucial instrument, to stay alive in the international market.

Acquiring or knowledge of a second language is multifaceted for the most learners. Second language achievement and second language learning engage different processes. The former process refers to selecting up a second language through disclosure. The latter process deals with the awareness for a second language (Ellis, 2010). To a certain degree, it is difficult to decide what elements of a language; learner's capability or presentation have been acquired or learned.

It is as clear as day that without specific aims or objectives for any activity the desired results cannot be achieved. Therefore, it is necessary to make learning process more scientific and successful. Further, teachers need to be aware of long term targets and their specific aim of "English language teaching" (James, 2001). The main aim of "English language teaching" at Grade-VI is to develop student's language skill i.e. listening.

The most interesting and important skill of language is "listening", which is regarded as a prerequisite for the enhancement of other language skills. According to the study of Brown and Yule (1999), they argue that Listening is a procedure that entails understanding of a message which is methodical, in a constant sound

stream and after that, conceiving in mind, recognizing elements inside this stream which is new for the listener and this structure is not heard by him/her. It proposes that a deep acquaintance with phonology/sound system of a language is the prerequisite for the improvement of listening skill. Hence, in the normal way of language-learning, so the first step in acquiring a language would be listening and exercises based on this must be watchfully and step-wisely prepared.

Listening and hearing are two terms, which are over and over again puzzled. So, “hearing” can be differentiated from listening on the reason that it is scientific & biological system which is systematically elucidated. On the other hand, listening is considered as a “cognitive neurological activity” that deals with the dispensation of acoustic spur and received through aural system. The study of Barthes (1985) differentiates between (hearings and listening) that former is a physiological happening while the latter is a psychological action. He further explains that listening is considered as a purposeful action of audition since past while in current situation it has contracted the command and almost the role of playing over unidentified places which consists of insensitive varieties. However, the process of hearing happens mainly subconsciously. On the other hand, listener interprets actions through listening in order to comprehend it and creates end results from the sound waves. Therefore, listening has three levels of understanding; first one is alerting, second one is deciphering, and the last one is an understanding of the sound formation and what are the effects of sounds on the listener (Barthes, 1985).

The third stage of listening is “understanding” which means to recognize the verbal effects of one person on the other person. Psychoanalysts’ consider “understanding” very important in the process of psychoanalysis. The study of Barthes also suggests that the psychotherapist must not go to the conclusion directly while listening for the purpose of unbiased communication with his/her patient.

On the other hand, “Listening” and “obeying” are two different things. In general, many children’s parents fuse together these two terms, which are of the view that their children misbehave with them because they don’t listen to them. Hence, a child who gets information/instruction in the form of listening from a speaker, he/she understands it and then decides whether to obey it or simply agree with it information or an instruction, sometimes, the results may not favour the person who speaks (Purdy, Michael & Borisoff, 1997).

The study of Prince (2004) reflected that activity based learning is a method of teaching where the learners are actively involved in the course of knowledge. Further, Harfield et al. (2007) stated that activity based learning is a method in which learners vigorously contribute in the all learning activities while they do not

participate merely as unreceptive spectators. Similarly, Edward (2001) is of the opinion that if these activities which are related to learning on practical experiences of life will support the learners in converting their information into their individual acquaintances and that can be used in many diverse circumstances. The research study of Harfield et al. (2007) depicts that there are two reasons on the basis of which active and conventional approaches are different from one another such as; firstly, on active engagement of the student ;and secondly, on the co-operation among the students.

The study of Sprenger (1999) indicates that the process of activity based learning concentrates on the pupils; the knowledge; they have brought into the classrooms and their lively participation while acquiring language procedure. Genesee (2000) stated that ELLS were not the inactive receiver during the process of learning at the Elementary & Middle level. Relatively, the learners were vigorously building sense and schema (which is also called as structures of language and subject matter). Therefore, it is required that the entire instructions like teaching with direct method ought to be deliberated; consequently, students may take in dynamic roles while learning.

Demirezen (2011) reflects that language is not just the incorporation of acquaintances or knowledge but is to gain lively communicative competence. Therefore, Communicative approach is developed on the basis of this reason in language. It facilitates learners in grasping the application of target language such as to converse aptly, smoothly and efficiently. Further, this approach facilitates learners; to be inventive and participative while teacher cantered direction is totally discouraged here. Communicative approach helps in language learning through teacher competence and motivation of the learner, makes the teaching and learning process effective.

Similarly, the hands-on learning is considered extremely, the superior way of teaching. The teaching plans which are comprised of hands-on learning can assist learners and make them more involved in learning (Cabral, 2006). Activity-based learning/ABL depicts a variety of educational approaches to teaching. Its main principle consists of the prerequisite that learning ought to be based on the liability of some “hands-on” experimentation and tasks. The thought of activity based learning is embedded in the general concept that students are vigorous learners rather than inactive receiver of knowledge. If a student is given a chance to investigate by his/her own and endow with a best possible environment of learning, then the learning turns into wonderful and enduring (Anandalakshmy, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

“Effect of ABL method on the students’ performance in listening skill at Grade-VI’ was a new study in our area because it has been observed that till date, language teachers are practicing old methodologies for teaching English. English is a compulsory subject at grade-VI and it is taught as a “second language” in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

The study was made on the subsequent objectives:

1. To analyse the effects of ABL in listening.
2. To investigate the effects of ABL method on the achievements of low and high achiever learners in listening skill.

To achieve the above objectives null hypotheses were tested.

Significance of the Study

This study will open new doors for effective teaching and learning in classrooms. It will provide support both to learners and teachers for utilizing this approach of teaching. Listening skill can be enhanced through activity based learning as this method provides ample opportunities to student to learn effectively while participating actively in the language learning activities.

Delimitation of the Study

This study was delimited to the Grade-VI male students of public sector schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Method

Research Design

An effect of ABL Method on the Students’ Performance in listening skill at Grade-VI was an experimental study. The study design used for this study was Pre-test post-test equivalent group design

Population

The all students (295,575) of Grade-VI, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were the population for this study (EMIS, 2013).

Sample

A sample of 50 male learners from two sections (A, B) of grade-VI of G.H.S Tarkha, Nowshera was randomly selected for the study. The students were separated evenly on the pre-test achievement scores into experimental and control groups. Experimental and control group had twenty students respectively.

Research Instrument and procedure

The development of research instrument plays a vital role in any study but in experimental study its importance grows further. Therefore, a teacher-made (Pre-test) and (Post-test) were developed for this study. The pre-test scores was used to distribute sample students into experimental and control groups equally before the start of the experiment, while post-test was given to the sample after the treatment. The main aim of this test was to determine the accomplishment of the sample students. Both pre-test and post-test were the same and were based on ten items. These items were selected from five lessons of Grade-VI English text book, of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Text Book Board. These lessons were: (a) Ibn-e-Seena; (b) Over Crowding in the Cities; (c) The Wolf Cub; (d) Electricity, and (e) The Qissa Khwani Bazar selected.

The researcher thoroughly studied literatures, books and visited IELTS and TOEFL sites for the development of test items. Further, the test was developed in the consultation with supervisor, supervisory committee and language experts. Some of the test items were changed according to the advice of supervisor and language experts.

The services of two teachers from G.H.S Tarkha, district Nowshera having masters in English from the University of Peshawar were hired for the study. Both of them had relatively equal teaching experience and considerably equal teaching potentials were selected for teaching English to Grade-VI, to the experimental and control groups. The teacher volunteering for teaching experimental group was already trained by the DCTE, KPK in teaching English through activity based learning.

The researcher developed lesson plans from the selected lessons for both the experimental and control groups having the same learning outcomes but control

group was taught through conventional way teaching. For this purpose, activities related to four skills from the text book were developed and opinions of the supervisor as well as language experts were considered. Interesting and relevant activities were selected from British council, E.T.T.E (English for teaching and teaching for English) project such as: introduction, TPR (total physical response), Simon says, Chinese Whispers, name revision ball game, Action song (heads, shoulder.....), inserting missing words, role play, dialogue, etc. were conducted. Teacher also conducted activities mentioned in text book.

4Ps (preparation, presentation, practice and production) format of lesson plan was used for activity based learning method. As English is not the mother tongue in Pakistan, for first two days only warm up activities were conducted in order to motivate them. This created a lot of interest in them and slowly other skills activities were conducted. Daily, only four activities were conducted; duration of the class was forty minutes because in government schools, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, students were not used to with this type of learning.

The treatment was given to experimental group while control group was taught to conventional way of teaching for seven weeks. Regularly, activities of both teachers were observed by the researcher as well as other language experts. Further, opinions of students were also noted.

Validity and Reliability

The content validity of the test was approved by the supervisory committee, i.e. the test items were selected from Grade-VI in the subject of English. Further, the subject and language experts also confirmed the validity of the test.

Reliability of the test was measured by using split-half (odd-even) technique. The test items were divided into halves, ensuring that each half was matched in terms of item difficulty and content. Each half was marked separately. The reliability was calculated by using Spearman-Brown formula: $\text{Reliability} = \frac{2r}{1+r}$

Where r = the actual correlation between the halves of the instrument. By using spearman Brown formula, the correlation coefficient is 0.88. In this case formula for reliability was set out thus: The maximum value for coefficient is 1.00. Thus, the reliability of the instrument calculated by split half technique was highly strong.

Data Analysis

The collected data were fed into the “*statistical package for social sciences*” (SPSS 16 version) program. For this purpose, data analysis was done by applying t-test for independent sample.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The data analysis and its interpretation play a crucial role in research because at this phase the investigator draws results from the obtained data. This section deals with the analysis and interpretation of data. The main target of the study was to analyse development of listening skill through activity based learning at grade six in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. For this purpose, teacher made pre-test and post-test scores were used for the analysis and interpretation of data obtained.

The significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups were found on pre-test and post-test by applying t-test. The obtained results along with analysis and interpretation are presented in the following pages.

Table 1: Significance of difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on pre-test with respect to achievement in listening.

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	
				Table value	Calculated value
Experimental	25	7.76	3.23	1.68	0*
Control	25	7.76	3.28		

*Not Significant d.f=48; Significance level = 0.05

Table 1 depicts that the obtained result of t was 0 and the table value of t was 1.68. Results were tested at 0.05 (level of significance), and the degree of freedom was 48. Hence, the table value of t (1.68) was greater than t (0) obtained value. That's why; H_0 was approved because no significant difference between the mean scores was found. In this way, the experimental and control groups were identical with respect to prior knowledge in the listening skill on pre-test.

Table 2: Significance of difference between the mean scores of low achievers of the experimental and control groups on pre-test with respect to achievement in listening

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	
				Table value	Calculated value
Low achievers of the experimental group	8	4	1.85	1.74	-1.478*
Low achievers of the control group	11	5.09	1.37		

*Not Significant d.f = 17; Significance level = 0.05

Table 2 reflects that the attained result of t was -1.478 and the table value of t was 1.74. Results were tested at 0.05 (level of significance), and the degree of freedom was 17. Consequently, the table value of t (1.74) was greater than t (-1.478) obtained value. That's why; Ho₂ was accepted because no significant difference between the mean scores was found. In this way, the low achievers of the experimental and control groups were identical with respect to prior knowledge in the listening skill on pre-test.

Table 3: Significance of difference between the mean scores of high achievers of the experimental and control groups on pre-test with respect to achievement in listening

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	
				Table value	Calculated value
High achievers of the experimental group	17	9.5	1.94	1.699	-0.86*
High achievers of the control group	14	10.14	1.99		

*Not Significant df = 29 Significance level = 0.05

Table 3 depicts that the acquired results of t was -0.86 and the table value of t was 1.699. Results were tested at 0.05 (level of significance) and the degree of

freedom was 29. Hence, the table value of t (1.699) was greater than t (-0.86) obtained value. That's why; H_03 was approved because no significant difference between the mean scores was found. Hence, the high achievers of the experimental and control groups were identical with respect to prior knowledge in the listening skill on pre-test.

Table 4: Significance of difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups on post-test with respect to achievement in listening

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	
				Table value	Calculated value
Experimental	25	17.52	2.4	1.68	6.716*
Control	25	11.6	3.69		

* Significant $df=48$ Significance level = 0.05

Table 4 depicts that the obtained results of t was 6.716 and the table value of t was 1.68. Results were tested at 0.05 (level of significance) and the degree of freedom was 48. Hence, the table value of t (1.68) was less than t (6.716) obtained value. That's why; H_04 was discarded because significant difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups were found. In this way, the group who were taught through activity based learning outscored the control group in the listening skill on post-test.

Table 5: Significance of difference between the mean scores of low achievers of the experimental and control groups on post-test with respect to achievement in listening

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	
				Table value	Calculated value
Low achievers of the experimental group	8	15.25	2.37	1.740	5.29*
Low achievers of the control group	11	9.09	2.58		

* Significant $df = 17$ Significance level = 0.05

Table 5 reflects that the obtained result of t was 5.29 and the table value of t was 1.740. Results were tested at 0.05 (level of significance) and the degree of freedom was (17). Hence, the table value of t (1.740) was less than t (5.29) obtained value. That's why; H_05 was discarded because significant difference between mean scores of experimental and control groups was found. In this way, the low achievers who were taught through activity based learning outscored the low achievers of control group in the listening skill on post-test.

Table 6: Significance of difference between the mean scores of high achievers of the experimental and control groups on post-test with respect to achievement in listening

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	
				Table value	Calculated value
High achievers of the experimental group	17	18.58	1.54	1.699	5.65*
High achievers of the control group	14	13.57	3.25		

* Significant d.f =29 Significance level = 0.05

Table 6 indicates that the obtained result of t was 5.65 and the table value of t was 1.699. Results were tested at 0.05 (level of significance) and the degree of freedom was 29. Hence, the table value of t (1.699) was less than t (5.65) obtained value. That's why; H_06 was discarded because significant difference between the mean scores of experimental and control groups was found. In this way, the high achievers who were taught through activity based learning outscored the low achievers of control group in the listening skill on post-test.

Discussion

When the experimental and control groups were analyzed with respect to achievement in listening on pre-test, no significant difference were found between the two groups and both the groups were almost equal with respect to achievement in listening ability at (0.05) level. That's why; the null hypothesis (H_01) was approved and both the groups were similar on their prior knowledge.

Similarly, the analysis between the mean of pre-test scores of low achievers of the experimental and control groups with respect to the achievement in listening was

also insignificant at (0.05) level. It proves that the low achievers of both groups were identical in their previous knowledge with respect to achievement in listening. That's why; H_0 was established.

In the same way, the dissimilarity between the mean pre-test scores of high achievers of the experimental and control groups with respect to achievement in listening was also insignificant at (0.05) level. For this reason, the null hypothesis; was established; and together; the groups might be treated as equivalent on pre-test.

The experimental group performed considerably better than control group on post-test with respect to their achievement in listening. The difference between the mean "post-test" scores of both groups was significant at (0.05) level. Therefore, null hypothesis was abandoned. The results of the study confirmed the studies of Harfield et al. (2007) who stated that activity based learning is a method, in which learners are vigorously contributing in the learning activities while they do not participate merely as unreceptive spectators.

Moreover, the comparison between mean "post-test" scores of low achievers of the experimental group and control group on listening was significant at (0.05) level. It suggests that low achievers of the experimental group, who were taught through 'activity based learning', performed considerably better than control group who were taught through traditional method of language teaching. As a result, the null hypothesis was discarded. The results of this study confirmed the views of (Krashen, 2003), who was of opinion that Pupils play pleasurable, attractive and dynamic part during the process of learning practice. That's why; a relaxed environment can help in the improvement of Language and literacy, this encourages morals and rejoices for hard work but it also gives the suitable level of challenge to inspire and connect students.

Similarly, the difference between the mean "post-test" scores of high achievers of both the experimental and control groups on listening was also significant at (0.05) level. That's why; the null hypothesis was rejected, in favor of experimental group. The results of the study confirmed the findings of Hug et al. (2005). They were of the opinion that learners show keen interest in learning if learning tasks are pertinent to learners, individually.

Conclusion

The following conclusions are made in the light of statistical analysis and the findings of the study.

1. Activity based instruction is more effective for teaching English as a foreign language as compared to traditional/conventional language teaching. Because activity based instruction provides ample opportunities to students for the development of listening skill.
2. The students who were instructed through ABL method outscored control group, as they were taught through traditional language teaching method in listening on post-test. The students of the experimental group found their method of language learning more engaging.
3. The low achievers of experimental group showed a significant jump over the low achievers of control group on post-test in listening because all the students of experimental group practiced interesting activities.
4. The results also proved that high achievers who were taught through ABL teaching method showed better performance in listening than those high achievers who were instructed through conventional/traditional way of language teaching.

Recommendations

In the light of the conclusions and discussion, the following recommendations are made:

1. It is recommended that activity based teaching method demands competence and training on the part of teacher. It is therefore, recommended that the teachers selected for providing treatment to the experimental group may be thoroughly trained prior to the onset of the experiment.
2. Without an encouraging environment, learning is not possible. It is suggested that teachers should create favorable language environment for the improvement of listening skill. They need to provide exposures and practices to students through various activities.
3. Keeping in view the effectiveness of activity based learning for curriculum developers, the results of this study favors application of this method of teaching. Therefore, it is recommended while designing curriculum, it should be considered that the curriculum be supportive for activity based learning and varieties of activities should be included.
4. Our present examination system only assess reading and writing while ignore other skills such as listening. It is therefore, recommended that examination system should be revisited, to ensure a proper system of evaluation of all four language skills.

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