



# The Effect of Prelistening Activity Types on Listening Comprehension and Listening Anxiety

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## Article Info

## ABSTRACT

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The integration of technology into education has offered new opportunities for higher education students. Flipped class, as part of this opportunity, has inspired ample research recently. However, there is still controversy over its effectiveness. To shed more light on its potentials, the present study compares a flipped class with a traditional and an online course in terms of their effects on developing the grammar knowledge of Iranian pre-intermediate TEFL students. In addition, the perceptions of the flipped group toward their learning experience in four areas were examined: motivation, effectiveness, interaction, and satisfaction. Finally, the potential of the flipped class to assist the instructor in presenting more topics was evaluated. Fifty-nine freshmen in two different classes were selected. Then, each class was randomly assigned to an experimental (n=31) or a control group (n=28). The former received instruction in a flipped class, whereas the latter attended a traditional class. Afterward, their performance was compared with that of another group attending an online course (n= 25). The data were collected through a timed and an untimed grammaticality judgment test and a perception scale. In order to compare the content coverage in the three classes, the number of units taught in each class was divided by the total number of units assigned for the semester. The results showed that instruction in the flipped class was as effective as instruction in the traditional class, and both were more effective than the fully online course. Additionally, the flipped class seemed to be a satisfactory experience for the learners. The results also indicated that drawing on a flipped class can allow the instructor to present more content without compromising the quality of instruction and learning. The results can encourage language teachers, program developers, and educational policymakers to consider the flipped classroom as an acceptable alternative.

**Keywords:** Flipped, Grammar, Higher Education, Online, Perception, Traditional.

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## 1. Introduction

As an essential skill in language learning (Hamouda, 2013; Nunan, 2002; Vandergrift, 2007), listening deserves to be further investigated. Listening is claimed to be even more important than other skills as it is a skill used more frequently (Kurita, 2012). In addition to being one of the two main channels of access to language input (Peterson, 2001), listening takes more than 50% of communication time (Buck, 2003). Despite playing a significant role in language learning, listening is considered as the least investigated and the least respected skill (Wilson, 2008).

Many students may experience difficulty in comprehending oral language input. This is especially true in EFL contexts (Graham, 2008; Renandya & Farrell, 2011). This may be due to the lack of learners' opportunity to encounter spoken language outside of classrooms, their lack of exposure to authentic input, inadequate time spent on listening in classrooms, lack of preparatory activities in the prelistening stage, etc. Learners' access to a foreign language is limited to inside their classrooms. Therefore, they can be assisted in their listening comprehension process by means of various prelistening activities.

Listening comprehension can be facilitated by prelistening support through activating learners' prior knowledge. Prelistening activities are employed by students to activate their preexisting knowledge in order to integrate what they already know to what they receive in the new listening experience (Rameshianfar, et al., 2015). In this way, students can make prediction, test their hypotheses, and infer the actual meaning from the listening input. Moreover, preparatory activities provide a meaningful context and assist learners to make use of their background knowledge (Mohamed, 2018).

Despite a large number of studies investigating the effect of different prelistening activities on comprehension (e.g., Chang & Read, 2006; Elkhafai, 2005; Sadighi & Zare, 2006; Tyler, 2001), it seems that learners, especially in EFL contexts, face serious challenges due to the difficulty of comprehending listening input (Buck, 2001; Vandergrift & Baker, 2015). Although many of the factors that affect listening have been investigated (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011), listening is still considered problematic. Many methods, techniques, and activities have been suggested to solve the existing problems. However, learners still feel anxious while listening. A good suggestion can be the selection of suitable prelistening activities and providing an anxiety-reducing context. In this way, it seems learning can happen more easily. Prelistening activities have been utilized mostly for preparatory purposes. It is believed that foreign language listeners need to be

adjusted to (Brown, 2011), rather than pushed into a listening task straight away. In the present study, the effect of prelistening activities such as cultural awareness-raising activities, strategy-based instruction, and linguistic support on listening comprehension and listening anxiety is investigated.

Many researchers have confirmed that strategy-based instruction facilitates learners' listening comprehension (Berne, 2004; Birjandi & Rahimi, 2012; Mohamadpour, et al., 2019), and can reduce their listening anxiety (Goh, 2008). Recently, increased attention has been drawn to the role of culture and background knowledge in listening comprehension. Empirical research in this area has shown a positive relationship between these two (Hayati, 2009; Bakhtiarvand & Adinevand, 2011). Linguistic knowledge has also been considered to be effective and necessary in the development of the listening skill and the comprehension of listening input (Rost, 2013). The main concern of the present study was to find a way to promote the listening skill and to help listeners overcome their listening anxiety through investigating the effects of three types of prelistening activities on learners' listening comprehension and listening anxiety. Its main purpose was to answer the following research questions:

1. Are cultural awareness-raising activities, strategies-based instruction, and linguistic support differentially effective on listening comprehension?
2. Are cultural awareness-raising activities, strategies-based instruction, and linguistic support differentially effective on listening anxiety?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Listening Comprehension**

Playing a vital role in language acquisition, listening comprehension has recently received even more attention. However, learners in EFL contexts may still find listening more difficult than other language skills to improve due to a number of reasons. Furthermore, the shortage of time for listening comprehension in classrooms and a lack of exposure to more authentic listening materials (Mousavi & Irvani, 2012) make listening comprehension even more challenging in EFL contexts.

According to a number of studies (e.g., Brindley & Slatyer, 2002; Mahmoudi, 2017), there are three major sources of difficulty in L2 listening comprehension courses. The first factor relates to the anxiety students feel as they face new information; the second factor is also psychological, as students may worry about comprehension and processing of listening input;

and the third factor relates to the strategic repertoire and schematic knowledge students may require to comprehend different listening texts.

The literature on listening implies that learners, especially EFL learners, need to be supported in their listening comprehension (Bakhtiarvand & Adinevand, 2011; Keshmirshakan, 2019). Supporting learners in their listening comprehension utilizing effective prelistening activities can result in reducing their listening anxiety. Learners may feel anxious about losing their self-image as they are involved in tasks for which they lack sufficient competence. Furthermore, a number of studies have confirmed that foreign language learning anxiety may be a strong predictor of learners' demotivation and low language achievement (Sparks & Ganschow, 2007), and many authors have confirmed the effectiveness of prelistening support with regard to learners' listening comprehension and listening anxiety (Farrokhi & Modarres, 2012; Wilberschied & Berman, 2004).

As a remedy, it has been suggested that activating learners' prior knowledge (linguistic and nonlinguistic) in advance may benefit their listening performance. Thus, providing adequate support for learners in the prelistening stage seems to enhance their listening comprehension (e.g., Chang & Read, 2006, 2008; Zarei & Mahmudi, 2012). The concept of preparing students instead of pushing them into the actual listening phase, straight away, has been taken from the schema theory, discussed below.

## **2.2. Schema Theory**

The concept of schema was introduced by Bartlett (1932), who defined them as the active organization of experiences or past reactions (as cited in Zhao & Zhu, 2012). According to this definition, an individual can comprehend written or spoken language by referring to his or her pre-existing schemata (linguistic and world schemata) taking into account the particular language input the individual receives (Mai, et al, 2014). Furthermore, Mousavian and Siahpoosh (2018) believe one can understand a text only if a particular part of the whole schemata that fits the listening input is activated, even arguing that comprehension occurs because of schema activation. According to schema theory, users of any language have to activate and make use of their schemata to achieve meaningful and accurate comprehension (Huang, 2009). This interaction between what listeners hear and their pre-existing relevant background knowledge can assist them in making accurate interpretations of listening input (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

Schemata can be classified into three main types of formal, content, and linguistic schemata (Huang, 2009; Zarei & Mahmudi, 2012). Formal

schemata include knowledge of the genre, rhetorical patterns, and formal structures of text (Carrell, 1985). Content schemata are related to an individual's knowledge of the topic and one's world knowledge related to the content domain of text (Johnson, 1981; Oller, 1995). These two types of schemata are considered the most common and more researched schemata types (Hayati, 2009). According to Carrell and Eisterhold (1983), linguistic schemata refer to the pre-existing linguistic knowledge that one uses to make a text understandable. Linguistic schemata include basic language knowledge (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, phonology, etc.) that plays a vital role in the efficient comprehension of a text. Strategy schema can be another type of schemata that is described as general knowledge that helps listeners to use effective listening strategies to overcome the possible challenges in their comprehension process (Casanave, 1988).

Schema theory can provide a rationale for using prelistening activities in listening classrooms. Prelistening activities are significant for two main reasons:

1. Activating listeners' prior knowledge and preparing them for the incoming listening input, and
2. Providing listeners with a required context under which they should perform listening tasks (Goh, 2002).

Therefore, activating listeners' schemata (linguistic and nonlinguistic) using various effective prelistening activities allows learners to do more effectively and more comfortably in their listening comprehension (Mai et al., 2014; Rost, 2013).

In spite of the above-mentioned studies, indicating a positive relationship between schema-building tasks and listening comprehension, there are some other studies reporting contradictory results (Chang & Read, 2006; Jafari & Hashim, 2012). Because of this controversy, this study compared three types of prelistening support including cultural awareness-raising activities, strategy-based instruction, and linguistic support in terms of their effect on listening comprehension and listening anxiety.

### **2.3. Cultural Awareness Raising (CAR)**

Cultural knowledge is believed to be embedded in any language manifestation (Cook, 2003). Spoken input, for instance, contains linguistic and cultural information (Kramsch, 1993), the interpretation of which requires the successful activation of the right part of learners' schemata (Nunan, 2002).

Cultural awareness, as a fundamental requirement for language acquisition, can be defined as the knowledge an individual possesses or obtains about one's own and target cultures (Tomlinson, 2001). To do so, teachers and learners may be required to utilize a number of techniques such as running a discussion to compare and describe the differences and similarities that may exist between the native and target language cultures.

Cultural awareness can be raised at different levels: source culture, target culture, and international target culture. The target culture level mostly includes raising students' target culture knowledge. Source culture is for expanding students' own cultural values and beliefs.

One of the studies that examine the role of cultural knowledge in listening comprehension is the one by Hayati (2009). In his study, participants were randomly assigned to certain cultural conditions: Target Culture, International Target Culture, Source Culture, and Culture Free. The result showed that cultural knowledge can enhance intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension significantly.

Lack of cultural knowledge can also cause students to become more anxious. In this regard, Karimi and Nafissi (2017) carried out a study to investigate whether utilizing different culture-based materials have any effect on L2 reading proficiency, anxiety, and self-efficacy. Although the experimental group showed a lower level of anxiety, no significant improvement was found in terms of reading proficiency.

Although activating cultural schema can be effective in promoting listening performance, Mahmoudi (2017) asserts that language proficiency plays a vital role in the effectiveness of cultural schema activation process. In his study proficient learners outperformed the low-level ones in activating their cultural knowledge.

#### **2.4. Strategy-Based Instruction (SBI)**

Even though strategy has got various definitions, there is a general agreement that consciousness is the core characteristic of strategy. By listening strategy, this study refers to the activities students do consciously to process and comprehend information. Among different approaches to teaching listening, strategy-based instruction has been reported to have a positive impact on improving listening comprehension (Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010; Yeldham & Gruba, 2016), motivation, and self-efficacy (Graham & Macaro, 2008). Many researchers have confirmed that strategy-based instruction facilitates learners' listening comprehension (Berne, 2004; Bozorgian & Pillay, 2013; Rahimi & Katal, 2013; Vandergrift &

Tafaghodtari, 2010), and can reduce their listening anxiety (Goh, 2008). For instance, Bozorgian and Pillay (2013) examined the effectiveness of strategies on listening comprehension. The experimental group that received Listening Strategy Instruction outperformed the nonintervention group.

Among the strategies employed in listening, cognitive strategy use has been reported as a problem-solving method (Vandergrift, 2003). It is used mostly to understand the linguistic input of the listening material. Cognitive strategies may be top-down or bottom-up. The former is used in guessing, prediction, visualization, etc., and the latter includes word-for-word translation, sound discrimination, induction/deduction, and so forth. The two bottom-up and top-down processes are different in terms of the way a listener wants to understand the listening input. Based on their cognitive style, each learner may be good at one of these processes than the other. Regarding the relationship between language proficiency level and strategy use, Mohseny and Raeisi (2009) reported that the most proficient students make use of cognitive strategies more than the other listening strategies.

One of the most researched strategy types is metacognitive strategy. This type of strategy includes resourcing, note-taking, grouping, elaborating prior knowledge, induction/deduction, summarizing, imagery, making inferences, auditory representation (Vandergrift, 1997). In this regard, Kassem (2015) studied the effect of metacognitive strategies on foreign language listening anxiety and listening comprehension of EFL learners. The participants who used metacognitive strategies performed better in TOFEL listening comprehension. The findings further indicated that the listening anxiety of the participants was reduced.

Socio-affective strategies, which include strategies such as cooperation, questioning for clarification and self-talk, are mostly used for the purpose of verification of the learners' understanding (Vandergrift, 2003). Therefore, it is likely that learners' learning can be facilitated through such created social interaction (Ellis, 2005). The effect of socio-affective strategies instruction was investigated in a study by Hamzah et al, (2009). An IELTS listening test was administered as a pre-test and a posttest. The participants of the experimental group received explicit instruction on socio-affective strategies every week, while the control group did not. The results revealed that the experimental group participants outperformed their control group counterparts.

Nevertheless, there are other studies that have found no meaningful role for strategy instruction in listening comprehension. Mobaraki and Nia (2018) studied the role of strategy instruction in listening comprehension. The results revealed no meaningful difference between the control and the

experimental groups. In a similar vein, Ngo (2019) compared the effect of strategy instruction with and without cultural context on EFL learners' performance. He also showed that the student with cultural knowledge outperformed the student with strategy instruction without cultural awareness in developing their listening strategy use, suggesting that cultural awareness that is focused on learner' background knowledge may be more appropriate than strategy instruction.

## **2.5. Linguistic Support (LS)**

Linguistic knowledge has been considered to be effective and necessary in the development of the listening skill and the comprehension of listening input (Rost, 2013). There are a number of factors that affect listening comprehension in EFL contexts. Lack of contextual knowledge, lack of control over the delivery speed of the input, limitation in the repetition of listening input, lack of vocabulary and discourse knowledge, and the internalized habit of most learners to concentrate on all words are only examples of the factors affecting listening comprehension in EFL contexts (Goh, 2000). Among the previously mentioned factors, linguistic knowledge, especially vocabulary knowledge, may also affect learners' listening anxiety; lack of vocabulary knowledge can demotivate and reduce the self-confidence of learners in listening classrooms (Bonk, 2000). This will, subsequently, influence their listening performance and language learning.

Prelisting activities are of various types. In a study by Keshavarz and Babai (2001), the effectiveness of linguistic knowledge on EFL learners' listening performance was confirmed. In this study, more proficient learners performed better in listening comprehension using their linguistic knowledge in bottom-up processing whenever they lacked relevant background knowledge.

In a recent research study by Ramli et al. (2019), the role of word recognition, syntactic knowledge, metacognitive awareness, and self-efficacy in listening comprehension was investigated. The findings showed that the mentioned variables can significantly determine success in L2 listening comprehension.

Although lack of vocabulary knowledge seems to cause serious challenges for EFL students, there are studies the results of which contradict those of the afore-mentioned studies supporting the effectiveness of linguistic support on listening comprehension (Chang & Read, 2008; Rameshianfar et al., 2015). For instance, Chang and Read (2006) studied the effect of four types of listening support (repetition, teaching words, previewing test questions, and giving background knowledge) was investigated. The result



revealed that the provision of topic familiarity the most effective listening support, and the least effective support was vocabulary pre-teaching.

It may be understood from the above review that the different aspects of the variables investigated in this study have already been considered. However, previous research seems to include the examination of the effect of different prelistening activities separately (mostly in comparison with a control condition), often suggesting the superiority of each of those activities over the control condition. There appears to be a gap in our understanding of the effect of the mentioned prelistening activities in relation to each other. This study was meant to partially fill that gap.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Participants**

The participants were 90 male and female Iranian EFL learners majoring in English language teaching and translation at Gonbad University. They were undergraduate students at intermediate level, between the age of 19 and 23. A sample PET was used to check the participants' proficiency level. Convenience sampling was used to select the participants. Three classes taking Listening and Speaking courses were selected. One class received *Cultural Awareness-Raising Support*, the next one was supported by *Strategy-based Instruction*, and the third class received *Linguistic Support*. Each group of participants was randomly placed in one of these three treatment conditions. The mother tongue of the participants was Persian, Turkish, and Kurdish.

#### **3.2. Materials and Instruments**

A number of instruments including (the following) were utilized to address the research questions:

##### **3.2.1. PET**

In order to homogenize the participants, a sample PET was used. This test included four parts: reading with 32 items, writing with 2 questions, listening with 25 items, and speaking. This test took 135 minutes to be completed. Using KR-21, the reliability index of the PET was estimated to be 0.93.

##### **3.2.2. Listening Comprehension Test**

The listening section of PET was also used as pre- and posttests. The listening section consisted of 25 items. The B1 Preliminary for Schools Listening paper had four parts. For each part, the students listened to a

recorded text or texts and answered the questions. The students were allowed to listen to each recording twice. The test took 36 minutes. The reliability of the section was estimated by the researchers to be 0.87.

### **3.2.3. FLLAS**

The Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS), designed by Kim (2000), was used to measure the participants' listening anxiety. The questionnaire consisted of 33 Likert-scale items. Lower scores indicated higher anxiety. Kim (2000) reported a reliability index of 0.93. Nevertheless, the reliability was re-estimated, using Cronbach's alpha, and the result showed the reliability of 0.85.

### **3.2.4. Teaching Materials**

The teaching materials included the American English File Series from Oxford publications (Latham-Koenig & Oxenden, 2013) (American English File 3A, Episode 1, part 2A, American English File 3B, 5 & 6 review check), and popular teaching English websites such as *www.britishcouncil.org* and *www.breakingnewsenglish.com*. To engage learners in the listening input, the researchers exposed them to authentic English texts with communicative purposes. The selected texts had at least one cultural point to raise learners' cultural awareness. The listening passages on different topics, accompanied by either video or audio files, were collected only if they suited the learners' level of language and background knowledge.

## **3.3. Procedure**

Initially, the researchers selected 126 students. The PET test was given to select only those students who scored between one standard deviation above and below the mean. Consequently, 90 participants were selected and divided into three groups of cultural awareness, strategies-based instruction, and linguistic support. Then, the pretests of listening comprehension and listening anxiety were administered. Next, the treatment began, during which in each session, one passage was presented using the previously mentioned websites and books, followed by audio tracks and supplementary video clips. The prepared passages were the same for all three groups. However, the participants of each group received different treatments as follows:

In group A, the students were exposed to the explanation presented by the teacher; they were involved in a discussion of the cultural issues related to the passage. First of all, the teacher introduced the topic and asked the

students for the relevant information they might know. Using cultural assimilators and capsules, the teacher explained the cultural background of the topic. Meanwhile, the teacher's explanation was accompanied by effective pictures containing captions. Then, students listened to the selected passage once, and the teacher asked for any misunderstanding of the cultural concept or for any other questions students might have. The listening comprehension of the students was checked through a discussion at the end of each session.

In group B, the students were exposed to the listening strategies. The preset strategies were described in terms of when, where, how, and why they are used, in advance (before practicing the strategies for the actual listening text, the teacher modeled the strategies on a similar input). Next, the learners listened to the actual listening text once and were asked to use the taught strategies whilst listening to the text again and note down the strategies they used. The students' comprehension was checked through group discussion.

In group C, the teacher introduced a list of critical vocabulary, practicing new syntactic patterns and the pronunciation of the difficult words, etc. Linguistic supports were relevant to the actual listening text and the input. Pronunciation, denotative, connotative, and associative meanings of critical words were discussed. For this purpose, a bilingualized or monolingual dictionary such as *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries* was used. Then students listened to the actual text (the same text as the one in the other 2 groups). The participants were asked to recognize the words and structures they were exposed to in the input. The learners could listen to the text twice. This time, the students were asked to fill their understanding gaps. If the students needed more linguistic support, they were given help.

The last step was to administer the posttests. A week after finishing the ten-session treatment, the listening section of another PET was given to the students to check the effect of the treatments on listening comprehension. A week later, the listening anxiety questionnaires were administered.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1. Results**

The aim of the first question was to compare the effects of cultural awareness raising activities, strategies-based instruction, and linguistic support, as prelistening activities, on listening comprehension. A one-way analysis of covariance was used to address this question. Before using the ANCOVA, its assumptions were checked. To check the assumption of normality, the ratios of kurtosis and skewness over their corresponding

standard errors were checked, and they were all lower than 1.96. The reliability of the data collection instrument (based on which the covariant was measured) was also checked using Cronbach's alpha, and it was .87.

ANCOVA also assumes that the relationship between the dependent variable (posttest of listening comprehension) and covariate (pretest) be a linear one. The Scatter Plot of pretest and posttest scores showed that the assumption of linearity was met. Moreover, one-way ANCOVA assumes that the linear relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable be the same across groups. The non-significant interaction effect,  $F_{(2, 84)} = .214$ ,  $p > .05$  (Table 1) indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes was also met.

**Table 1**  
*Homogeneity of Regression Slopes for Listening Comprehension*

| Source                      | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F       | Sig. |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|---------|------|
| Corrected Model             | 41.354 <sup>a</sup>     | 5  | 8.27        | 2.351   | .04  |
| Intercept                   | 749.745                 | 1  | 749.74      | 213.092 | .00  |
| Group                       | 3.750                   | 2  | 1.87        | .533    | .58  |
| Precomprehension            | .373                    | 1  | .37         | .106    | .74  |
| Group *<br>Precomprehension | 1.503                   | 2  | .75         | .214    | .80  |

a. R Squared = .123 (Adjusted R Squared = .071)

Another assumption of ANCOVA is the homogeneity of variances, which was checked by running Levene's test, which indicated that the difference was not significant ( $F_{(2, 87)} = .99$ ,  $p > .05$ ), hence meeting the assumption.

After checking the assumptions, the scores of the groups were compared. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the three groups on listening comprehension. Based on these results, it can be observed that the cultural awareness group had the highest mean on the posttest of listening comprehension. This was followed by the linguistic support and strategies-based instruction groups.

**Table 2**  
*Descriptive Statistics for Listening Comprehension*

| Group                        | Mean Pre | Std. Pre | Mean Post | Std. Post | N  |
|------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----|
| cultural awareness           | 14.56    | 1.79     | 22.80     | 1.86      | 30 |
| strategies-based instruction | 14.73    | 2.03     | 21.36     | 2.09      | 30 |
| linguistic support           | 14.36    | 2.15     | 22.73     | 1.55      | 30 |

The main results of one-way ANCOVA,  $F(2, 86) = 5.74, p < .05, \eta^2 = .11$  (representing a moderate effect size; Table 3), show significant differences among the three groups on the posttest of listening comprehension after considering the pretest differences.

**Table 3**  
*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Listening Comprehension*

| Source                           | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F      | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|--------|------|---------------------|
| Corrected Model                  | 39.85 <sup>a</sup>      | 3  | 13.28       | 3.84   | .01  | .11                 |
| Intercept                        | 760.28                  | 1  | 760.28      | 220.11 | .00  | .71                 |
| Prelistening comprehension Group | .58                     | 1  | .58         | .16    | .68  | .00                 |
|                                  | 39.71                   | 2  | 19.85       | 5.74   | .00  | .11                 |

a. R Squared = .118 (Adjusted R Squared = .088)

Pairwise comparisons (Table 4) showed that the cultural awareness group had a meaningfully higher mean score than the strategies-based instruction group on the posttest of listening comprehension after the effect of the pretest was controlled (Mean Difference = 1.44,  $p < .05$ ). In addition, the linguistic support group had a significantly higher mean score than the strategies-based instruction group (Mean Difference = 1.38,  $p < .05$ ).

**Table 4**  
*Post-Hoc Comparisons for Listening Comprehension*

| (I) Group                    | (J) Group          | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval for Difference |             |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------|------|--|-------------|
|                              |                    |                       |            |      | Lower Bound                            | Upper Bound |
| Strategies-Based Instruction | Cultural Awareness | -1.44*                | .48        | .01  | -2.61                                  | -.26        |
|                              | Linguistic Support | -1.38*                | .48        | .01  | -2.55                                  | -.20        |
| Linguistic Support           | Cultural Awareness | -.05                  | .48        | 1.00 | -1.23                                  | 1.11        |

However, no significant difference was observed between the mean score of the cultural awareness and linguistic support groups on the posttest of listening comprehension (Mean Difference = .05,  $p > .05$ ).

The second question dealt with the effects of the mentioned prelistening readiness activities on listening anxiety. A one-way ANCOVA was used to this end. Besides the assumption of normality, the other assumptions of ANCOVA were also checked prior to using it. The scatter plot showed that the assumption of linearity was met. Also, a non-significant interaction effect between the dependent and independent variables showed that the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes was met ( $F(2, 84) =$

.25,  $p > .05$ ). The results of the Levene's test ( $F_{(2, 87)} = 2.84, p > .05$ ) showed that the homogeneity of variances assumption was also met.

After checking the assumptions, the scores of the participants in the three groups were compared. Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics. It can be noted that the linguistic support group had the highest mean on the listening anxiety posttest, followed by the cultural awareness and strategies-based instruction groups.

**Table 5**  
*Descriptive Statistics for Listening Anxiety*

| Group                        | Mean.<br>Pre | Std.<br>pre | Mean. Post | Std. post | N  |
|------------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------|-----------|----|
| cultural awareness           | 54.03        | 4.25        | 138.60     | 2.45      | 30 |
| strategies-based instruction | 54.73        | 3.96        | 135.93     | 3.17      | 30 |
| linguistic support           | 54.90        | 4.19        | 139.23     | 3.60      | 30 |

The main results of one-way ANCOVA ( $F_{(2, 86)} = 9.36, p < .05, p\eta^2 = .17$ ) (Table 6) indicated a significant difference between the three group means on the posttest of listening anxiety after the pretest effect was controlled.

**Table 6**  
*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Listening Anxiety*

| Source          | Type III Sum of<br>Squares | df | Mean<br>Square | F      | Sig. | Partial Eta<br>Squared |
|-----------------|----------------------------|----|----------------|--------|------|------------------------|
| Corrected Model | 184.02 <sup>a</sup>        | 3  | 61.34          | 6.24   | .00  | .17                    |
| Intercept       | 9492.31                    | 1  | 9492.31        | 966.73 | .00  | .91                    |
| Pre anxiety     | .00                        | 1  | .00            | .00    | .98  | .00                    |
| Group           | 183.95                     | 2  | 91.97          | 9.36   | .00  | .17                    |

a. R Squared = .17 (Adjusted R Squared = .15)

The results of post-hoc comparison tests (Table 7) showed that the cultural awareness group had a significantly higher mean score than the strategies-based instruction group on the listening anxiety posttest after the differences on the pretest were considered (Mean Difference = 2.66,  $p < .05$ ). Meanwhile, the linguistic support group had a significantly higher mean than the strategies-based instruction group on the listening anxiety posttest (Mean Difference = 3.30,  $p < .05$ ).

**Table 7**  
*Post-Hoc Comparisons for Listening Anxiety*

| (I) Group | (J) Group | Mean<br>Difference (I- | Std. | Sig. | 95% Confidence<br>Interval for |
|-----------|-----------|------------------------|------|------|--------------------------------|
|-----------|-----------|------------------------|------|------|--------------------------------|

|                              |                    | J)     | Error |     | Difference  |             |
|------------------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|-----|-------------|-------------|
|                              |                    |        |       |     | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Strategies-Based Instruction | Cultural Awareness | -2.66* | .80   | .00 | -4.58       | -.74        |
|                              | Linguistic Support | -3.30* | .80   | .00 | -5.21       | -1.38       |
| Cultural Awareness           | Linguistic Support | -.63   | .80   | .71 | -2.55       | 1.28        |

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Furthermore, no significant mean difference was seen between the cultural awareness and linguistic support groups on the posttest of listening anxiety.

#### 4.2. Discussion

The present study showed that cultural awareness-raising and linguistic support activities were more effective than strategies-based instruction on listening comprehension. This finding can take support from that of Farrokhi and Modarres (2012), who reported that students benefited more from schemata activation in listening comprehension. The result showed that glossary of unknown words worked better for less-proficient students, while content-related support was effective for more proficient students. This shows a relationship between the type of support and students' level of language proficiency.

Likewise, the finding of the superiority of cultural awareness over strategies-based instruction is supported by the finding of Ngo's (2019) study comparing the role of strategy teaching in learners' achievement. Further support for this finding comes from Mahmoudi (2017), who found that cultural familiarity can improve students' listening comprehension.

With respect to the above-mentioned similarities between the results of this study and those of the previous studies concerning the more effective role of cultural awareness raising activities and linguistic support in improving EFL learners' listening comprehension compared to strategies-based instruction, it could be argued that word recognition, syntactic

knowledge, and metacognitive awareness can significantly determine success in L2 listening comprehension (Ramli et al., 2019).

The two main strategies practiced in this study were summarizing and note-taking, as a form of strategies-based instruction (Jones, 2007). Although it is likely that these strategies could have enhanced learners' comprehension and ability to recall and understand the subject matter, without the required background of linguistic and cultural knowledge, summarizing and note-taking could not help the students in any significant manner.

At the same time, the results of this study are not compatible with the results of Chang and Read (2006), who reported that vocabulary instruction shortly before the test was beneficial for neither high nor low level learners. This difference may be attributable to time since the learners may have had little time to practice the words before the test. In addition, the results of this study challenge Chambers' view (1997) that comprehension emerges because it is acquired and that practice cannot substantially improve comprehension.

The results of data analysis on the second research question indicated that both cultural awareness-raising and linguistic support groups had a significantly higher mean score than the strategies-based instruction group. As the cultural awareness-raising and linguistic support groups had no significant mean difference on the posttest of listening anxiety. This finding is in line with several previous studies concerning the positive role of prelistening activities in reducing foreign language listening anxiety. This finding is in line with that of Vandergrift (2007), suggesting that students' vocabulary and grammatical knowledge as well as cultural background can help them to decrease their listening anxiety. According to Elkhafaifi (2005), insufficient foreign language knowledge can cause anxiety. Therefore, cultural awareness-raising and linguistic support can both resolve learning difficulties and help learners cope with their learning anxiety. This finding also supports previous research indicating that prelistening activities have an encouraging and supportive nature, which leads to a less stressful and enjoyable learning environment (e.g., Keshmirshekan, 2019; Mai et al., 2014; Mahmoudi, 2017).

This finding is also compatible with that of Golchi (2012), who showed that familiarity with culture and environment can reduce anxiety. According to Wang (2010), learners' anxiety is associated with their background information and listening ability. The results showed that although the strategies-based instruction was least effective in comparison to the other two techniques, it was positively effective on both variables. This finding is supported by Zhang (2013), who found that listening strategies can



lead to a reduced anxiety level because of the opportunity they provide for learners to overcome their problems. Further support for the positive impact of teaching strategies in ameliorating listening anxiety comes from Yeldham and Gruba (2014), who claim that strategy instruction helps EFL learners to use schematic knowledge to improve their listening ability and reduce their anxiety.

On the other hand, the finding that cultural awareness-raising and linguistic support groups had higher mean scores than the strategies-based instruction group is in contradiction with that of Chang and Read (2008), who found a significant difference between vocabulary, the repeated listening, and background pre-teaching groups and reported that repeated listening and background pre-teaching were more effective on anxiety reduction. This finding can take support from Fathi et al. (2020), who reported that teaching listening strategies can significantly reduce listening anxiety.

With respect to the above-mentioned finding, it could be claimed that both types of prelistening activities can create more knowledge or information for individuals about their native and target culture in addition to regarding learners' differences and abilities and, thus, help reduce learners' foreign language learning anxiety (Tomlinson, 2001).

## **5. Conclusion and Implications**

From the results of this study and the related literature on the impact of prelistening activities on improving listening comprehension and decreasing listening anxiety (e.g., Basavand & Sadeghi, 2014; Keshmirshekan, 2019; Mahmoudi, 2017; Rost, 2013; Yeldham & Gruba, 2014), it seems essential to pay more attention to the utilization of the appropriate techniques based on the analysis of learners' needs and the teaching conditions.

According to the findings, both CAR and LS activities influenced learners' listening comprehension positively and reduced their listening anxiety; however, no significant difference was found between them. Therefore, it can be concluded that being eclectic in using the prelistening activities can be much more preferable, and too much emphasis on employing only one of these techniques may be unnecessary and pointless.

As learners possess individual preferences, it is worth noting that in using each type of prelistening activity, learners' specific characteristics should be considered (Mousavian & Siahpoosh, 2018; Rost, 2013; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010). In other words, due to learners' individuality, it is suggested that the utilization of each of the investigated

prelistening activities be in congruence with learners' needs. Therefore, showing unnecessary prejudice by teachers toward applying only one prelistening pattern may not be justifiable. It can be concluded that the use of the investigated prelistening activities should also be in line with the teaching purposes in addition to learners' needs. As we had different prelistening activities that influenced our variables differently, we cannot use them for any teaching purposes and making any decisions in this regard should be cautious.

Considering the fact that CAR and LS had approximately the same effect on listening comprehension and listening anxiety, the conclusion to be drawn is that the type of prelistening activities could not be a determining factor in learners' LC and LA at this particular proficiency level. As a matter of fact, both types of techniques can aid teachers in teaching listening to intermediate learners in EFL contexts.

Improvement in the listening comprehension of learners receiving cultural and linguistic supports to activate the relevant schema is consistent with the claim that both types of bottom-up and top-down skills and knowledge should be integrated in teaching listening to improve listening comprehension (Gruba & Yeldham, 2014).

Regarding the effect of SBI on LC and LA, although the improvement was significant, it was the least effective technique compared to CAR and LS. Considering this, it can be concluded that learners may not have been confident enough to apply the strategies to their listening input as they may not have been motivated enough or scaffolded by the teacher. Another conclusion, drawn based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978), is that the feedback of SBI may have been poor due to the fact that the participants did not have adequate group work and cooperation in practicing the strategies. Learners might need to be involved in challenging tasks more while being supported by someone more capable. Meanwhile, SBI could improve learners' listening performance better if it were perceived correctly by the participants. Therefore, they might not have been able to take a risk and use the strategies to overcome their listening problems.

These findings can be useful for multiple stakeholders. Teachers play a crucial role in teaching listening and in implementing strategy instruction (Parrish & Lanvers, 2019). It is important for teacher education programs to train teachers theoretically and practically about different types of listening strategies that they may employ in their listening classes. This way, teachers can lead learners toward successful strategy use better and improve the effectiveness of SBI.

Learners can increase their vocabulary knowledge and, consequently, their listening comprehension through excessive exposure to cultural issues. Moreover, learners can relate newly incoming information to their existing information to facilitate their listening comprehension and keep confidence while doing listening tasks. Considering the results of the study, it seems important to suggest that learners should deal with prelistening activities not merely as means of assessing their comprehension, but as facilitators of their listening process.

Material developers can develop materials with activities to be practiced before the listening phase, with the purpose of equipping learners with the required linguistic and meta-linguistic knowledge to perform successfully in the listening process. The activities should facilitate listening in terms of both bottom-up and top-down processes. In other words, learners' skills should be enhanced and developed perceptually and conceptually after being exposed to prelistening activities.

At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that this study was carried out under some limitations and delimitations. One limitation was the small sample size; it is suggested that others work with a larger number of learners at different language levels. To generalize the findings and to obtain more reliable and valid results, this study can be replicated in other contexts as well. Furthermore, in this study, the effect of three types of readiness activities was studied on only two factors related to the listening skill. Other researchers can focus on the effect of other prelistening activities on the development of other aspects of listening or other language skills. Meanwhile, one can replicate this study using qualitative methods such as interviews or retrospective data to examine the participants' internal cognition.

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