

Al-Quds University

The Education Department

**The relationship between Lexical and Grammatical
Knowledge and Listening Comprehension Amongst
Tenth Grade Students in North Hebron
and Bethlehem Districts**

Master Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the
Degree of Master of Education

By

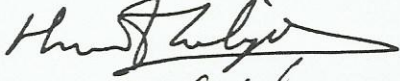
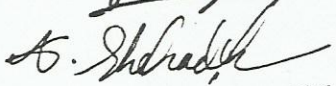
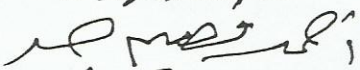
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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between lexical and grammatical knowledge and listening comprehension amongst tenth grade students in North Hebron and Bethlehem districts. Also, it aimed to investigate if there are significant differences in the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to the sex, type of school and district.

The population of this study consisted of all the tenth grade students in North Hebron and Bethlehem districts. They were (7956).

The sample of the study consisted of (200) students male and female distributed amongst eight sections in eight schools (Public and Private) in North Hebron and Bethlehem districts. The sample was selected in a random way. 188 papers were returned and 12 papers were discarded because they were incomplete. Three achievement tests (lexical knowledge test, grammatical knowledge test and listening comprehension test) were distributed amongst the sample of the study in the first semester of the academic year 2000/2001.

This study aimed at answering the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between lexical and grammatical knowledge and listening comprehension?
2. Is there a significant relationship between tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and lexical knowledge?

3. Is there a significant relationship between tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and grammatical knowledge?
4. Is there a significant difference in the achievement of tenth grade students in listening comprehension due to the sex (male or female)?
5. Is there a significant difference in the achievement of tenth grade students in listening comprehension due to the type of school (public or private)?
6. Is there a significant difference in the achievement of tenth grade students in listening comprehension due to the district (North Hebron or Bethlehem)?

The validity of the three achievement tests was ensured by submitting them to experts in the Palestinian Universities. The reliability of the three tests was computed by using Cronbach Alpha formula. It was 0.82. Also the means, standard deviation, frequency, T-test, Pearson Correlation and percentages were calculated by using SAS program.

The results of the analysis indicated the following:

1. There is a significant relationship between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and lexical and grammatical knowledge. (linguistic factors)

2. There is a significant relationship between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and lexical knowledge.
3. There is a significant relationship in the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and grammatical knowledge.
4. There is a significant difference at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to sex.
5. There is a significant difference at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to type of school.
6. There is a significant difference at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to district.

In the light of the results of the study, it is recommended that teachers of English language give more attention to lexical and grammatical knowledge as two factors in improving listening comprehension. Also, it was recommended that the Directorates of Education in Palestine should organize workshops for teachers to emphasize the importance of the listening skill. It also recommended that other researchers conduct studies to investigate the relationship between lexical and grammatical knowledge and listening comprehension in other district in Palestine and not only in North Hebron and Bethlehem.

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Chapter One

Introduction

As we approach the beginning of the twenty-first century, English is without a question the major language in the world. It is also the language most often used all over the world as means of communication. The widespread use of English is one of the main reasons for its being taught in Palestine schools.

Listening is a very important skill for achieving communication in any foreign language. Also, it is a fundamental language skill. However, it is often neglected by foreign and second language teachers. "Listening as a method of taking information is used far more than reading and writing combined. It is the channel used most often for learning" (Carol, 1991: 73).

Rost (1990: 52) admirably summarizes the importance of listening in second and foreign language learning in a recent publication:

1. Listening is vital in the language classroom because it provides input for the learner. Without understanding input at the right level, any learning simply cannot begin.
2. Spoken language provides a means of interaction for the learner. Because learners must interact to achieve understanding, access to speakers of the language is essential.
3. Authentic spoken language presents a challenge for the learner to attempt to understand language as native speakers actually use it.

4. A good listening usually supports the self-esteem of the speaker. Burley (1982:141) considers listening “ a potent force for reducing stress and tension”. It is important for self-confidence.
5. By good listening we save time.

Listening is essential not only as a receptive skill but also to the development of spoken language proficiency. Also, we can say that good listening usually leads to success in a profession.

According to the researchers' experiences as teachers of English they noticed that most of students finish high school and join the university without having or speaking good English that allows them to function in the world of work. Listening comprehension is one of those problems. This study investigates the relationship between lexical and grammatical knowledge and listening comprehension amongst tenth grade students.

Statement of the problem

The study of foreign language comprehension is a complex phenomenon compounded by the fact that many types of processes and factors need to be accounted for and explained. The knowledge that listeners bring to the process is one of those many factors. "It is generally known that good knowledge of vocabulary and grammar helps the listener to understand the material he or she hears" (Faraj, 1998).

According to the researchers experiences as teachers of English they noticed that most of students finish high school and join the university without having or speaking good English that allows them to function in the world of work. Listening comprehension is one of those problems. This study investigates the relationship between lexical and grammatical knowledge* and listening comprehension amongst tenth grade students.

Purpose of the study

This study attempts to investigate the relationship between lexical and grammatical knowledge and listening comprehension amongst tenth grade students in North Hebron and Bethlehem areas. It also investigates if there is a significant difference in the achievement of tenth grade students in listening comprehension due to sex, type of school and area.

In short we can say that this study tries to improve students' level in listening comprehension to achieve good communication in foreign language.

Significance of the study

Many books and articles were written on the topic of listening comprehension. A great number of educators and researchers also highlight the importance of listening comprehension in teaching English as a foreign language in particular.

Listening is assuming greater and greater role in many foreign language contexts. However, it is often neglected by foreign and second language teachers. Also, listening comprehension does not normally receive the amount of attention in the classroom that it deserves.

Faraj (1998: 31) says "Good listening usually leads to success in a profession. On the other hand, if student's lexical and grammatical knowledge is very limited it makes listening comprehension very difficult."

This study attempts to investigate the factors that affect the listening skill in order to improve student's level. Furthermore, the results of testing the questions of the study is expected to achieve the following results:

1. This study is expected to help English teachers and draw their attention to the main factors that affect students' achievement in listening comprehension and finding solutions according to the expected recommendations.
2. It is expected to help students to improve their level in listening comprehension.

To sum up, the researcher hopes that this study may contribute to improve students level in listening comprehension by drawing teachers attention to concentrate on vocabulary and grammar.

Research questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between lexical and grammatical knowledge and listening comprehension?
2. Is there a significant relationship between tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and their lexical knowledge?
3. Is there a significant relationship between tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and their grammatical knowledge?
4. Is there a significant difference in the achievement of tenth grade students in listening comprehension due to sex (male or female)?
5. Is there a significant difference in the achievement of tenth grade students in listening comprehension due to type of school (private or public)?
6. Is there a significant difference in the achievement of tenth grade students in listening comprehension due to district (North Hebron or Bethlehem)?

Hypotheses

To answer the questions of this study, these questions were converted into the following null hypotheses:

1. There is no significant relationship between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and (lexical and grammatical) knowledge.
2. There is no significant relationship between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension with lexical knowledge.
3. There is no significant relationship between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension with grammatical knowledge.
4. There is no significant difference at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to sex (male or female).
5. There is no significant difference at $\alpha = 0.05$ in the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to type of school (public or private).
6. There is no significant difference at $\alpha = 0.05$ between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to district (North Hebron or Bethlehem).

Limitations of the study

The researcher acknowledges the following limitations to the study. This study is limited to the tenth grade students in the public and private schools which belong to North Hebron and Bethlehem Directorates of Education in the first semester of the academic year 2000-2001. The results of this study could not be generalized out the borders of these limitations. The study will be conducted by using three-achievement tests lexical knowledge test, grammatical knowledge test and listening comprehension test. All of the subjects are non-native speakers of English.

Definition of Terms

Comprehension: An active constructive process that consists of relating new or incoming information to already stored in memory. (Anderson: 1984).

Listening comprehension: The process of receiving , attending to and assigning meaning to aural stimuli (Frances: 1994) as measured by the listening comprehension test.

Lexical knowledge: Information held regarding the meaning of words. (Frances: 1994) as measured by the lexical knowledge test.

Grammatical knowledge: Information held regarding the system, i.e. rules, for forming interpreting words and

sentences (Frances, 1994) as measured by the grammatical knowledge test.

Linguistic factors: Features of the language that pertain to Lexis, grammar and syntax. (Kelly :1991).

Language proficiency: An index used to describe the level of language attainment of a learner in a language environment. (Frances: 1994).

Lexis: The vocabulary of a language in contrast to grammar. (Frances : 1994)

Grammar: The mental system that is used to form and interpret the words and sentences of a language. It includes such sub components as phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. (Frances : 1994).

Chapter Five

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

This study attempted to investigate the relationship between tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and lexical and grammatical knowledge in Hebron and Bethlehem districts and whether the weakness of students in listening comprehension is caused by the weakness of these students in lexical and grammatical knowledge. It also attempted to investigate if there is a significant difference in tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to sex, type of school and district.

In this chapter, the researcher highlights and discusses the six hypotheses of this study. Also, he compares the results of this study with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The necessary recommendations, which depend on the results, will be presented.

Hypothesis One:

There is no significant relationship between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and (lexical and grammatical) knowledge.

The findings of this study did not support the first null hypothesis which indicated that there was no relationship between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and lexical and grammatical knowledge.

The means of this hypothesis, 76.45 in the lexical knowledge test, 72.23 in the grammatical knowledge test and 79.47 in the listening comprehension test, show that lexical and grammatical knowledge play an important role in listening comprehension. The more they have lexical and grammatical knowledge, the more they achieve listening comprehension. The correlation coefficient between the variables was 0.76. This means that there is a significant relationship between linguistic factors and listening comprehension.

The results of this study agree with the teachers believes in Faraj (1998) who indicated that lack of vocabulary is a cause for the weakness of student's listening skill. The results also agree with the view of Kelly (1991) who indicated that lack of vocabulary knowledge is the main obstacle to listening comprehension and recommended enriching the student's lexical knowledge. Furthermore, the results conform with the view of Bernhardt (1987) who indicated that linguistic knowledge-lexis, syntax and grammar, likewise occupies an important role in the comprehension process.

The result of this study did not conform with the view of Frances (1994) completely. He indicated that only lexical knowledge was significantly related to comprehension while grammatical knowledge proved to be non-significant. It could be said that this refers to the level of students who included in his study. He included university students not as students in this study (tenth grade students).

The result of this study conform with the view of Brown (1977) who pointed out that lack of linguistic knowledge is often a

key factor in listening problems. The listener may not know which aspects or situations are relevant to interpreting current utterances or how to respond.

Hypothesis Two:

There is no significant relationship between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and lexical knowledge.

The findings of this study did not support the second null hypothesis which indicated that there was no relationship between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and lexical knowledge.

The means of the students' achievement in lexical knowledge test and listening comprehension test were 76.45 in the lexical knowledge test and 79.47 in listening comprehension test. The correlation coefficient between the two variables was 0.71.

This means that there is a significant relationship between lexical knowledge and listening comprehension.

The results of this study are in agreement with the view of Faraj (1998) who said that vocabulary is an important factor in listening comprehension.

The results of this study also conform with the view of Kelly (1991) who indicated that lack of vocabulary knowledge is the main obstacle to listening comprehension. Garrett (1986) also supports the findings of this study.

The results of this study conform with the view of Lewis (1977) who indicated that a teacher could promote active listening by writing difficult words on the board. This means that lexical knowledge plays an important role in listening.

The results of this study did not support the view of Masny (1980) who claimed the level of vocabulary may be less relevant as a factor of difficulty in listening comprehension than one might think.

The results of this study conform with the view of Frances (1994) who claimed that lexical knowledge appears to be a key linguistic factor since it allows the language learner to grasp the overall meaning elements of discourse.

The results also support the view of Rivers (1980), Byrnes (1984), and Al-Jamal (1995) who indicated that the listener is more able to distinguish a known word from an unknown word. This means that the known words help the listener to understand the listening text, and the unknown words delay this process. This means that good knowledge of vocabulary gives students confidence and positive feedback.

Hypothesis Three:

There is no significant relationship between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and grammatical knowledge.

The findings of this study didn't support the third null hypothesis which indicated that there was no relationship between

the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and grammatical knowledge.

The means of the students' achievement in grammatical knowledge test and listening comprehension test were 72.23 and 79.47. These means show that there is a relationship between listening comprehension and grammatical knowledge. The correlation coefficient was 0.70, and this means that there is a significant relationship between the two variables.

The results of this study conform with the view of Halliday (1970) who claimed that grammatical and lexical parsing skill are needed for reading and listening. This means that grammatical knowledge is necessary in listening comprehension.

Also, the results conform with the view of Anderson (1983) who claimed that in addition to lexical knowledge, it can be noted that syntactic and grammatical knowledge also come into play in the perception and interpretation of aural language.

The findings of this study also support the views of Call (1985), Frances (1994) and Johnson (1982) who stated that knowledge of vocabulary plays an important role in listening comprehension. They must be able to use syntax to help them recognize the relationships among the words they have heard and to retain utterances in memory long enough to understand them.

On the other hand, the findings of this study didn't support the views of Abu Hanieh (1996) who claimed that there is no significant correlation between the means of students' achievement in grammar and listening comprehension. It could be said that this refers to the

method that he used in applying his study. He used the experimental method. But in this study the researcher used achievement tests.

Hypothesis Four:

There is no significant difference at ($\alpha=0.05$) between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to sex.

The findings of this study did not support the fourth hypothesis which indicated that there was no significant difference at ($\alpha=0.05$) between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to sex. This means that there is a significant difference between students' achievement in listening comprehension and sex. It could be said that this refers to the female's nature.

The results of this study disagree with the view of Abu Hanieh who claimed that there is no significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) between the means of students' achievement in grammar and listening according to sex.

Hypothesis Five:

There is no significant difference at ($\alpha=0.05$) between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to type of school.

The findings of this study did not support the fifth hypothesis which indicated that there were no significant differences at

($\alpha=0.05$) between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension and type of school. This means that there is a significant difference. Also, this means that students who study English in the private schools are better in listening comprehension than students who study English in the public schools.

It could be explained that this is because students in the private schools study English from the first grade unlike students in the public school who study English from the fifth grade. Classes in the private schools aren't crowded, as is the case in the public schools and this affect on their listening abilities. Also, the classroom environment in the private schools is more comfortable than situation in the public schools, and this help them to achieve high scores in listening comprehension. Sometimes the crowded classes prevent the teacher to use the tape. Therefore the teacher tends to read by him self. So, students found it is difficult to listen to the tape and this affect their abilities in listening.

Hypothesis Six:

There is no significant difference at ($\alpha=0.05$) between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to district.

The findings of this study did not support the sixth hypothesis which indicated that there were no significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension according to district. The significant level of (α) is < 0.05 and this means that there is a significant difference at

($\alpha = 0.05$) between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to district.

To conclude, it could be said that listening comprehension plays an important role in teaching English language and grammatical knowledge affect listening comprehension so teachers of English should emphasize these two factors. This implies that they should have sufficient preparation in syntax and vocabulary.

The results of the study revealed the following:

1. There was a significant relationship between the achievement of tenth grade students in listening comprehension and lexical knowledge.
2. There was a significant relationship between the achievement of tenth grade students in listening comprehension and grammatical knowledge.
3. There was a significant difference at ($\alpha=0.05$) between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to sex.
4. There was a significant difference at ($\alpha=0.05$) between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to type of school.
5. There was significant difference at ($\alpha=0.05$) between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to district.

These results disagree with the researcher's hypotheses which indicated that there were no relationships between lexical and grammatical knowledge and listening comprehension and that there

Conclusions

To conclude, it could be said that listening comprehension plays an important role in teaching English language. Lexical and grammatical knowledge affect listening comprehension so teachers of English should emphasize these two factors. This implies that they should have sufficient preparation in syntax and vocabulary.

The results of the study revealed the following:

1. There was a significant relationship between the achievement of tenth grade students in listening comprehension and lexical knowledge.
2. There was a significant relationship between the achievement of tenth grade students in listening comprehension and grammatical knowledge.
3. There was a significant difference at ($\alpha=0.05$) between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to sex.
4. There was a significant difference at ($\alpha=0.05$) between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to type of school.
5. There was significant difference at ($\alpha=0.05$) between the means of tenth grade students' achievement in listening comprehension due to district.

These results disagree with the researcher's hypotheses which indicated that there were no relationships between lexical and grammatical knowledge and listening comprehension and that, there

were no significant differences between the means of tenth grade students achievement in listening comprehension due to sex, type of school and district.

1. The researcher recommends that teachers of English language give more attention to lexical and grammatical knowledge as two factors in improving listening comprehension.
2. The researcher strongly recommends that teachers of English encourage their students to practice listening at home by listening to TV news and present it.
3. It is also recommended that teachers of English give more attention to listening comprehension at class. They also should test their students in listening comprehension.
4. The researcher recommends that teachers of English language use the target approach in teaching the key words when teaching listening texts.
5. The researcher strongly recommends that other researchers conduct studies to investigate the relationship between lexical and grammatical knowledge and listening comprehension in other districts in Palestine and not only in Hebron and Bethlehem.
6. The researcher recommends that other researchers conduct studies to investigate the relationship between (lexical and grammatical) knowledge and reading comprehension that compare it with listening comprehension.

Recommendations

In the light of the results of this study, a number of recommendations are made:

1. The researcher recommends that teachers of English language give more attention to lexical and grammatical knowledge as two factors in improving listening comprehension.
2. The researcher strongly recommends that teachers of English encourage their students to practice listening at home by listening to TV news and present it.
3. It is also recommended that teachers of English give more attention to listening comprehension at class. They also should test their students in listening comprehension.
4. The researcher recommends that teachers of English language use the aural-approach in teaching the key words when teaching listening texts.
5. The researcher strongly recommends that other researchers conduct studies to investigate the relationship between lexical and grammatical knowledge and listening comprehension in other districts in Palestine and not only in Hebron and Bethlehem.
6. The researcher recommends that other researchers conduct studies to investigate the relationship between (lexical and grammatical) knowledge and reading comprehension then compare it with listening comprehension.

7. The Directorates of Education in Palestine should organize workshops for teachers in listening comprehension to emphasize the importance of the listening skill.