

The Influence Of Note-Taking Technique On EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension In A Higher Education Context

Phan Thi Lam

Faculty of Foreign Languages, Dong Nai Technology University,
Dong Nai, Vietnam.



Abstract – The research aims to investigate the influence of note-taking technique used by EFL students' listening comprehension in academic context. The research was conducted with sixty English-majored freshmen at a university in the southern of Vietnam. Quantitative method were employed to collect the data. The study results reveal that note-taking positively affects students' listening comprehension. The students who took notes while listening to lectures have higher levels of comprehension. It is recommended that students be trained to use note-taking technique to acquire active listening and active learning.

Keywords – Note-Taking, Listening Comprehension, Active Listening, EFL Students, Higher Education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Listening comprehension is considered to be a crucial and challenging skill in learning language. It plays an important role in daily life. People listen for various purposes such as obtaining information, academic purposes or entertainment. According to Rixon (1986), in foreign language studying, listening is of the utmost importance because it gives the language input. If input is not appropriately understood, learning simply cannot have any advancement. Vandergrift (2007) also adds that the enhancement of second language listening skills take an important role of improving other language skills. Thus, it is necessary for students to develop their listening comprehension.

Note taking is an vital academic skill. Van de Meer (2012, p.13) points out that “note taking in lectures is often taken to be the distinguishing characteristic of learning at university.” Note-taking brings high effectiveness on comprehension. Kiewra (1991) indicates that taking notes during lessons helps students understand what is taught easier and then they can reach the objectives of the course more comfortably. Shortage of note-taking skills and problems with note-taking in listening comprehension are troublesome areas that international learners often face. Accordingly students with deficient comprehension may contribute their silence in oral discussion in class. It is critical for students to master note-taking technique.

As a result, it is necessary to conduct a study to investigate the influence of note-taking on English – majored freshmen's listening comprehension. It is believed that note-taking is a fruitful technique in listening comprehension and the extra cognitive tasks. It contributes to depth of processing and deeper learning as well. Moreover, note-taking allow students to pay more attention to main points that can lead to improvement of listening comprehension. To gain the aim of the research, the author tries to answer the question: How does note-taking influence on EFL students' listening comprehension?

II. RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

The effects of note-taking techniques has been supported by different researches which show positive influences on EFL students. Kneale (1998); Laidlaw, Skok and MSLaughlin (1993) reveals that EFL teachers and their colleagues agree on the advantages of note taking as an effective and well-recognized strategy to develop learners' ability to recall, comprehend and retain subject matter delivered through lectures. Other researchers have found that EFL learners bear short-term memories in English and face more difficulties grasping what they listen (Peverly et al. 2007). When students don't take down notes, their attention span is ten to fifteen minutes, but note-taking can extend this period and increase the motivation and interest level of listeners that help them to deeper understand. Thus, the most remarkable benefits of note-taking EFL learners is the convenience of capturing terms, ideas and uncommon names in text to remember and comprehend later (LeBeauer, 2000). To build an evidence base for the study, some former researches an theoretical background should be revised in this section.

1. Teaching listening comprehension

Listening is a receptive skill. It is a purposeful and active process of making sense of what we hear. Therefore, it asks a person to receive and comprehend incoming information. Rost (2001) explains that there are principles behind the teaching listening that teachers should be note to obtain teaching and learning aims.

- Expose learners to various kinds of processing information: top down vs. bottom up: In bottom up processing, learners begins with the component parts: grammar and words. Contrastingly, with top down processing students begin from their background knowledge, general information from life experience and preceding learning or given situation.
- Expose learners to diverse kinds of listening: any choice of listening tasks has to be considered types of listening. Listening for specifics, it involves catching detailed information such as names, dates, time. Listening for gist/ global listening requires to identify main ideas or noting a sequence of events. Inference is other critical kind of listening. It is listening for meaning that is implied not stated directly.
- Teach a different tasks: students need to work with various of listening tasks. It is important that the tasks does not requires too much production of students.
- Teach listening strategies: It is useful to note the strategies that are used by successful listeners (Rost, 2001).
 - + Predicting: think about what you will hear
 - + inferring: It is useful to listen between the lines
 - + Monitoring: effective listeners note what they do and do not understand
 - + clarifying: active students make questions and give feedback to the speaker
 - + Responding: students react to what they listen
 - + evaluating: student check on how well they have comprehended.

2. Note –taking technique

2.1 Definition of note-taking

Note-taking is the practice of writing down or otherwise recording main points of information. Note-taking is a skill, used frequently from primary school to university years, is preferred after university as well. There are two components in note-taking. The first part is about the moment when the notes are taken which concentrating on the things read, seen and heard. The latter one is recording notes for forthcoming use.

According to Fisher and Harris (1973), note-taking have two general functions: encoding and external storage. For encoding, note-taking plays the role as ensuring that lecture information is understood correctly and coded into memory. This can enclose increasing awareness of talk organization, increasing the learner's attention to the lecture and encourage learners to compare the information heard with previous knowledge (Frase, 1970). On the other hand, external storage refers to revising notes for test.

As defined by Boch and Piolat (2005), note-taking as writing in symbols quickly that create external memory and shortening main information to use later. Note-taking also described by Zhang (2012) as writing important ideas and main points of listening text. Piolat et al. (2005) shows that note-taking is a complicated activity that demands us to understand and select information and requires written production processes. Other studies have failed to find beneficial effects and others have observed an interfering effect. For example, Zuckerman (2016) indicates note-taking is a mixed and complicated process that lead learners to make incomplete and fruitless notes.

2.2 Advantages of note-taking

Note-taking is a technique that has beneficial effect on comprehension. Some researchers promote note-taking, and many even encourage note-taking teaching to both L1 and L2 learners. Siegel (2015) indicates that students benefit from note-taking because it can give an external recording of information for review and later tasks. Note-taking develops learner's comprehension skills because it increases their attention to the materials which are listened or read. In addition, it helps learners store the important information they learnt and prevent from missing the things taught during the lessons (Umaadevi & Sasi, 2019). A study conducted by Roy et al. (2014) reveals that some details about the subjects taught, to specialize in listening can be recalled through note-taking. Kobayashi (2005) points out that note-taking is among the most important technique which enhances comprehension. Nevertheless, comprehension does not only depend on note-taking.

Note-taking is generally regarded within the courses' context. It not only associate with courses, but notes are also taken with the objectives of a thorough grasp, long-term learning and revising prior knowledge. Witherby and Tauber (2019) states that notes taken during lectures are useful materials for exams. Note-taking is applied in other fields in life such as daily life and work.

2.3 Strategies of note-taking

The value of note-taking in listening is comprehension have been informed, EFL teachers desire to find suitable strategies to instruct EFL learners how to take meaningful and effective notes within the time limit. Newell and Smith (1999) shows that several EFL teachers suppose their students have improved mentioned skills and make use of them. However, to teach student how to take notes in an effective way is a quite challenging task for teachers. Note-taking misunderstanding of students will cause ineffective note-taking. Some students think note-taking as writing everything they heard. Sutherland et al. (2002) conducted a study with forty-one EFL students shows that seventeen of them did verbatim transcription. Knowledge cannot be synthesized and analyzed if every word heard is noted (Hill & Miller, 2006). In a meta-analysis, Kobayashi (2005) finds out six different methods which are conducted by steps as follow:

- 1) Pre-train note-taking skills or strategies
- 2) Give verbal instructions to use a particular note-taking strategy
- 3) Provide framework notes at the beginning of class
- 4) Pre-train note-revising skills or strategies
- 5) Give verbal instructions to use a particular note-taking strategy
- 6) Add personal notes with instructors' notes at the time of later revision.

The first three strategies only influence learners encoding process of deeper learning. Nevertheless, the fourth and fifth are practical way to develop reprocessing of information through motivate students revise notes later. The sixth method provides learners chance to benefit from more complete notes.

III. METHODOLOGY AND INSTRUMENTS

1. Participants

The research sample was 60 students from two listening 1 classes in Faculty of Foreign Languages at Dong Nai Technology University (DNTU). One group is controlled who receive conventional method as the treatment while the other is experimental group who received note-taking technique instruction. The students in the treatment group had a three-hour practical training on note-taking techniques and they were required to use these techniques during the listening activities. They were also informed that

they could use any technique that they had trained or develop their own techniques (Boch, 2001). The classrooms are well-equipped such as computer, projector, loudspeakers, microphone, flexible chairs and tables. At the time of study, students were taking the listening 1 course that last 10 week. They took class once week.

2. Method

Depending on aims and aspects of study, researcher choose qualitative, quantitative or mixed methodology to collect valid and reliable data. Every methodology has its strengths and limitations. Quantitative method emphasizes objective measurements and statistical, numerical analysis of data collected. It is designed to provide reliable data and useful for conducted on a large number of participants that produces information in width (Kelle, 2006). Therefore, this method is useful for me to collect data a large amount of valuable information from the students in a short time.

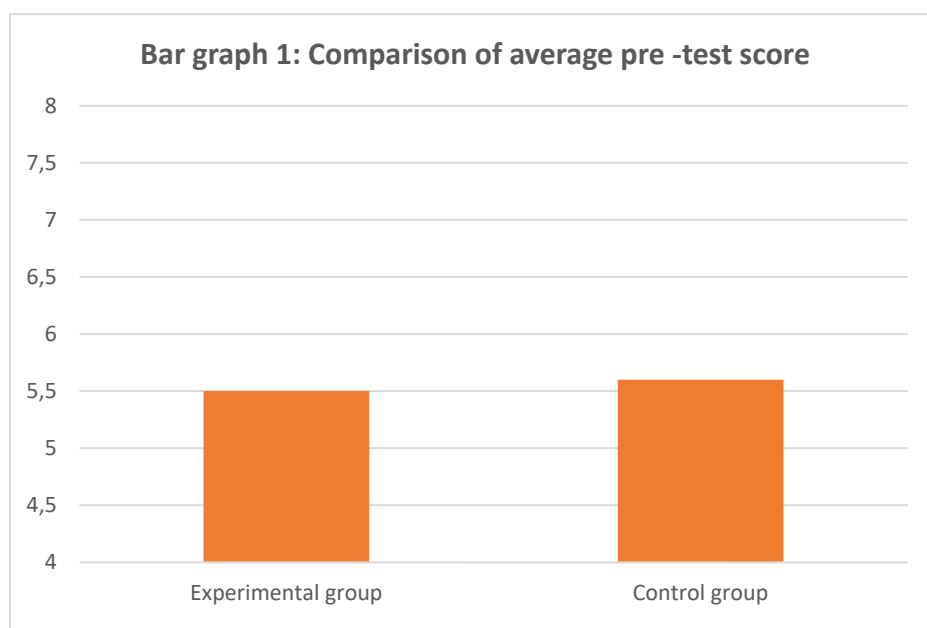
Pretest – posttest designs are the preferred method to compare participant groups and measure the degree of change occurring as a result of treatments or interventions. This instrument is useful for researchers who want to monitor the effect of a new teaching method on groups of students. In this study, the participants were divided into two groups who took the pre-test at the second week to evaluate listening comprehension ability before treatment. The forty- minute pre-test includes three sections with 25 items of sentence completion, multiple choice and true/false questions. Each correct answer got 0,4 marks. The total score is 10 marks. A post-test is the same structure with pre-test used for two groups on the ninth week to measure achievement after the treatment.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Before conducting the treatment, thirty students in each took the pre-test. To get descriptive statistical result from pre-test scores in control group and experimental group, the researcher used Microsoft Excel to analyze the collected data. The below table indicates that 7.5 is the highest score in the control group and the lowest score is 4. In the experimental group, the highest score is 7 and the lowest one is also 4. The bar graph shows the mean score of pre-test in experimental group is little lower than in control group.

Table 1: The pre-test scores

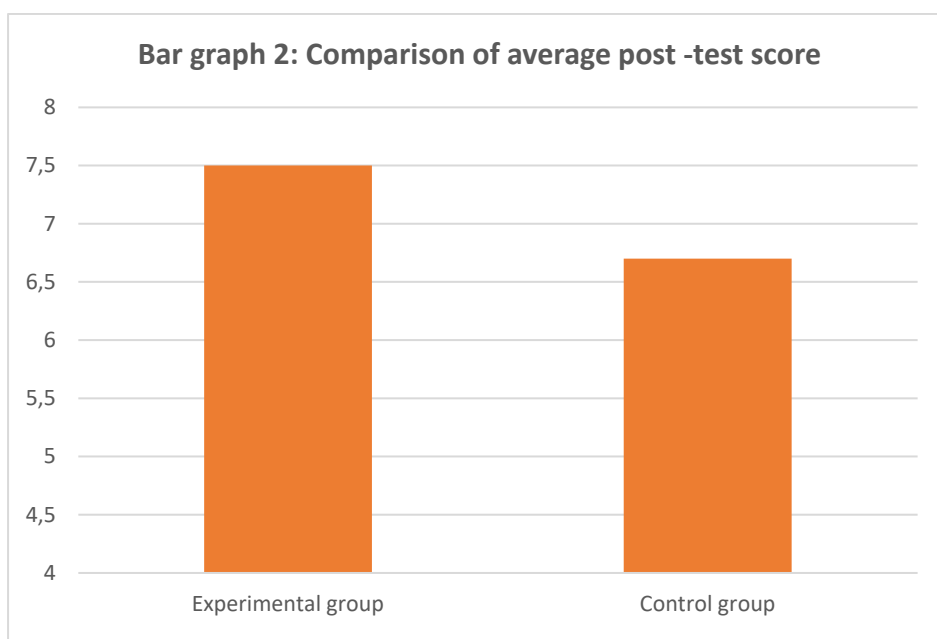
Subjects (30 students)	Control group	Experimental group
Highest score	7,5	7
Lowest score	4	4
Sum	168	165
Mean	5,6	5,5



At the last week of the course, the post-test was taken by sixty students in two groups and the collected data was also analyzed through Microsoft Excel. It can be seen clearly in the table 2, the highest score in control group is 8,5 and the lowest is 5. Only one student got 8.5. Whereas in experimental group, the highest score is 9,5 and the lowest is 6.5. there are three students achieved 9.5. The figures in bar graph 2 shows the mean of experimental group ($M=7,5$) is also significantly higher than that of control group ($M=6,7$). From the table 1 and 2, we can see that in experimental group the students achieved higher results than ones in control group after the treatment.

Table 2: The pre-test scores

Subjects (30 students)	Control group	Experimental group
Highest score	8,5	9,5
Lowest score	5	6,5
Sum	202	217
Mean	6,7	7,5



It could be seen from bar graph 1 and 2, there is a statistically significant difference between the listening comprehension scores of pre-test and post-test in the experimental group. The mean of pre-test is only 5.5 , but in post- test it is increased to 7.5. The findings reveal note-taking technique has an positive influence on students' listening comprehension levels . As proved by Umaadevi and Sasi (2019), note-taking develops learner's comprehension skills because it increases their attention to the materials which are listened. In addition, it helps learners store the important information they learnt and prevent from missing the things taught during the lessons.

V. CONCLUSION

The study has shown that note-taking technique positively affect students' listening comprehension. It improves students' listening comprehension levels, extend listeners' attention period and increase the motivation that help them to understand better. Basically, the findings have answered the research question and currently contribute to innovating the teaching method to develop the teaching performance as well as students' listening comprehension skill. The results are also beneficial to my colleagues at DNTU. However, the sample research is small; the participants are the first-year students who are adjusting the new learning styles, so the findings might not be stable. Moreover, the study duration is quite short, the reliability and validity of results are possibly influenced. Thus, other teachers should carefully consider before employing note-taking technique in listening classes.

REFERENCES

- [1] Boch F, Piolat A (2005). Note taking and learning: A summary of research. *The WAC Journal* 16 p
- [2] Boch F. (2001). Prise de notes et écriture conceptuelle à l'université [Note-taking as Writing to Learn at University], *Pratiques*, 105/106, 137-159.
- [3] Fisher, J. L., & Harris, M. B. (1973). Effect of note taking and review on recall. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 65, 321-325.
- [4] Frase, L. T. (1970). Boundary conditions for mathemagenic behaviors. *Review of Educational Research*, 40, 337-347.
- [5] Hill JD, Miller KB (2006). Classroom instruction that works with English language learners. Virginia, USA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- [6] Kelle, U. (2006). Combining qualitative and quantitative methods in research practice: purposes and advantages. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (4),293-311.
- [7] Kiewra KA (1991). Aids to lecture learning. *Educational Psychologist* 26(1):37-53. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep2601_3.
- [8] Kiewra, K. A. (1989). A review of note taking: The encodingstorage paradigm and beyond. *Educational Psychology Review*, 1(2), 147-172
- [9] Kobayashi K (2005). What limits the encoding effect of note-taking? A meta-analytic examination. *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 30(2):242-262. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2004.10.001>
- [10] Laidlaw, E. N., Skok, R. L., & McLaughlin, T. F. (1993). The effects of note taking and self-questioning on quiz performance. *Science Education*, 77(1), 75-82.
- [11] LeBauer, R. S. (2000). *Learn to listen: Listen to learn. Academic listening and note-taking* (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.
- [12] Newell, J., & Smith, J. (1999, March). Academic success for long-term ESL students. Paper presented at the meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, New York, NY, USA.
- [13] Peverly, S. T., Ramaswamy, V., Brown, C., Sumowski, J., Alidoost, M., & Garner, J. (2007). What predicts skill in lecture note taking? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99(1), 167-180.
- [14] Piolat A, Olive T, Kellogg RT (2005). Cognitive effort during note taking. *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 19(3):291-312. <https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.1086>
- [15] Rixon, S. (1986), *Developing listening skills*. Macmillan, London.
- [16] Rost, M 2001. *Teaching and researching Listening*, Harlow: Pearson Education/ Longman.
- [17] Roy D, Brine J, Murasawa F (2014). Usability of English note-taking applications in a foreign language learning context. *Computer Assisted Language Learning* 29(1):1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2014.889715>
- [18] Siegel, J. (2015). A pedagogic cycle for EFL notetaking. *ELT Journal*, 70(3), 275–286. Retrieved [28-04-2019]: <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/>.
- [19] Sutherland P., Badger R., White G. (2002). How new students take notes at lectures. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 26(4):377-388. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877022000021775>
- [20] Witherby A. E, Tauber S. K. (2019). The current status of students' notetaking: Why and how do students take notes? *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition* 8:139-153. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pag0000322>
- [21] Umaadevi MB, Sasi R. S. (2019). Note-taking as an effective strategy in enhancing the listening and writing skills of English language learners. *International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities* 7(6):1-11.
- [22] Van der Meer, J. (2012). Students' note-taking challenges in the twenty-first century: Considerations for teachers and academic staff developers. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 17(1), 13-23. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2011.590974>.

- [23] Vandergrift, L. (2007). Recent developments in second and foreign language listening comprehension research. *Language Teaching*, 40(1), 191–210.
- [24] Zhang Y. (2012). The impact of listening strategy on listening comprehension. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 2(3):625-9. <https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.2.3.625-629>.
- [25] Zuckerman K. L. (2016). *An Investigation of Note-Taking and Review on Test Performance*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Columbia University, New York, US.