

Comprehension in the Second Language: How Do Students Learn?

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Abstract: *Comprehension in the second language is a skill that needs to be developed, so students can better understand texts in English. This study aimed to gauge the comprehension ability of the 90 BSED English students and discover a comprehension strategy that worked best for them. The study used a quantitative-qualitative research design through One-Factor ANOVA and a focus group discussion. The instrument used was an adapted comprehension questionnaire prepared in three versions: texts for reading, listening, and viewing comprehension test. After intensive analysis with the inclusion of the Tukey Post Hoc Analysis, results showed that the 3 strategies were significantly different from one another. It showed that students got higher scores with the use of the viewing strategy because they could read the texts and watch the events of the piece. The reading strategy fell on the second rank while listening strategy appeared to be less preferred by the students.*

Keywords: Comprehension, viewing strategy, reading strategy, and listening strategy

1. Introduction

As the education all over the world crossed with the 21st-century learners, scholars quickly see the necessity for teachers to keep abreast with the trends brought about by the new generation students, the technology-advanced millennials (Guieb & Cruz, 2017). These technology-driven individuals spend a good portion of their times with the digital world. The traditional literary prints have evolved so drastically, turning into movies and stories published on the internet and other sites. It led to the use of stories integrated into comprehension activities such as listening, reading and viewing. Mohammad & Nasrollahi (2012) insisted that the use of literature in reading and language classes remained a theme of argument for many scholars.

Comprehension refers to the capability of the receiver to understand and interpret information from the sender, despite the challenge of adequately deciphering the right message (Yildiz & Albay, 2015). However, the teaching of comprehension in the second language expanded not only to reading and listening but also to viewing. With the changing face of learning, experts take sides as to which strategy enhances comprehension in the second language. Guieb & Cruz (2017) insisted that viewing is the most effective teaching technique to fill the problems that bridge traditional instruction and computer-age education at all levels. Viewing through the help of technology has been the magic trick in holding the learners' interest. Due to the thinning retention span of students, teachers need to meet their visual intelligence by showing pictures and photographs. Teachers may also resort to showing literary genre found in movies, talk shows, skits, dramas, plays to keep them engaged. For Bingo et al. (2014), listening is among the many skills to be mastered in acquiring the second language. However, several barriers such as environment, audience, and delivery hinder the listening process. Besides, schools nowadays focused more on the development of reading, writing, and vocabulary.

Gilakhani & Sabouri (2016) defined listening comprehension as an intricate process. So, the listener must use some strategies like understanding the recording while

listening, keeping the message in memory, and combining the new information with the prior knowledge. In schools, teachers should guide students in employing the right strategies for there is no single. De Brito (2015) mentioned that learners find listening difficult due to the speech rate and the accent of the speaker. To address the difficulty teachers may enhance the note-taking skills techniques of the learners such as abbreviating and using graphic organizers to improve their ability to record more information.

On the other hand, Graham (2006) stressed that the persons' speed in speaking as he or she delivers the message and the difficulty level of the materials greatly influence the learners' listening skills. Sometimes, the deficiency lies in the inability of the learners and their lack of appropriate listening strategies. Found out in his study that 50% of the respondents refuse to learn English due to the speed of the speech of the speaker and the materials, limited vocabulary, and little knowledge of the topic. On the positive note, the learners gradually improved their listening skills through the use of learning tool such as radio even if teachers do not use them inside the classroom. They even lack the recorder for listening practice (Malkawi, 2010).

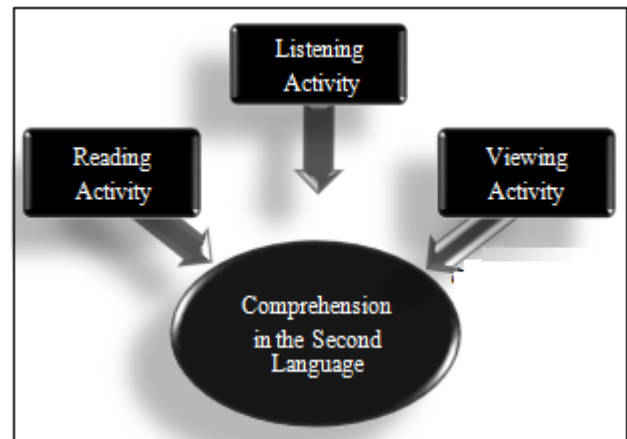
Furthermore, Hamouda, A. (2013) explained that listening could be sometimes difficult to carry out because of the speakers' accent, speech speed, and bad quality of the listening material. The learners, on the other hand, possess inadequate vocabulary, lack concentration and have anxiety problems. He suggested that teachers may improve their listening materials and their classroom strategies, while students work on enhancing their proficiency with the use of listening strategies. Experts recommend that the listening tasks must move from simple to complex.

Wolley (2010) expressed a new viewpoint. He insisted that putting visual and verbal information together enhanced the reading comprehension skill of the students. Moreover, he emphasized that good comprehension requires the ability to create mental models that combine both the implied meaning of the listening text and the information stored as prior knowledge. A good mixture of verbal and visual teaching

method could aid comprehension for it stimulates the memory of the learners. Putting them together would help the students alleviate their comprehension in terms of viewing. As a result, students will develop a fascination for literature that can contribute to their academic achievement. Mathieson (2015) expressed that the use of visual arts tasks in the reading instruction increases the involvement and excitement of the students. The effect of the strategy helps the students develop their retention and comprehension ability.

Others agreed that reading brings out the best in every learner in developing comprehension. Rolt (2016) stressed that students of this generation are pressured with the booming demand to read and understand overwhelming comprehension tasks. In order to do it, students should be taught the proper comprehension strategies that can make them excellent readers who master understanding and interpreting. They should become responsible for their developments so they become creative and innovative who can solve comprehension problems they may face. Inside the classroom, the real objective of letting students read is to make them comprehend. Therefore, there is a need to make them fully engaged in tasks that ushers their comprehension. He further concluded that reading comprehension could be bested using intrinsic motivation and proper study habits. Moreover, students should strive to become adept in decoding words for it can contribute to successful comprehension (Sanford, 2015). So, Plocher (2016) suggested that teachers use the Reading Road Map method for it links the traditional reading materials and digital literacies. Students and teachers should use appropriate techniques in reading prints and another set of tricks for digital text.

The researcher conducted the study due to the observed varied preferences of experts as to which among the three – listening, reading, and viewing techniques, works best in second language comprehension. In detail, this study aimed to determine the comprehension strategy that college students prefer. Furthermore, this research also intended to address the call of the time which is producing some learning techniques in comprehending stories which served as a springboard of any language, literature, and topics from other disciplines. The study anchored on the Vygotsky's Scaffolding concept which states that learners need instructional techniques in order to successfully progress in their goal of achieving independent and lifelong learning.



Theoretical- Conceptual Framework

2. Methodology

Research Design

This research used a quantitative-qualitative research design. In particular, it employed the Parametric One Way or One-Factor ANOVA using the SPSS software, since the study aimed to test whether the population means of three groups had significant differences. To get a clear picture as to where the differences lied, the researcher ran the Post Hoc Analysis through SPSS applying the Tukey statistical tool. The researcher also conducted a focus group discussion to support the gathered data.

Research Site and Respondents

The respondents of the study were the 3 blocks of BSED English of Cebu Normal University enrolled this School Year 2018-2019. Each class block was composed of 30 students, in totality, 90 students were involved all in all. They were purposively chosen because these learners spent and dealt with comprehending stories in most of their language and literature classes. Reasonably, English majors were in dire need to develop their comprehension skills because their specialization required them too.

Instrument and Data Collection Procedures

The study used one (1) story prepared in three different versions:

- a) (*Version 1*). The students were provided and instructed to read the written summary of the story entitled, "Scent of Apples" followed by a written 15-item test on reading comprehension.
- b) (*Version 2*). The students were instructed to listen to the video entitled, "Scent of Apples" downloaded from YouTube. Only the audio was presented to them followed by a 15-item listening test on comprehension in order to meet the listening objective.
- c) (*Version 3*). The students were gathered to view the story entitled, "Scent of Apples" through a video with subtitles. This time, the researcher played the video with subtitles in an LED screen inside the classroom followed by a displayed 15-item test on comprehension.

3. Results and Discussion

The data of the study suggested that there were significant differences among the three comprehension strategies

applied to the 3 groups of learners with 30 respondents each. The researcher used SPSS software for data analysis. The generated tables and figure are as follows:

Effective Comprehension Strategy for the Students

Learners performed in their classes differently due to their varied intelligence that signified their strengths and weaknesses. However, the use of the right of strategy could

help and aid the weakness of the students. The best strategy is the one that pushes them to acquire more learning. In research, the mean seemed to be the best indicator of the effectiveness of a strategy. Most of the time, the students' main criteria in choosing was the usefulness of the strategy because students tended to apply the strategies more often if it helped him/her understands the lessons.

Table 1: Mean Plot of the Data

Mean of the Data

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Reading Activity	30	9.60	.910	.235	9.10	10.10	8	11
Listening Activity	30	10.93	1.280	.330	10.22	11.64	9	13
Viewing Activity	30	13.67	1.915	.494	12.61	14.73	9	15
Total	90	11.40	2.209	.329	10.74	12.06	8	15

The table shows the mean, the total number of samples and the standard deviation. Based on the table, the Viewing Strategy has the mean of 13.67 which was higher than the 10.93 of the listening Strategy and the 9.60 mean of the Reading Activity. Even the minimum score of 9 and the maximum score of 15 explained further that Viewing Strategy has helped the students comprehend the literary piece. This means that the students scored higher in the comprehension test using the viewing strategy which is incomparably higher than the scores of the other students who took the same test, but in listening and in reading.

engaged in reading. This scenario could be due to the influence of technology wherein everything went digital, making print materials uninteresting to read.

The Difference among the Strategies

One of the unique features of a statistical tool is its ability to determine the significance of the variables being tested. The clearer the significance, the more interesting the study becomes because there would be so much information that the researcher needed to delve into. This significant difference could bring out a new trend that could help in the discovery of new information and ideas.

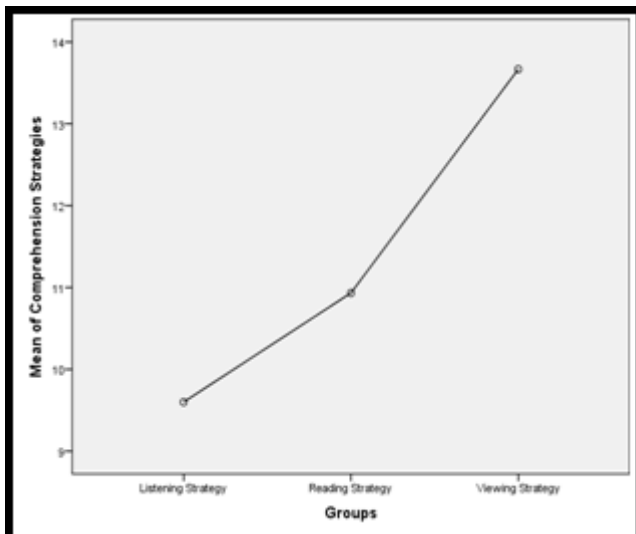


Figure 1: Mean Comparison of the Data

Comparing the strategy as displayed, we can see that students got higher scores when literary texts were discussed and assessed using a Viewing Activity where students watched the events of the literary piece taking place through a movie clip or a presentation accompanied by texts. The lowest among the 3 was listening. Listening became complicated due to the many factors that hinder listening comprehension such as diction, accent, speech speed, quality of the materials, the environment, and the attitude of the learners while taking the test. The table ranked reading as the second. It had a higher mean than listening and lower than viewing because students nowadays were no longer

Table 2: ANOVA Results of the Data

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	128.933	2	64.467	31.533	.000
Within Groups	85.867	42	2.044		
Total	214.800	44			

Table 2 suggests that there are significant differences between the 3 strategies. The p-value of .000 which is lower than the level of significance of .05 means that the result is significant. Therefore, the three groups with 30 respondents each yielded different scores based on the result of the comprehension test given after applying the strategies. Furthermore, the strategies are not comparable. They are not equal to one another in terms of helping the students understand the literary piece used in the study. One of them is better than the other and vice versa. Furthermore, the students find one of the strategies effective and efficient. So, the result rejected the null hypothesis of the study.

Details of the Difference using Post Hoc Analysis

The previous table signalled that the variables showed significant differences. Interestingly, the data needed further investigation to see where the differences lied. To get the detailed description of the differences, the Post Hoc Analysis specifically the Tukey statistical tool should be applied.

Post Hoc Analysis						
Table 3. Post Hoc Analysis of Variance						
(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Listening Strategy	Reading Strategy	1.333*	.522	.037	.06	2.60
	Viewing Strategy	-2.733*	.522	.000	-4.00	-1.46
Reading Strategy	Listening Strategy	-1.333*	.522	.037	-2.60	-.06
	Viewing Strategy	-4.067*	.522	.000	-5.34	-2.80
Viewing Strategy	Reading Strategy	4.067*	.522	.000	2.80	5.34
	Listening Strategy	2.733*	.522	.000	1.46	4.00

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The table displays the details of the differences among the groups using the Post Hoc Analysis. As shown, when the Viewing Strategy was compared to Reading and Listening Strategy, there was a positive difference of 4.067* and 2.733* which were both significant. In the case of the Reading Strategy as compared to Listening and Viewing Strategy, there were negative mean differences of -1.333* and -4.067* and these were both significant. When Listening Strategy was compared to Reading Strategy and Viewing Strategy, the mean differences were positive 1.333* and -2.733 which were both significant

Consequently, the 3 strategies also have mean differences that were not comparable. Therefore, the student's ability to comprehend was also dependent on the strategies and the kind of assessment that the teacher used to gauge how much of the lesson was grasped by the students.

Strategies that Work Best for the Students

Learners have preferences when it comes to acquiring comprehension. They tend to choose strategies that best fit their interests and learning styles. In this study, the learners explained why they prefer a particular strategy and support it with ideas that resulted to these themes: a) Viewing Strategy Works Best b) Listening Strategy Lacks Comprehension Elements, and c) Reading Depends on the Reader's Ability.

Theme 1: Viewing Strategy Works Best

Students found out that viewing was the best strategy that worked for them. They saw that it was easy and helpful for it provided everything they wanted in order to understand what they have read and watched. With viewing, they could both form mental pictures and comprehend texts based on writing that came with the video clips.

Participant 1 said,

"Viewing is better than just reading and listening because it is the combination of both. It is easy to read the texts in the video and understand them while watching. It is two in one."

Participant 4 added,

"Viewing is easy to do because you do not need to read everything word for word because the video is already a big help."

Participant 6 supported the idea,

"The video is more than enough, plus the texts that can be read. Watching works better than just reading books and listening to stories. Videos are also more interesting."

Participant 14 expressed,

"I need to see a video clip or a movie of what I am watching because there are parts of the texts that can only be understood when seen."

Participant 21 agreed to the idea,

"Viewing is interesting because not all students love reading. Personally, viewing the characters makes me feel their emotions. Even the quick gestures can understand when seen."

Participant 26 added,

"Based on observation, most of us prefer viewing than reading. With viewing, I become engrossed with the scenes. So, I stay interested for the entire duration of the activity. We even get excited when our teacher tells us that we are going to have a viewing activity."

Lastly, participant 30 mentioned that,

"Unlike listening, the words in the video clip which are not even clearly said or delivered with a different accent can still be understood because of the accompanying gestures and facial expressions."

The viewing strategy was preferred by the students for it drew their attention and kept them focused on the task. If understanding the texts that came with the viewing strategy fails, there would still be an option to understand them by the body language and non-verbal communication that were present in the scenes. Moreover,

Theme 2: Reading Can Partially Substitute Viewing

Based on the focus group discussion conducted, students prefer reading next to viewing. They specified that reading also worked best if viewing could not be possible. With it, they can review the information and reread the text to aid their comprehension. They can use the bottom-up and top-down reading strategies. They insisted that they could resort to learning new vocabularies and understand using context clues. The following were their quoted statements:

Participant 3 said that,

"If the teacher cannot show use videos to watch to make us understand the lesson, he or she may give us references to read."

Participant 8 mentioned that,

"While reading a student will not worry about understanding the accent because he or she does not have to listen to it. Some accents suck!"

Participant 12 expressed that,

“Reading is better than listening. With reading, a student will have a higher chance of understanding the text because he or she can use context clues. He or she can also read the texts again.”

For Participant 17,

“Reading can enrich your vocabulary since the words, though sometimes too difficult, can still be understood.”

Supporting the idea, Participant 24 said that,

“Reading is also fun to do because it also includes illustrations and pictures which listening does not have. It presents written concepts that can be seen and interpreted.”

Based on the responses, reading could aid the comprehension of the students thought it was also tiring at times. The reader could also read the materials several times. Students also preferred seeing the texts than just listening to them without the presence of the print.

Theme 3: Listening as the Least Preferred Strategy

Students struggle listening due to many factors which were beyond their control. Reasons include the students' inability and less exposure to listening tasks due to the lack of classroom equipment and the right listening environment. The newness of the experience such as hearing an accent for the very first time, encountering new vocabulary, and coping with the speech rate of the speakers. These were some of the vignettes:

Participant 3 said,

“It is difficult to get all the words and the ideas by just listening. Sometimes, there are new words that one can hear for the first time. There's a need to see what are said.”

For participant 8,

“Reading is better than listening because there are times that a student cannot understand the accent of the speaker. Some words are slurred and not enunciated by syllable. Alertness is needed,”

However, Participant 9 admitted,

“Less exposure to English conversation makes understanding an accent difficult. It adds to the comprehension problem.”

According to Participant 12,

“The accent is making listening difficult. It is so frustrating to just listen and not understand. Reading is better because the texts are visible.”

In addition, Participant 17 mentioned that,

“The pace of the speaker is sometimes too fast. Since English is only the second language, the speech rate of the speaker should be slower, so that each word can be grasped.”

For Participant 21 added,

“The environment while listening is difficult to control like the noise from my classmates. Sometimes, the classrooms are not noise-free.”

According to Participant 25,

“Listening is sometimes a waste of time. If a student does not see the facial expressions of the persons you are talking with, he or she cannot easily get the emotions that the speakers want to convey.”

The vignettes showed that the respondents would engage in viewing or reading strategy than listening. Their reasons were varied, but vividly, they have comprehension problems. They needed exposure and constant practice in order to solve the dilemma.

4. Conclusion

Based on the result, the 3 comprehension strategies were significantly different in their effects on the students' comprehension in the second language. Among the 3, it was in the viewing strategy that students got higher scores because they understood better when they read subtitles and watch the scenes in the video presentation. Reading came out as the second strategy that students found comfortable to use because they can re-read and review the portions and information which they considered confusing. Listening got the lowest mean, for students found it difficult due to many aspects that students needed to consider such as accent, speech rate, environment and attitude of the speaker.

5. Acknowledgment

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