

Factors Affecting the Online Listening Performance amongst EFL Military Cadets

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Abstract:

The present study examines factors affecting online listening performance among EFL military cadets to practice listening comprehension skills. 32 (male) EFL Jordanian students from Mu'tah University were divided into two groups: experimental and control groups in their 2nd year for the academic year 2023-2024. The researcher used three research instruments: a questionnaire, a semi-structured interview, and an online listening test. The results showed that practicing online listening is beneficial to the development of their listening skills. In addition, results revealed that a 2% development of motivation led to a 79.9% increase in online listening performance at a 0.001 significance level compared to 77.5% in the control group. Further, the results revealed that online listening practices were very effective in developing their understanding of effective online listening comprehension (speaker accent, speaker speed of speaking, new vocabulary, and English knowledge of the listeners). This shows that online listening practices should take place in an EFL learning setting.

Keywords: *online; listening skills; performance; EFL cadets; military; listening practices*

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Introduction :

English is a global language that functions as a communication bridge. It has an important contribution in global settings where communities from several languages and cultures interact with each other. The current growth of online interaction has led to the development of chances to use English for global interaction (Nguyen et al., 2023). English has four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, expertise in English for interaction must comprise the four skills. Listening is the skill that specifies how the listener comprehends what the utterer is expressing by implementing previous experience with the skill to differentiate and comprehend the articulation vocabulary and structural structures. It accounts for 40–50 percent of the time spent on the total four language skills (Ahmadi & Motaghi, 2021). Currently, it is problematic to reject the idea that listening skills are significant in refining a learner's speaking skills. Listening is not just about how learners receive words; it is about how they reply to the person with whom they are communicating (Azmeem, 2022). Consequently, developing learners' listening skills has been shown to develop other language skills (Milliner & Dimoski, 2021). It can be viewed that if learners face difficulties with listening comprehension, which might be the source of learners' incompetence to hold the key notion, it is both a first skill in learning English and a source of language skill growth.

English is the most extensively used language worldwide, so learners who cannot interact in English, principally through listening, may not be able to interact inside and outside the classroom. This difficulty has arisen among military institutions' cadets in Jordan, and it is right that some learners struggle and suffer with their listening skills. That is, it is necessary to carry out investigations on the factors affecting online listening comprehension skills to identify the causes and sources of listening problems and to use them to solve listening difficulties.

Literature Review:

Some foreign language learners encounter problems when learning listening skills. Much research was conducted to examine significant listening skills for EFL learners. Modarresi and Jalilzadeh (2020) compared two ways of presenting listening assessments. This experimental study included 36 male students studying the English language at a secondary school in Tehran. Two groups were included in this study: a control group that was exposed to paper-based assessment and an experimental group that was exposed to internet-based assessment. The results established that there was a significant difference between the two groups on post-test scores on the listening test. Indeed, the internet-based group outperformed the paper-based group in their listening scores. Having tested the significant difference between the students' scores in internet-based assessment obtained from Time 1, Time 2,

and Time 3, as measured by the ANOVA, the results showed that there were statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level in students' scores for the three sets of scores. Further, Chen and Ren (2021) examined Chinese EFL students' online classroom and listening anxiety. The analysis revealed that students experienced lower levels of anxiety in listening practices and presented good English listening skills in online classrooms. Moreover, there were no significant gender differences in classroom anxiety or listening anxiety.

Almalki et al. (2023) examined English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' anxiety when learning listening skills. They aimed to contribute to a better understanding of EFL listening anxiety in both online and FTF learning modes. A quantitative approach was used, and a questionnaire was implemented to acquire data from a sample of 212 students studying in the English Language Institute at King Abdulaziz University. The results revealed that despite the online or FTF, EFL learners experience listening anxiety. However, online classrooms lessened the listening anxiety of beginner and intermediate EFL learners slightly.

Based on the above discussion of past research, it is viewed that these studies presented conflicting findings concerning the effect of EFL online classes on listening anxiety, motivation, and feedback, and the results may vary depending on the context. Online listening classes, listening anxiety, motivation, and feedback are more detailed and have established comparatively scant concerns in the Jordanian setting. The current study is expected to be a valuable addition to the earlier determinations, and it seeks to fill the gaps through an in-depth investigation of EFL Jordanian students' online listening performance compared to the students' experiences with traditional listening classes.

Statement of the Problem:

Listening is viewed as a complicated task to master, which requires learners to have rigorous practices through overt and inherent learning experiences (Razavi et al., 2023). Consequently, online listening in English is one of the roughest and most difficult skills to learn by EFL learners, as an indication shows that most EFL learners entering colleges do not possess adequate knowledge to listen proficiently (Satori, 2022). Thus, in many EFL contexts in the Arab world, learning to listen in English poses many irresistible challenges to learners since they are not more concerned with the learning process (Zhang & Shen, 2023). In many EFL military institutions, cadets face problems in learning to listen, which happen mostly because of ineffective listening modules or activities, a lack of listening practice in class, and peer or collaborative interaction (Pei et al., 2023). For now, the use of technological tools for academic purposes requires several variations in the way of learning and communication among the teachers, learners, and their peers. Online listening is part of the constant

procedures for applying technological strategies that have many possibilities for both teachers and learners to use their time and expertise (Mandiri et al., 2022).

Henceforth, motivation has been a main facilitator and driver of sustaining long-term and often difficult learning procedures, as well as important to learning achievement (Dörnyei, 1998). Applying technological tools in the classroom through online listening not only encourages the learners but also involves them in their dealing with four language skills with ease (Zulfikar & Akmal, 2020). Thus, there is a vigorous connection between motivation and the effective language learning effect (Rakhman et al., 2019). Motivation, specifically intrinsic motivation, has a progressively significant role in EFL pre-listening, online listening, and post-listening practices, It supports the teacher in choosing better language learning tasks for his learners and aids learners in attaining better performances in listening.

Thus, keen teachers look for contemporary methods to develop their students' motivation. Online listening appears to have the possibility of changing the method of students' learning; it inspires their motivation and drives them forward to obtain the necessary educational goals. Yet, as an emerging field in language teaching and learning, there is a scarcity of research carried out in EFL settings to examine the aspect of learners' motivations in online listening tasks, specifically using online listening (Kobayashi, 2020). This study will explore how online listening could be used to increase military cadets' motivation in EFL listening classrooms. Military cadets face many obstacles in learning to listen competently in different EFL settings because of the effects of many factors such as motivation, second language, feedback, and anxiety. Despite the countless advances in teaching methods, an abundance of learning strategies, and modern models of learning with the advent of technology, most EFL teachers stick to the traditional teaching approaches to teach their students, mainly the teacher-centered method, which highlights lecturing over communication, favors memorization over comprehension, and raises individualistic and competitive attitudes over collaboration and group work (Nadhira & Warni, 2021). Many research reports extensively disregard listening skills, especially in military institutions. Thus, the main purpose of the present study is to explore the effects of military students' motivation, EFL listening, feedback, and anxiety on Jordanian military cadets' performances in an online listening task.

Research Objectives:

This research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To find the connection between motivation and online listening performance among the EFL military cadets.

2. To find the connection between peer feedback and online listening performance among EFL military cadets.
3. To find the connection between anxiety and online listening performance among EFL military cadets.

Research Questions:

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions are constructed:

- Q1. Is there a connection between motivation and online listening performance among the EFL military cadets?
- Q2. Is there a significant connection between peer feedback and online listening performance among EFL military cadets?
- Q3. Is there a significant connection between anxiety and online listening performance among EFL military cadets?

Research Methods:

This research used a mixed-methods research design in which a convergent parallel design was used. As Creswell (2012) interprets, the goal of a convergent parallel mixed methods design is to instantaneously gather both quantitative and qualitative data, merge the data, and use the findings to comprehend a research problem. Henceforth, the researcher gathered quantitative and qualitative data, analyzed both datasets distinctly, compared the findings from the analysis of both datasets, and made an interpretation as to whether the findings supported or contradicted each other. The direct comparison of the two datasets by the researcher provided a “convergence” of data sources. This provided the researcher with the opportunity to compare and find the connection between variables.

The sample of this study comprised 32 (male) second-year EFL cadets in the year 2023–2024 at the Department of English Language and Literature at Mu'tah University in Jordan, selected using a convenience (non-probability) sampling technique. To elicit data from participants, the researcher used three research instruments: a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire (45 items), an interview, and an online listening test.

Data Analysis:

The researcher used SPSS to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire. A pilot study was carried out to determine the reliability and validity of the instrument. Further, the researcher used factor analysis to check convergence validity and discriminant validity. Pearson correlation analysis was performed on independent variables. Then, a t-test that displays a two-tailed probability of the difference between the means was conducted to examine the relationship between the independent

variables and the dependent variable. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the mean differences between the items on the scale used in this study. In addition, it was used to determine the relationships between an independent variable and a quantitative dependent variable (Creswell, 2012) to test a particular hypothesis. The essays listened to by the participants were assessed by two EFL instructors to obtain inter- and inter-rater reliability. Finally, ATLAS.TI software was used to assist in the process of examining the data collected from the interview. Meanwhile, both the pre-test and post-test were marked by applying the rating scale for the analytic listening rubric for individual and collaborative.

Discussion and Findings:

The results of the analysis showed that when comparing the means of the control and experimental groups, it was revealed that the mean for the experimental group (mean rank = 48.60) was greater than that of the control group (mean rank = 44.60). This shows that there are significant differences between the two groups, and the experimental group performed better than the control group in the general performance of online listening. The effect size of $r = -0.242$ signifies an average to great effect, therefore showing that the effect of the experiment on the control group was a practical one.

However, this reveals that although this research did not intend precisely to examine the within-group effect on the students' online listening performance, it is very important to reveal the within-group results in the three tests to achieve a comprehensive reading of the effect of the method on both groups by examining their development in performance. Data were tested through the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test supported by Hanus & Fox (2015) by assessing the effects of gamification in the classroom concerning a longitudinal study on social comparison, effort, intrinsic motivation, satisfaction, and educational performance. They state that the findings achieved by the participants in the gamified course revealed less empowerment, and motivation compared to the non-gamified class.

That is, the analysis indicated that there was a significant difference in the gain score of the experimental group performance ($T = -14.74$, $z = -5.953$, $p = 0.000$, $r = -0.874$) before and after exposure to the online listening test. The findings revealed that exposure to online listening practices showed an important effect on the experimental group's online listening performance on given tasks. The effect size of $r = -0.874$ indicates a very large effect, therefore representing that the effect of the listening practice approach in developing the student's understanding of the online listening performance was significant.

The findings revealed that exposure to constant online listening practice showed that there is an important development in online listening, which showed a significant impact on the experimental

group's online listening performance in the given task. The effect size of $r = -0.877$ shows a very great effect, hence representing that the effect of online listening practices in developing the student's understanding of online listening performance was significant. The findings of the analysis presented that exposure to online practices had a significant effect on the control group's online listening performance in given tasks. The effect size of $r = -0.880$ signifies a very great effect, therefore showing that the effect of online listening practice in developing the student's understanding of the online listening performance was significant. There was a significant variance in the improvement score of control group performance in the listening gap-filling practices ($T = -27.13$, $z = -5.846$, $p = 0.000$, $r = -0.872$) after direct non-exposure to the non-online listening practices. The finding presented that non-exposure to online listening practices had a significant effect on the control group's online listening performance in given tasks. The effect size of $r = -0.873$ signifies a very great effect, therefore showing that the effect of the non-exposure to online listening practices in developing the student's understanding of the online listening performance was significant. This agrees with Metruk's (2018) findings, which stated that practicing listening outside the classroom through viewing English videos is beneficial to the development of their listening skills. Furthermore, Thatphaiboon and Sappapan (2022) support the result showing that the flipped classroom conducted through online video conferences affects listening skills since the pre-test and post-test had statistically significant differences.

Additionally, the results revealed that motivation and online listening performance have a solid, significant positive connection. This showed that a 2% development of motivation led to a 79.9% increase in online listening performance at a 0.001 significance level. This revealed that the greater the motivation of the EFL learners, the greater the online listening performance among the EFL learners. This result goes in line with Goctu (2016), who indicated that there is a positive connection between motivations and listening skills, and the most frequent type of motivation is external motivation. Further, the result revealed a connection between anxiety and online listening performance. It showed that there is a strong positive connection between feedback and online listening performance. This indicated that a 2% increase in feedback; resulted in a 70.5% increase in online listening performance at a 0.001 significance level. This showed that the greater the feedback of the EFL learners, the greater the online listening performance among the EFL learners.

However, the results of the interview (3 male participants) showed that participants revealed their view that an encouraging understanding of the significance of listening in the English language needs to be real, particularly for EFL learners. All participants consistently agreed that online listening practices were very effective in developing their understanding of effective online listening.

Participants replied on the significance of effective listening, with the view that online listening practices help develop listening skills or ease interaction.

The results showed different implications for EFL learners to use of online listening practices to develop online listening skills. Many psychological aspects, including anxiety, affect the development of learners listening skills (Thatphaiboon and Sappapan, 2022). Eysenck (1997) describes anxiety as an emotional and personality dimension of a clinical disorder. Hence, anxiety is viewed as a state of “uneasiness” and "apprehension,” or fear, normally caused by anticipating something threatening.

Conclusion:

It appeared sensible to conclude that the poor performance of military cadets in online listening practices, particularly in Jordan, has not been much examined in past research. This investigation decreased the gap by giving useful evidence that can be authoritative for policy suggestions in the Ministry of Higher Education. The result of the analysis will also be helpful to the Jordanian EFL students in developing their listening skills in a competitive setting. It has been a severe concern for Jordanian students in online listening, specifically in projects, assignments, and research. Thus, this research urged learners to gain expertise in online listening and further support their search for learning EFL. There are so many related factors that may make learning EFL through online listening difficult, such as distractibility during listening tasks, psychological discrepancies, and thoughtless efforts in online listening. Hence, most of the learners do not appropriately use their potential in online listening, and they select to get everything prepared that has been finished by others and evade any kind of feedback (Metruk, 2018).

Although listening in any language is an art that is affected by specific personal skills and interests. A listening difficulty might manifest itself in a learner's online listening practices as low vocabulary deposit, tuning, accents' variation, speakers' frequency, speed rate, trouble listening or hearing back what is said, or difficulty with word sounds and meanings. A variety of situations might eventually lead to this problem, and the researcher reveals the underlying causes. To conclude, this study recommends that teachers should make a marvelous impact on the package of information informed to learners, which is vibrant to offer modern methods of speaking and listening. In addition, learners should examine the up-to-date learning activities. The four language skills need to be observed consistently in a holistic manner. This allowed future investigators in the field of literature to understand the language in its whole form and senses.

المستخلص

العوامل المؤثرة على أداء التلاميذ العسكريين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مهارة الاستماع

و الاستيعاب عبر الإنترنت

عيسى الخطبا

وائل الفقراء

بحثت الدراسة الحالية العوامل المؤثرة على أداء التلاميذ العسكريين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مهارة الاستيعاب و الاستماع عبر الإنترنت بغرض ممارسة مهارات الفهم السمعي، تم تقسيم عينة الدراسة المكونة من 32 طالب (ذكور) في حقل اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة مؤتة إلى مجموعتين: مجموعات تجريبية وضابطة في عامهم الثاني للعام الدراسي 2024/2023. استخدم الباحث ثلاث أدوات بحثية هي الاستبيان، والمقابلة شبه المنظمة، واختبار الاستماع عبر الإنترنت. وأظهرت النتائج أن ممارسة الاستماع عبر الإنترنت مفيدة لتطوير مهارات الاستماع لديهم. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، كشفت النتائج أن تطور التحفيز بنسبة 2% أدى إلى زيادة بنسبة 79.9% في أداء الاستماع عبر الإنترنت لدى العينة التجريبية عند مستوى أهمية 0.001 مقارنة مع العينة الضابطة بنسبة 77.5%. علاوة على ذلك، كشفت النتائج أن ممارسات الاستماع عبر الإنترنت كانت فعالة للغاية في تطوير أداء التلاميذ من خلال الاستماع الفعال عبر الإنترنت (لكنة المتحدث، سرعة المتحدث في التحدث، معرفة المستمعين باللغة الإنجليزية والمفردات الجديدة) وهذا يدل على أن ممارسات الاستماع عبر الإنترنت يجب أن تأخذ مكانًا في بيئة تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

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