

The Impact of Students Team Achievement Divisions (STAD) on Iranian EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension

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Abstract—This article determines the impact of Students Team Achievement Divisions (STAD) on Iranian EFL Learners Listening Comprehension. In 1995, Students Team Achievement Divisions (STAD) was coined by Slavin based on research on cooperative learning. Listening as one of the language skills has crucial role in developing the knowledge of the English learners in second or foreign language settings. Listening has always been supposed that as the difficult language skill in EFL classroom for the EFL learners in learning their English language. In this project, the total number of sixty Iranian students was selected based on their performance on Oxford Placement Test (OPT). For homogeneity of the learners, a proficiency test (Edwards, 2007) was administered to select the participants of this project. The Iranian students were in the age range of 18 to 25 studying English as their foreign language in a language institute in Bushehr city, Iran. Outcome of this research paper showed that that there is a statistically significant difference between the participants of control and experimental groups' scores ($t = 6.50, p < 0.05$) on post-test.

Index Terms—Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD), cooperative learning, English foreign language, EFL learners, listening comprehension

I. INTRODUCTION

Listening skill as language learning strategy is always used in promoting knowledge of Iranian English foreign learners in learning English language as a foreign language in Iranian language setting. Khansir, and Gholami (2014) argued that English language in Iran is taught as a foreign language from middle (Guidance) school. However, it was introduced as a subject from middle school; the Iranian learners accepted it as foreign language to pass in their examination. Richards et al (1992) argued that listening comprehension is used as the process of understanding speech in a second or foreign language. The study of listening comprehension processes in second language learning focuses on the role of individual linguistic units (e.g. phonemes, words, grammatical structures) as well as the role of the listeners' expectations, the situation and context, background knowledge and the topic. Ziahosseiny (2009, p. 89) mentioned that "listening refers to receiving information through the ear". He added that the nature of listening is dependent on the features of spoken language which has the characteristics: a) it is often less complex in its grammatical and discourse structure; b) much speech gives a 'broken' impression, with new starts in mid-sentence, changes of direction or topic, hesitation and half-finished statements; c) not many explicit connector (moreover, however); d) topic complement structure (as in the sun ... oh look it's going down'); e) replacing expressions (e.g. 'this fellow she was supposed to meet'); f) frequent reference to things outside the 'text' such as the weather for example; g) the use of generalized vocabulary (thing, nice stuff, a lot of); h) repetition of the same syntactic form; i) the use of pauses and 'fillers' ('erm' 'well' 'uhuh', 'if you see what I mean' and so on (P. 89). Ur (1996) indicated that the principal objective of listening comprehension practice in the classroom is to enable the learners to function successfully as a speaker-listener when the occasion arises in real-life listening entails and then, to examine what types of activities listeners are required to do in such situations in order that they could negotiate meaning satisfactorily in a variety of live situations (cited in Birjandi et al 2006). Piper (1993) argued that listening comprehension utilizes many of the same processes necessary to read and comprehend a story. Gunning (2003) mentioned that listening capacity refers to an informal measure of one's ability to understand or comprehend spoken language in the context of a story. Ziahosseiny (2009, p. 93) mentioned that the following abilities are needed for a person in order to listen and understand a language: 1) He should possess knowledge of the sound system of the language; 2) He should possess the necessary grammatical knowledge to organize the incoming speech into meaningful sections; 3) He should have a wide recognition vocabulary; 4) He should possess the necessary background knowledge and knowledge of context [the psychological setting (home, office, school, etc.) the participants in communication, their roles, and their relationship to each other.].

Richards and Rodgers (2001) argued that cooperative language learning (CLL) as language learning strategy can be used as a part of general instructional approach to teach language and thus, it also known as Collaborative Learning

(CL). Cooperative Learning is an approach to teaching that makes maximum use of cooperative activities involving pairs and small groups of students in the classroom. Olsen and Kagan (1992, p.8) argued that "Cooperative learning is group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between students in groups and in which each student is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others". Richards et al (1992) argued that "cooperative learning an approach to teaching and learning in which classrooms are organized so that learners work together in small cooperative teams. He added that such an approach to learning is said to increase students' learning since a) it is less threatening for many students, b) it increases the amount of student participation in the classroom, c) it reduces the need for competitiveness, and d) it reduces the teacher's dominance in the classroom" (p.87). Listening is described and contrasted with hearing. Linse (2005) indicted that hearing is different from listening. Hearing refers to the actual perception and processing of sound. In order to be able to listen in class, children need to be able to hear.

Student Teams- Achievement Divisions (STAD) has been used in this paper as an approach of cooperative learning (CL). In this model heterogeneous students with varying academic abilities are assigned to 4 to 5-member groups. Each student should reach his or her highest level of achievement. The teacher provides the groups by purposeful presentation with objectives. The material to be learned should focus on specific information, and the groups have the opportunity to decide on the way of studying information in any way that is best for them. The groups should realize that their task is to master the material, and not just the ability to answer worksheets or tests. The goal of the group is that every single person masters the material and also helps other group members. In the first step of STAD the teacher presents a new concept. Then the teacher organizes students in heterogeneous groups to study and practice the specific concept. The teacher evaluates the progress of the groups and individuals during learning new materials several times to check their improvements. Groups earn certificates or other recognition based on the degree to which the group members have progressed over their past records. Rai and Samsuddin (2007) said that Student Teams- Achievement Divisions (STAD) one of the learning strategies based on cooperative learning which helps promote collaboration and self-regulating learning skills.

In discussion of statement of problem, it is felt that Iranian EFL learners are not master of English listening comprehension in order to get knowledge of English Language in and out of their classrooms. However, it seems that listening comprehension as a language skill should be considered in foreign language classroom, especially in Iran society. According to the research, the investigators have been teaching English listening skill at the Iranian institutions and good experienced to manage their classrooms. Thought, for got more information on their research paper, they followed the question and hypothesis as follows:

- Does STAD technique facilitate listening comprehension by Iranian intermediate EFL learners?
- STAD technique does not facilitate listening comprehension of Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many studies have been carried out based on the effect of CL by many scholars are discussed as follows:

Slavin (1983) studied a cooperative learning and found that cooperative learning resulted in significant positive effects in 63% of the studies. Johnson, Maruyama, Johnson, Nelson, and Skon (1981) examined a meta-analysis of one hundred two studies related to cooperative learning and concluded that there was strong evidence for the superiority of cooperative learning in promoting achievement over competitive and individualistic strategies. The findings of Balfakih (2003) mentioned that in teaching tenth grade chemistry, learners' team achievements division is a more effective teaching method than the traditional-teaching method. Kinney (1989) studied the effects of cooperative learning on the achievement of ninth-grade learners in a diverse cultural general biology class. The experimental group of the research had the combination of both black and white learners had a significant increase on the academic achievement scores. Allen and Van Sickle (1984) investigated students' team achievements division STAD as the experimental treatment in their study. The study involved low achieving learners. The outcome of this paper indicated that the cooperative learning group scored significantly higher on a world geography test.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

To conduct the current study 60 Iranian EFL learners were selected based on their performance on Oxford Placement Test (OPT). It was general proficiency test that was administered to select the participants in a convenient sampling format. The subjects for this study were 60 students in the age range of 17 to 28. The average age of the participants was 23. In addition; English language used as foreign language for Iranian students. The Participants were studying English language in a language institute in Bushehr. Their level of English language proficiency was intermediate. The participating learners have been learning English for about 6 years and have reached the intermediate level. Beside that they had the opportunity of studying English at school or at university so they had a considerable experience of exposing to English and as the result it is expected that they have developed some basic listening skills after few years. Hence, it seems reasonable to choose learners at this level of English proficiency as the participants of the research. The

participants of this paper were randomly divided into two groups of Experimental and Control. Each group consisted of 30 learners. The STAD technique was applied to the experimental group as the treatment.

B. Instruments

The instruments used for this research were Oxford Placement Test and a listening comprehension test that was used as the pre-test and post-test. They are explained as follows:

1. Oxford Placement Test

In order to achieve the participants' homogeneity in terms of language proficiency level, a version of Oxford Placement Test (Allen, 2004) was used in this study. The validity of the test is self-evident. This test enabled the researchers to select those learners who were compatible with the conditions of the study. Oxford placement test has been used to determine low and high level participants in terms of language proficiency. It was administered to assess learners' knowledge of grammar, and listening. It also enabled the researchers to have a greater understanding of what level their participants were at. The test contained two parts. Part 1 (questions 1–100) contained grammar and part 2 (questions 100-200) included listening questions. So the total score was 200.

2. Listening Comprehension Pre-test and Post-test

A syllabus-based listening comprehension test consisting of 20 multiple choice items was designed by the researchers in order to test and compare EFL learners' listening comprehension before (pre-test) and after (post-test) treatment instruction sessions. In order to protect the content validity of this test, it was checked by 5 experienced test experts in the field of English language teaching. In order to check the test's reliability, ceiling effect and floor effect, it was piloted on 20 EFL students who were similar to the participants of the main study in terms of age and proficiency level. Internal consistency reliability for the instrument was estimated by computing Cronbach's alpha coefficients and proved to be .82.

C. Data Analysis

In the current study, the statistical procedures were employed to analyze the results of the tests. The data collection was analyzed in order to determine the effect of applying STAD technique on the listening comprehension of the participants. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 was used to analyze the descriptive statistics of the STAD. Descriptive statistics (such as mean, standard deviation, kurtosis, skewness) were calculated for proficiency test to show the general information of obtained scores. The reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha formula was performed on the pre-test and post-test. In order to determine the effect of STAD on listening comprehension and comparing the groups of study, an independent sample t-test was used.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this brief article was to investigate the Impact of Students Team Achievement Divisions (STAD) on Iranian EFL Learners Listening Comprehension. Details of the data analysis and results of the study based on statistical analyses are reported in this research as follows:

A. Results of the Pilot Study

In this paper, a pilot study was performed on twenty EFL learners of the same age and proficiency level in order to check the internal consistency or reliability of the listening pre-test and post-test. Descriptive statistics of pilot test on pre-test and post-test, such as mean, standard deviation (SD), standard error of measurement (SEM) and the item facility (IF) index of the test items are provided in table 1. The items with facility index above 0.63 were too easy and below 0.33 were too difficult. Three items (two easy and one difficult) were revised.

TABLE 1:
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE PILOT STUDY ON PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST

	Mean	SD	SEM	IF < 0.33	0.33 ≤ IF ≤ 0.63	IF > 0.63
Pre-test and Post-test	13.8	6.71	3.44	2	17	1

In order to test the reliability of the tests, Cronbach's alpha analysis was performed, the results ($r = 0.82$), as is shown in table 2, indicated that the pre-test (and post-test) had a satisfactory level of reliability.

TABLE 2:
RELIABILITY STATISTICS OF THE PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Pre-test and Posttest	.82	20

B. Analysis of the Proficiency Test

At the beginning of the study, the participants of main study ($n = 80$) took part in the proficiency test i.e., Oxford Placement Test (OPT) to identify their language proficiency. The purpose of proficiency test was to manifest the learner's homogeneity or to show whether the learners' knowledge of English is at the same level. The detailed descriptive statistics of proficiency test is shown in table 3.

TABLE 3:
THE FREQUENCY OF SCORES OBTAINED FROM PROFICIENCY TEST

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
96.00	1	.8	.8	.8
100.00	2	.8	.8	1.7
101.00	1	.8	.8	2.5
102.00	1	.8	.8	3.3
104.00	3	2.5	2.5	5.8
106.00	1	.8	.8	6.7
109.00	4	.8	.8	7.5
110.00	1	.8	.8	8.3
115.00	3	.8	.8	9.2
117.00	2	.8	.8	11.7
118.00	1	.8	.8	12.5
Valid 120.00	7	5.8	5.8	18.3
123.00	2	1.7	1.7	20.0
124.00	15	16.7	16.7	53.3
125.00	8	8.3	8.3	61.7
126.00	10	8.3	8.3	78.3
127.00	8	6.7	6.7	85.0
128.00	2	1.7	1.7	93.3
129.00	2	1.7	1.7	95.0
130.00	2	1.7	1.7	96.7
131.00	2	1.7	1.7	98.3
132.00	2	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	80	100.0	100.0	

According to Oxford Placement Test (Allen, 2004), the intermediate learners are those whose score fall between 120 and 149 (out of 200). The total score should not be less than 120. As table 3 shows, twenty participants could not attain the intended scores for intermediate level of language proficiency; therefore, they were excluded from the study. The participants were then randomly assigned into two equal groups of control and experimental.

C. Analysis of Participants' Performance on Pre-test

The participants of the study were selected by pre-test that was designed to test the participants' listening comprehension before receiving the treatments of study. The descriptive statistics of participants' performance on pre-test is provided in table 4.

TABLE 4:
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS' SCORES ON PRE-TEST

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Pretest	Control	30	3	13	7.63	2.69
	Experimental	30	6	14	8.76	3.64

In order to ensure that there is no significant difference between the control and experimental groups regarding their pre-knowledge of listening, an independent sample t-test was performed. The results are provided in table 5.

TABLE 5:
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST OF CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS ON PRE-TEST
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances t-test for Equality of Means

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
										Lower	Upper
Scores on Pretest	Equal variances assumed	.216	.176	.846	58	.353	.93333	.99751	-1.063	2.93006	

The results indicated that there is no statistical significant difference between control and experimental groups ($t = 0.84, p > 0.05$) in their performance on pre-test.

D. Testing the Null Hypothesis of the Study

In order to find the effects of treatment on the learners, each group was given a listening comprehension post-test immediately after the end of treatment sessions. The descriptive statistics of both groups are compared with each other in table 6.

TABLE 6:
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS' PERFORMANCE ON POST-TEST

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Posttest (Experimental Group)	30	10	18	15.33	2.368
Posttest (Control Group)	30	7	15	10.30	2.168

The mean of experimental and control group scores on immediate post-test were 15.33 and 10.30 respectively. Generally, the performance of the control group learners on the posttest was weaker than experimental group. In order to verify the null hypothesis of the study in finding whether STAD facilitate Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension, a paired sample *t*-test was performed. The results are provided in table 7.

TABLE 7:
PAIRED SAMPLES T-TEST ON PRETEST AND POST-TEST OF EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Pair 1	Posttest-Pretest	Paired Differences		Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Sig.
		Mean	Std. Deviation		Lower	Upper			
		6.857	1.987		6.174	7.540			

The results showed that there is a statistical significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores ($t = 20.41$, $p < 0.05$) of the participants of experimental group. In other words, training on the use of STAD significantly enhanced EFL learners' listening comprehension. In addition, an independent sample *t*-test was performed between the performances of both groups on posttest. The results are provided in table 8.

TABLE 8:
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST BETWEEN THE POST-EST SCORES OF EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS

Posttest	Equal variances assumed	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
		1.348	.250	6.500	58	.000	2.286	.352	1.584	2.987

The results of independent samples *t*-test showed that that there is a statistically significant difference between the participants of control and experimental groups' scores ($t = 6.50$, $p < 0.05$) on post-test. EFL learners of experimental group outperformed listening comprehension posttest. Thus, the hypothesis of the study was not accepted. According to this hypothesis, STAD technique does not facilitate listening comprehension of Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

E. Discussion

Regarding to the great significance of listening comprehension in the process of learning foreign languages, many studies have focused on developing new techniques for teaching listening. This paper provided an empirical evidence for Iranian English foreign language students to investigate the potential role of STAD in enhancing learners' ability for listening comprehension. The findings of the study provided an empirical support for the effectiveness of STAD technique in enhancing Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension.

The results of this study supported the theoretical and pedagogical value of STAD in listening comprehension class. From theoretical point of view, this research presented STAD instructional techniques of foreign language listening instruction which are in line with second language learning theories that highlight the role of cooperation in language learning. In this framework, the instruction is based on dividing students into groups from different academic levels and ethnic backgrounds. The interactive nature of the STAD proved to be a confident way of enhancing listening comprehension. The use of these instructional techniques is characterized as an effective way of STAD for EFL learners since they are contextualized provide deep senses of language use and learner-based classroom as the listening comprehension is the result of learner's efforts. From a pedagogical viewpoint, it is plausible to recommend language teachers consider different learning conditions because they definitely have significance for teaching purposes as the findings suggest. Teachers can implement these important points in the process of teaching listening and help the students make significant improvement.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt to investigate the Impact of Students Team Achievement Divisions (STAD) on Iranian EFL Learners Listening Comprehension. Doff (1990) argued on the importance of listening such as developing of speaking skills depend on developing of listening skills; to have a successful conversation, learners must understand what is said to them. Later, the ability to understand spoken English may become very important (for listening to the radio, understanding foreign visitors, studying, etc.). He added that to develop this ability, students need plenty of practice in listening to English spoken at normal speed.

The results of this study supported the use of STAD in listening as they allow the students to comprehend more information, associate it with other ideas and incorporate new ideas into their prior knowledge. Therefore, when information is cooperated by their peers, learning would be easier. Outcome of the research paper indicated that the use of cooperative learning can help in order to save time and energy for get more information. The use of STAD, in contrast to individual teaching and learning can be more effective at different stages of teaching listening. The results of this paper showed that that there is a statistically significant difference between the participants of control and

experimental groups' scores ($t = 6.50$, $p < 0.05$) on post-test. EFL learners of experimental group outperformed listening comprehension post-test. Thus, the hypothesis of the study was not accepted. According to this hypothesis, STAD technique does not facilitate listening comprehension of Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

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