

Study on the Impact of Note-taking on Listening Comprehension of Third Year French Specialization Students at Yangon University of Foreign Languages

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Abstract

This paper is based on the result of a research which is aimed to investigate the impact of note-taking on listening comprehension of third year French specialization students at Yangon University of Foreign Languages. The study was carried out among 92 third year French specialization students and students were divided into two groups (Group I and Group II). During the study, students from Group I benefited from note-taking strategies and listened to a recording text while taking notes by using their preferred note-taking method that they had already learnt but the other group, students from Group II, who hadn't learnt and practiced any note-taking method, listened to the same recording text without taking notes or taking notes in their own way. In the study, two main sections are composed. Section I refers to the comparison of the results of listening skills of the students between these two groups in terms of the different questions types of the listening text. Section II focuses on students' opinion on the impact of note-taking on their listening comprehension. To collect the data, the items in the questionnaire are designed and developed from earlier research conducted by Yasser Aminifard and Amin Aminifard, 2012. The findings revealed that although the significant effectiveness of note-taking skill does not show in some question types, it is obviously helpful in the specific detail question types. Moreover, students had positive attitude towards note-taking while listening. However, students also encountered some difficulties doing note-taking while listening. Thereby, the study points out that students should be systematically trained to achieve their note-taking abilities which is undeniably helpful for their advanced listening comprehension skills.

Keywords: Note-taking, listening comprehension skills, third year French specialization students

I. Introduction

Language proficiency essentially comprises 4 skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Reading and listening are receptive skills since writing and speaking are called productive skills. Among these four skills, listening is the most important skill in learning a new language and its main purpose is to be able to understand what the intended meaning of the speaker is (Rost, 2011). Myanmar students are familiar with reading and writing skills because they have been trained these two skills to learn English as second language since their kindergarten life up to the matriculation.

When they join University of Foreign Languages to learn a foreign language that they prefer, except English, they have to start from scratch and almost all the students are faced with difficulties especially in listening and speaking skills. The main reason is that there is no language environment apart from the respective language classroom. Moreover, most of the students are afraid of listening examination module and they admit that they cannot memorize very well or understand what they heard in the listening comprehension test. According to some scholars, lack of vocabulary and poor pronunciation practice make them that kind of trouble. So many activities are mentioned by scholars to improve the listening comprehension skills. Linse (2005) mentions that listening skill is the base of other skills and it should be

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taught to students. It is not deniable that note-taking while listening is a very important strategy that can be used for improvement of students' listening comprehension. According to Ferris and Tagg (1996), most of the international students reported that lack of note-taking and problems with note-taking as well as listening comprehension are troublesome areas. Therefore, in the present study, the importance of note-taking skills while listening is mainly focused.

II. Literature Review

In the literature, the studies pointing out various benefits of note-taking while listening are mostly conducted in higher education level. When listeners do note-taking while listening, their interest and motivation level might increase and that can help them understand better. According to Dunkel and Pialorsi (2005) and Hasswell and Lee (2013), when learners are allowed to take notes, they feel more comfortable. However, Ellis (2003) mentions that listening and taking notes simultaneously is a "dual-task" which may be very difficult and challenging for many second language learners. Some techniques and tips for listening and note-taking are mentioned in the book published in University of New South Wales, UNSW 2019.

Do not write full sentences, write phrases. You should only record the key words that you need to get the idea of the point. You should skip words like "the" and "a" that don't add additional meaning to the lecture content and retain key technical or discipline-specific terms.

You should take notes in your own words and paraphrase what you hear so it makes sense to you _ it helps you to understand and remember what you hear. You should try to paraphrase everything except where information needs to be noted exactly. Don't forget to structure your notes with headings, subheadings and numbered lists. You should use headings to indicate topic areas or to include bibliographic details of the sources of information, outline form and/or a numbering system and indenting to help you distinguish major from minor facts.

Don't forget to do underline, circle, star, etc. to identify key information, examples, definitions, or other important materials and devise your own marking code to indicate each type. If you miss something, you should write key words, skip a few spaces, and get the information later. You should also leave a space on the page for your own notes and comments. Symbols and abbreviations for words, phrases or names are necessary for note-taking while listening. According to Miami University's public database, a course outlining note-taking and active listening now exists.

Some scholars mention that there are five efficient note-taking methods. (Oxford Learning Centres, Inc 2017)

The Cornell method: This method helps organize class notes into easily digestible summaries. This method is very useful and clear because it points out that the main points, details, study cues, and summary are all written in one place.

Mapping note taking method: this method is a more visual way to organize your class notes. This technique is effective when we learn about relationships between topics.

The Outlining note taking method: this method uses headings and bullet points to organize topics. This method is adequate when learning about topics that include a lot of detail.

Charting note taking method: this method uses columns to organize information. This method is adequate for lessons that cover a lot of facts or relationships between topics.

The Sentence note taking method: this method is simply writing down each topic as a jot note sentence. This method is practical for fast paced lessons where a lot of information is being covered.

It is difficult to say that which note-taking techniques are the best as each method has advantages. It depends on your own preferences and what you are learning.

III. Purpose of the study

In French language teaching and learning, to overcome the Myanmar students' difficulties regarding their listening comprehension module, the researcher tries to point out that note-taking strategy is one of the vital important factors for students' listening comprehension ability and that the students do need to have enough knowledge about it and ability on how to do it. In this regard, the main purpose of the study is to prove the impact of note-taking on listening comprehension and to find out the students' perception on the effect of note-taking while listening.

IV. Participants

The participants to the present study are 97 third year French specialization students at Yangon University of Foreign Languages. Students' participation was anonymous and the questionnaire of the survey was clearly explained to the students.

V. Methodology and data

Quantitative approach is applied with a survey design in this study. The study was conducted among 92 third year French specialization students during the first semester of 2019-2020 academic year at Yangon University of Foreign languages. For the purpose of the survey, students were divided into two groups (Group I and Group II). Students from Group I received a practical training on note-taking techniques for a couple of weeks, and they were asked to use any technique that they had learnt during listening activities. During this period, students from Group II did not receive any practical training on note-taking techniques while listening. On the third week, to be able to conduct the study, a listening comprehension test from "Barféty, Beaujourn (2004) Compréhension Orale 2" was chosen and two groups were asked to listen the same text. The assigned time for this test took an hour. Students from Group I were asked to use their preferred note-taking strategy while listening to a recording text but the other group was asked to listen to the same recording text without taking notes or taking notes using their own method. After the second section of listening, all the students were asked to answer the questions prepared. After analyzing the results of the listening skills of students from these two groups in terms of the different question types of the listening text, the instruction of note-taking strategies was given to all the students and they were trained to take notes while listening during the whole semester. In order to conduct the second part of the research, at the end of the semester, they all were asked to fill out a set of questionnaire about their opinion on this activity. The questionnaire is composed of 9-item statements using Linkert scale which referred to students' opinion towards note-taking while listening. Students have to select a response from five possible options in each item: 1 for strongly disagree (SD), 2 for disagree (D), 3 for neutral (N), 4 for agree (A), and 5 for strongly agree (SA), but for the item of negative statement, a reverse scaling is applied. The items in the questionnaire are designed and developed from earlier research conducted by Yasser Aminifard and Amin Aminifard, 2012.

Regarding the response to the questionnaire, students were explained that it was a voluntary study. The questions as well as the instructions were in English. The return rate of the questionnaire is 100%.

Descriptive and analytical methods were done on survey by analyzing the means and standard deviation. Besides indicating general tendencies of the data, descriptive statistics has supported the researcher to make overall discussion.

VI. Research questions

1. What types of listening questions does note-taking help to answer very well?
2. Does the note-taking affect students' listening comprehension ability? What are the students' perceptions on the effect of note-taking while listening?

VII. Findings

Section I: Comparison of the results of the students' listening skills in terms of the different questions types of the listening text

After administering the test, based on the obtained data, the results of the two groups were compared to determine any significant differences.

TABLE 1. RESULTS OF THE STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILLS FOR ' MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTION TYPE' (10 MARKS)

<i>Marks obtained</i>	Group I		Group II	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
(0- 4)marks	1	2.20%	4	8.70%
(5-7)marks	19	41.30%	18	39.10%
(8-10)marks	26	56.50%	24	52.20%

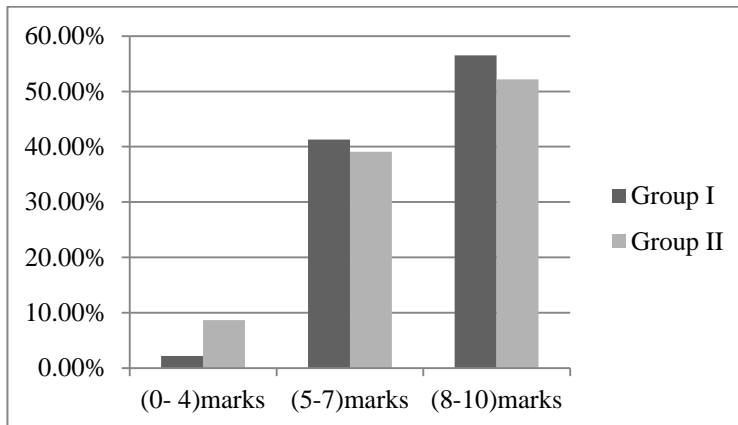
N= number of students out of 46 in each group

Group I = students who listened to a recording text while taking notes by using their preferred note-taking method that they had already learnt

Group II = students who hadn't learnt any note-taking methods listened to a same text without taking notes or taking notes with their own way

For "Multiple-choice question type", the results in the table above are shown in three parts: students who scored between (0-4) marks, those who scored between (5-7) marks and those who scored between (8-10) marks.

FIGURE 1. COMPARISON OF THE RESULTS OF THE STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILLS FOR "MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTION TYPE. (10 MATKES)



Data showed that for "Multiple- choice question type", over half of the students from group I and II (56.5% and 52.5% respectively) scored high marks, between 8 and 10. Moreover, it can be seen that 41.30% of group I students and 39.10% of group II students obtained the marks in the range of 5 to 7. Only 2.20% from group I and 8.70% from group II got low marks, from 0 to 4. According to the data, it can be considered that regarding "Multiple- choice question type", there was no significant difference between these two groups.

TABLE 2. RESULTS OF THE STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILLS FOR " SENTENCE COMPLETION QUESTION TYPE" (10 MARKS)

<i>Marks obtained</i>	Group I		Group II	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
(0- 4)marks	1	2.20%	12	26.10%
(5-7)marks	15	32.60%	13	28.30%
(8-10)marks	30	65.20%	21	45.60%

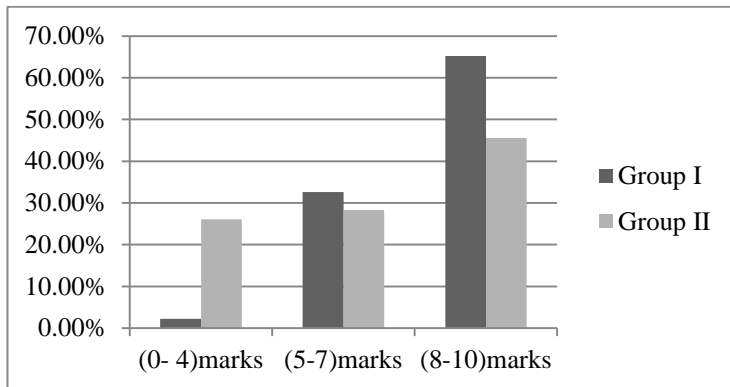
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FIGURE 2. COMPARISON OF THE RESULTS OF THE STUDENTS’ LISTENING SKILLS FOR “SENTENCE COMPLETION QUESTION TYPE” (10 MARKS)



In terms of the “Sentence completion question type”, most of the students from group I (65.20%) gained high marks, between 8 and 10. Meanwhile, only 45.60% of the students from group II scored within this range. Moreover, it is noted that 32.60% of group I students and 28.30% of group II students obtained the marks in the range of 5 to 7. Only 2.2% of group I students got low marks, from 0 to 4, whereas around 26.10% from group II got marks in the range. Therefore, it can be assumed that, with regard to the “Sentence completion question type”, those who have the knowledge of note-taking can get better achievement than those with lack of this knowledge.

TABLE 3. RESULTS OF THE STUDENTS’ LISTENING SKILLS FOR “ SHORT ANSWER QUESTION/ SPECIFIC DETAIL QUESTION TYPE” (10 MARKS)

<i>Marks obtained</i>	Group I		Group II	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
(0- 4)marks	4	8.70%	20	43.50%
(5-7)marks	28	60.90%	22	47.80%
(8-10)marks	14	30.40%	4	8.70%

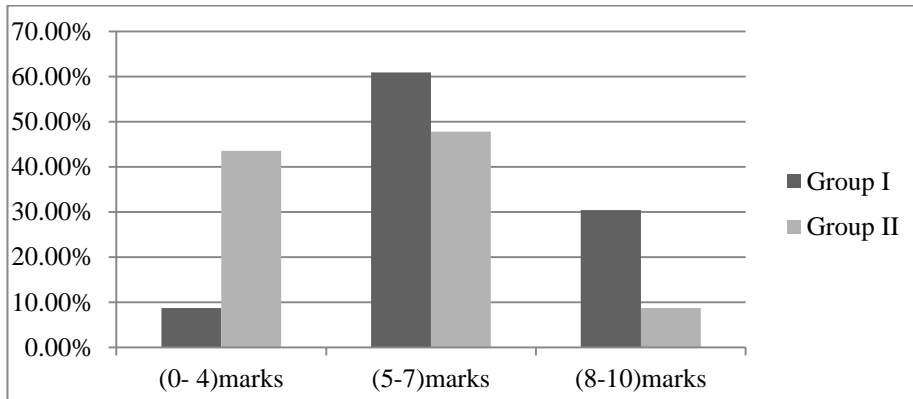
N= number of students out of 46 in each group

Group I = students who listened to a recording text while taking notes by using their preferred note-taking method that they had already learnt

Group II= students who hadn’t learnt any note-taking methods listened to a same recording text without taking notes or taking notes using their own method.

With regard to “Short answer question/ specific detail question type”, the results in the table above are shown in three parts”: students who got between (0-4) marks, those who scored between (5-7) marks and those who scored between (8-10) marks.

FIGURE 3. COMPARISON OF THE RESULTS OF THE STUDENTS' LISTENING SKILLS FOR "SHORT ANSWER QUESTION/ SPECIFIC DETAIL QUESTION TYPE" (10 MARKS)



Regarding with "Short answer question/ specific detail question type", 30.4% of the students from group I could answer this question type and gained high score, between 8 and 10. Meanwhile, only 8.7% of the students from group II obtained this range of marks. Moreover, it is found that most of the students from group I (60.90%) obtained the marks in the range of 5 to 7 but around 47.80% of the students from group II entered this range. As 43.50% of the students from group II could not answer very well this question type and ended in low marks whereas only 8.70% of the students from group I entered this range of marks.

So figure 3 scrutinizes the fact that, with regard to "Short answer questions/ specific detail question type", student who are used to note-taking methods can achieve higher scores than those who had not learnt any note-taking method.

Section II. Students' perceptions on the effect of note-taking while listening

TABLE 4 : RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES IN TERMS WITH STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE EFFECT OF NOTE-TAKING WHILE LISTENING

No	Statements	Strongly Disagree (N/ %)	Disagree (N/ %)	Natural (N/ %)	Agree (N/ %)	Strongly Agree (N/ %)	Mean	Std. deviation
1	Taking notes is more helpful in answering the questions better than without taking notes.	-/0%	3/3.2%	11/12.0%	49/53.3%	29/31.5%	4.13	0.74
2	Relying on my memory rather than taking notes.	10/10.9%	30/32.5%	34/37.0%	16/17.4%	2/2.2%	2.67	0.96
3	Taking notes covers the entire context of the questions.	2/2.2%	13/14.1%	57/62%	18/19.5%	2/2.2%	3.05	0.72

No	Statements	Strongly Disagree (N/ %)	Disagree (N/ %)	Natural (N/ %)	Agree (N/ %)	Strongly Agree (N/ %)	Mean	Std. deviation
4	Having enough time to take good notes.	20/21.7%	32/34.8%	15/16.3%	21/22.8%	4/4.4%	2.53	1.19
5	Relying on the notes to answer the test questions.	-/0%	6/6.5%	19/20.7%	52/56.5%	15/16.3%	3.82	0.77
6	Taking notes makes me listen carefully.	2/2.2%	9/9.8%	27/29.3%	36/39.1%	18/19.6%	3.64	0.98
7	Taking notes is more helpful in answering specific detail questions.	-/0%	1/1.1%	16/17.4%	54/58.7%	21/22.8%	4.03	0.67
8	taking notes makes the text more difficult for me	21/22.8%	38/41.3%	28/30.4%	4/4.4%	1/1.1%	2.19	0.88
9	Taking notes disturbs my concentration while doing listening text.	7/7.6%	23/25.0%	39/42.4%	15/16.3%	8/8.7%	2.93	1.04

Note. Mean scores range from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

N= number of participants out of 92

To be able to conduct the second part of the survey, descriptive statistic (frequencies) analysis was done (see table 4). For analysis purposes, the levels of agreement like strongly agree and agree were combined and concerned as positive attitude and strongly disagree and agree categories were concerned as negative attitude.

The results of the first statement showed that majority of the students (84.8%, 78 responses) agreed that taking note is more helpful in answering the questions better than without taking note. Moreover the descriptive statistics shows that the highest mean was gained by item 1 (M=4.13) and standard deviation of this item is not very high (SD=0.74), which implies that most respondents have similar opinion on the item. Only 19.6% of the students agreed that they relied on their memory rather than their notes (item 2). With regard to item 3, more than half of the students (62%, 57responses) did not mention “agree” or “disagree”, it means that they are not sure that taking note covers the entire context of the questions. For item 4, over half of the students reported that they did not have enough time to take good notes. However, most of the students (72.8%, 67 responses) agreed that they rely on their notes to

answer the test questions and for item 5, the mean value is 3.82 and standard deviation is 0.77 so it shows that most of the students have similar opinion on the item. Another positive perception towards note-taking is that 58.7% of the students considered that taking note makes them listen carefully. For (item7), majority of the students (81.2%, 75 responses) believed that taking notes is more helpful in answering detail questions. As the mean value is 4.03 and standard deviation is 0.67, most of the students have similar positive opinion on the item 7. According to item 8, more than half of the students (64.1%, 59 responses) disagreed that taking notes makes the text more difficult for them. The result from the last statement demonstrated that only 32.6% of the students disagreed that taking notes disturbs their concentration while doing listening text.

VIII. Discussion

This study investigates the impact of note-taking on listening comprehension of third year French specialization students at Yangon University of Foreign Languages. Generally, the results of the students' listening skills in terms of the different questions types of the listening text reveals that there are no significant differences between the groups for the "Multiple-choice question type" as the answer is very easy to guess even if the students know little about the subject. However, for the "Sentence completion question type", students who have good knowledge of note-taking proved that they achieved higher scores than those with lack this knowledge. As the questions in this category are composed of important words or phrases omitted, students need to do taking notes while listening in order to answer them well. Students also need to note some specific detail information such as cost, place and time to be able to answer very well "Short answer questions/ specific detail question type". For that point, the finding revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between two groups.

Regarding with students' perceptions on the effect of note-taking while listening, according to this study, majority of the students believe that note-taking can positively affect their listening comprehension. This finding is comparable with Dunkel's (1988) statement. He pointed out that note-taking is perceived by examinees as a strategy that facilitates remembering the lecturer content. Moreover, most of the students showed a significant tendency towards note-taking with regard to answering detail questions. So, it can be compared with Hale and Courtney's (1994) statements. They pointed out that students could benefit from note-taking if they are asked about specific details. However, according to the data obtained for item 3 and 9, it can be found that some students could not manage both listening and taking notes at the same time. This finding was also in line with Ferris and Tagg's (1996) statement: lack of note-taking skills and problems with note-taking as well as listening comprehension are troublesome areas most often reported by international students.

IX. Conclusion

Most of the foreign language learners state that listening comprehension is the most challenging skill to improve. In line with the finding of this study, it is found that students should be taught the useful techniques of note-taking in order to improve their listening skills. Some scholars revealed that note-taking while listening is not an easy task because it is possible to utter 150 words a minute, but only 27 words can be taken down as notes at most. Therefore, the research points out that note-taking should be part of the curriculum and it should be taught from the beginning. Another important finding of the research is that students need to practice note-taking while listening several times to be able to concentrate on central ideas and main focuses so that they could manage both note-taking and listening at the same time. Based on the current

result of the study, it is also possible to conduct further studies on the impact of pronunciation through phonetics to be helpful for listening comprehension.

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