

The Effect of Active Learning Instruction on the Intermediate Iranian EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension Ability

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Abstract

This research was conducted to investigate the effect of active learning instruction of listening on the listening comprehension ability of the intermediate Iranian EFL learners; moreover, it investigated the difference between male and female learners who had experienced active learning instruction in terms of the mentioned variable. The participants were 52 Iranian EFL learners who were distributed into control and experimental groups after making sure of their homogeneity through a proficiency test. To evaluate learners' listening comprehension, a researcher-made listening test (pre-test), which was validated and its reliability using Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to be 0.762, was conducted at the beginning of the term as a pre-test. During the term, which took about 20 sessions, active learning instruction of listening was fulfilled by the use of peer teaching and four types of

tasks (jigsaw task, gap filling task, graphic organizer task, and information transfer task) as the treatment for the experimental group. In contrast, the learners of the control groups experienced traditional approach to instruction of listening comprehension. At the end of the term, the same listening comprehension test was applied as the post-test. The results of independent samples t-tests and Mann-Whitney U test revealed that active learning instruction of listening comprehension had a significant effect on the learners' listening comprehension ability of those in experimental groups. In addition, there was no significant difference in terms of listening comprehension between males and females of the experimental groups. The findings can provide insights to teachers and teacher trainers to be aware of beneficial characteristics of active learning instruction in the development of listening comprehension.

Keywords: Active learning instruction, Task, Peer teaching, Listening comprehension ability

1. Introduction

In recent decades learner-centered approach has become more popular in educational settings in comparison with teacher-centered one. Learning is an interactive process and learners do not learn much just by participating in class, listening to the teachers, memorizing some assignments, and reflecting the answers, but they should speak about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to their own experiences, and use it in their daily lives, additionally they should consider what they learn as a part of themselves (Chickering and Gamson, 1987).

According to Gardner, Heward and Grossi (1994), active participation of students has a positive effect on the academic achievement in learning process. In this process, listening comprehension ability is considered as an important skill. Early researches about listening comprehension mostly focused on linguistic knowledge but recent researches have paid attention to different factors such as contextual clues or background knowledge (Morley, 2001). Although listening comprehension is now recognized as an important dimension in language learning, it is needed to work in both theory and practice domain of this subject (Morley, 2001) because despite its importance, language learners often consider listening skill as the most difficult one to learn (Hasan, 2000; Graham, 2006). Vandergrift (2007) believes that one main reason for this consideration can be that the effective ways of learning listening comprehension are not taught to learners.

Recent attention to the learner-centered approach and applying it in teaching situations has made the researchers interested in the subject of instructing active learning for improving learners' listening comprehension ability.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

According to Simons (1997), active learning refers to the number and types of decisions taken by learners themselves or by the help of a teacher. He believes that in more active forms of learning, each learner has his own time plan, own aims and activities of learning. Learners evaluate their progress, they are responsible for their learning and understanding, and they think critically on errors and successes. One problem is that some students consider this kind of learning threatening and they do not accept the challenge, or they want to be more passive in the class. On the other hand, some teachers are reluctant to loosen the control in the classroom and they cannot accept that teaching and learning processes are managed based on the students' inputs and unforeseen learners' subjects (Huber, 1992).

As Nunan (1997, p.1) points it "Listening is the Cinderella skill in second language learning. All too often, it has been overlooked by its elder sister-speaking." However, according to Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006), listening to the second language is considered as an important part of learning the second language and is widely used by the learners of second language in different daily situations.

1.2 Research Questions

In order to achieve the purpose of the study, the following research questions were posed:

- 1) Does the active learning instruction of listening comprehension have any significant

effect on the intermediate Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension ability?

- 2) Is there any significant difference in terms of listening comprehension skill between male and female EFL learners, who have experienced active learning instruction in teaching listening comprehension?

1.3 Significance of the Study

Learning is a multidimensional word and concept in education. Learning and the conditions in which it happens depends on several factors and contexts. According to Dewey (1938), in traditional views, learning is considered as the transfer of information from knowledgeable sources, such as teacher, textbooks, elders or one who is more informed, to the passive recipient. While, the definition of learning goes beyond the merely comprehension of text and listening to lectures to the skills that require more learners' involvement, taking control of their own learning by involving in active learning and using meta-cognitive skills (Bransford, Brown and Cocking, 1999). Therefore, the results of this study will be significant for teachers who are interested in providing more attractive and interactive environment for learners by using active learning instruction in their classes. In addition, the findings can be helpful for teacher trainers to make teachers familiar with the beneficial characteristics of the active learning instruction in pre or in-service courses.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Active Learning

Bonwell and Eison (1991) define active learning as anything that engages learners in performing and thinking about what they are doing. They point out to many techniques, which can be used to make the learners engaged in learning process such as: problem-solving activities, cooperative learning, experiential learning, writing tasks, computer-aided instruction, simulations, speaking activities, role-playing, library assignments, class discussion, fieldwork, case study methods, peer teaching, independent study, and homework.

2.1.1 Characteristics of Active Learning

Bonwell and Eison (1991) provide some characteristics for active learning: 1) Learners are engaged instead of being passive listener; 2) Learners are involved in different tasks and activities in the classroom; 3) Less focus on transmission of information and more focus on promoting learners' skills; 4) More focus on the learners' attitudes and values exploration 5); Motivation of learners is raised; 6) The possibility of providing immediate feedback from their peers and instructor ; 7) Higher level of thinking is involved such as: analysis, evaluation, and synthesis.

2.1.2 Related Studies of Active Learning Instruction

Yuretich, Khan, Leckie and Clement (2001) investigated active-learning instruction to enhance learners' performance and their scientific interest in oceanography course. They applied the active learning methods such as interactive activities and discussion instead of lecturing and teacher-fronted instruction in class. The results of student surveys, evaluation of

course, and learners' performance on the exam indicated that the learning process in this kind of situation was enhanced. Learners' achievement demonstrated significant improvement in recalling of the related information, analytical abilities, and logical reasoning. In addition, Kalem and Fer (2003) conducted a research whose main purpose was to investigate the effects of the active learning model on learners' learning, teaching and communication processes. The study showed that there was a positive effect of active learning model on learners' learning, teaching, and communication processes. Akinoğlu and Tandoğan (2007) also investigated the effects of problem-based active learning in science education on the learners' achievement and concept learning. Again the findings corroborate the positive effect of active learning instruction and revealed that the application of problem-based active learning model has positive effect on the learners' attitudes towards the related course and their academic achievement. It was also revealed that the use of problem-based active learning model has a positive effect on the conceptual development of the learners and causes their misconceptions remain at the lowest level.

2.2 Tasks

According to Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001) "A task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective".

2.2.1 Characteristics of Tasks

Skehan (1998) proposed five main characteristics of a task: 1) Meaning is important. 2) Other people's meanings are not given to learners to follow. 3) There is relationship between tasks and the activities in real world. 4) There are some priorities for task completion. 5) Tasks are evaluated based on their outcomes.

Richard (2001) pointed out to some other main characteristics of task. He believes that: 1) Tasks refer to the activities that drive the process of second language acquisition. 2) Grammar is not being taught as a core in doing task and it is learned as by-product of carrying out tasks. 3) Tasks engage learners in meaningful communication and are motivating for them.

2.2.2 Types of Tasks

Pedagogical tasks: Richards (2001) introduced these kind tasks, which are designed according to SLA theory such as:

- Jigsaw tasks: In these kinds of task, learners are engaged in joining different parts of information to make a whole (Richards, 2001).
- Information-gap tasks: In these kinds of task, one student has some information and another one has some other information, which is complementary. They should exchange the information in order to complete an activity (Richards, 2001).
- Graphic organizers tasks: According to Freeman (2003), these tasks provide a kind of flexibility and limitlessness in choices of using. They are visual patterns of concepts, information, knowledge, and they can incorporate pictures and text.

- Information transfer tasks: In these tasks, oral information is transferred to a visual or written representation or vice versa, such as: “labeling a diagram, identifying an element in a picture, completing a form, or showing routes on a map.” This kind of tasks includes: “Multiple-picture cued selection”, “single picture cued verbal multiple choice”, and “chart filling” (Brown, 2004, pp. 127-128).

Real-world tasks: these kinds of tasks were introduced by Richards (2001) as the important ones in real-world performance.

2.2.3 Related Studies of Tasks

Hanifehzadeh and Ebrahimi (2012) examined the effects of post task activity on L2 learners' task-based performance. The results revealed that there was no significant difference for the effect of post task activity in the terms of fluency and complexity of the task. Cao (2013) also investigated the effects of task-induced engagement load on the learning of lexical bundles. The three tasks with different engagement load (reading comprehension, sentence writing, and reading comprehension plus gap-filling) were assigned to 70 EFL learners. After completion of the tasks, an immediate posttest was administered. One week later, the same test was used. The findings showed that task has an effect on the lexical bundles learning, which supported the engagement load hypothesis according to which higher task-induced engagement was more effective in lexical bundles learning and it was concluded that on both immediate and delayed posttests, the group of sentence writing significantly outperformed the other two groups. In addition, Abdollahzadeh and Kashani (2011) conducted a research in which the effects of task complexity was investigated on narrative production in written form, under different task complexity conditions by EFL learners at different proficiency levels. Three certain measures of the written narratives were targeted (complexity, accuracy and fluency). The results indicated that both task complexity and language proficiency had significant effect on the EFL Learners' Narrative Writing Task Performance and task complexity and language proficiency had no significant effect on fluency.

2.3 Peer Teaching

In most situations, the learners are more comfortable with their classmates rather than their teacher. Peer teaching and learning is based on interactive view of education and emphasizes learners' reconstructing of their skills and knowledge for themselves not just being as a simple receiver of knowledge from external sources (Nunan, 1999). Bradford (2011) defines peer teaching as some kinds of practices in which peers instruct each other in a meaningful and purpose-driven interaction and in such environment the learners work collaboratively to notice the areas or items which they do not know and try to learn and teach each other.

2.3.1 Benefits of Peer Teaching

Bradford (2011) points out to some benefits of peer teaching such as: improving learners' competence in the related subject, preparing learners for university life, making learners more autonomous in learning process.

According to Correa, Brugal, Valentin, Perez, and Perez-Guma (2009), peer teaching can

improve learners' study habits, providing better attitudes towards the class environment and the course, and improving communication and interaction between peers.

2.3.2 Related Studies of Peer Teaching

Desta, Chalchisa, Mulat, Berihun, and Tesera (2009) conducted the study which consisted of five phases. In phase one, the concept of peer teaching and self-reflections in relation to improving active learning in primary schools were introduced. The second phase dealt with providing a training manual for the teachers of primary school on peer assessment and self-reflection. In the third phase a one day trainers' training was arranged for four important teacher trainers from two institutes of teacher education who managed and conducted the observations of the classroom. In the fourth phase of the study a training workshop was provided for school teachers and the fifth phase involved with peer assessment and reflections by observing the classes of the teachers who took part in the training workshop during their teaching process. The results showed that the teachers and principals of the related schools perceived peer assessment and self-reflections positively. Moreover, the results showed that peer assessment and self-reflections are helpful in improving active learning among learners. Riazi, and Rezaii (2011) carried out a study to investigate the effect of peer-scaffolding on EFL learners' writing ability. The results of t-tests indicated that teacher scaffolding was more successful on improving learners' writing in this particular EFL context. It was also concluded that both the teacher and peers used many various scaffolding behaviors but teacher used more such behaviors. King, Staffieri, and Adelgais (1998) investigated the effects of organizing tutorial interaction for scaffolding peer learning. In this study, for 3 mutual peer-tutoring situations, seventh graders worked in pairs: one group with only explanation (E), the second group with inquiry plus explanation (IE), and the last one with sequenced inquiry plus explanation (SIE). IE and SIE learners were trained in the way that when they were in the role of tutor they should ask some thought-provoking and comprehension questions on the material and in the tutee role they were required to explain the content to their partners. SIE additionally were trained for asking their questions in a certain order. E learners explained material to each other. It was concluded that SIE learners outperformed IE and E learners on the ability to provide knowledge during their tutorial interaction and on written forms.

2.4 *Listening Comprehension Ability*

Among different skills and sub-skills, listening comprehension ability has not sufficiently been taken into account; while, Krashen (1985) considered the listening comprehension as a channel for comprehensible input. Swain (1985) regarded listening comprehension as an important aspect of interlanguage communication necessary for language acquisition

According to Call (1985), listening has been ignored or poorly paid attention because of the belief that it is considered as a passive skill and that just exposing learners to the spoken language can be enough for the instruction of listening comprehension.

2.4.1 Listening Comprehension Obstacles

Underwood (1989) proposes seven reasons for having problems in listening comprehension

such as 1) Listeners cannot manage the speed of spoken language. 2) Always the words cannot be repeated for listener. 3) The vocabulary knowledge of listener is not sufficient. 4) Listeners are not familiar with the signals and cannot understand when the speaker is moving from one point to another, repeating a point, and giving an example. 5) Listeners do not have adequate contextual knowledge. Listeners from different culture may misinterpret some nonlinguistic cues, such as body language, nods, gestures, or tone of voice, 6) For listeners it may be difficult to focus in a foreign language. 7) Certain learning habits may impede effective listening comprehension such as learners' willingness to understand all words.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants and Setting

To accomplish the purpose of this study, 68 EFL language learners in Khorasan Institute in Mashhad, Iran were selected. The researcher used the Interchange/Passages Objective Placement Test (Lesly, Hasen and Zukowski, 2005), to homogenize the participants' level of proficiency. The number of participants reduced to 52 EFL learners. The total number of learners in control groups was 25 EFL learners, which comprised 11 male and 14 female learners, and the number of learners in experimental groups was 27 learners consisted of 12 males and 15 females. Their age varied from 13 to 35, and their educational levels varied from high school to Bachelor degree.

3.2 Instrumentation

To carry out this investigation, three instruments were employed: 1) Interchange/Passages Objective Placement Test (Lesly, Hasen & Zukowski, 2005) as the proficiency test to evaluate the participants' level of proficiency. 2) A researcher-made listening comprehension test for pre-test and post-test to investigate the differences in listening comprehension ability among participants before and after the treatment. This test consists of eight parts including different kinds of tasks such as editing tasks, note taking tasks, information transfer tasks, filling the blanks, multiple choice comprehension items, and true or false items. The validity of the test has been proven by two experts. This test was piloted with 20 intermediate EFL learners in Mashhad and the reliability was calculated through Cronbach's alpha (0.762). 3)

Listen In, book 3 (David Nunan, 2003), the book from which the before mentioned tasks as the treatment were selected. This book is an academic listening book for Intermediate level and includes listening strategies and different tasks for listening. In the control groups, the learners received the listening activities by the use of traditional instruction of listening comprehension. It means that the subjects of control groups listened to the predetermined segments of listening activities which were followed by just some comprehension questions.

3.3 Procedure

As previously mentioned, 68 EFL language learners in Khorasan Language Institute in Mashhad, Iran were selected. At the very first session of the term, to homogenize the subjects, the placement and evaluation package of the *interchange* book (3rd Edition) was used. In order to ensure the real proficiency level of learners, the placement test was administered in addition

to the supervisor's confirmation concerning the level of learners. As a result, the number of participants reduced to 52 EFL learners in four classes, two control classes (one with 14 females another with 11 males), and two experimental classes (15 females in one class and 12 males in another one). In the next session, a researcher-made test was conducted as a pre-test to evaluate learners' listening comprehension. During the term, which took about 20 sessions, active learning instruction for listening, were fulfilled by the use of peer teaching and four types of tasks (jigsaw task, gap filling task, graphic organizer task, and information transfer task) as the treatment for experimental groups. For peer teaching practices, after three sessions during which the learners got familiar with the layout of the *Listen In*, book 3 and the type of listening instruction in the class, some learners were assigned voluntarily in advance to teach their classmates the pre-determined parts of above mentioned book in some appointed sessions. They were asked to teach listening creatively and interactively, and they were encouraged to use different kinds of strategies to make students actively involved in class activities and tasks of listening comprehension. In contrast, the learners of the control groups experienced traditional approach to instruction of listening comprehension such as teacher-fronted instruction, memorization, repetition of listening parts, and answering to some comprehension questions, which mostly tested learners' listening comprehension, rather than teaching it. At the end of the term, the researcher-made test which had been used for pre-test was again administered to the learners of the experimental and control groups as a post-test to investigate the probable variations on their listening comprehension ability due to the treatment they received.

4. Results

At first, the descriptive statistics was reported. Then according to the questions of the study, to see the difference of the mean scores in listening comprehension between control groups and experimental groups on pretest, posttest and the difference between pre-test and post-test (gain scores), and to investigate the difference between male and female in listening comprehension an independent-samples t-test for the scores with normal distribution and Mann-Whitney U test for the scores with non-normal distribution were conducted to the data.

To analyze the related data in this study, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 19, was applied and the significance level was set at 0.05. In the first phase of the data analysis, Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the experimental and control groups in listening comprehension at the pre-test.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the experimental and control groups in listening comprehension ability at the pre-test

		N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Pre-test listening	Experimental	27	14	26	18.111	2.832
	Control	25	12	26	17.920	4.009

To ensure the normality of the distribution of the scores in each variable, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run. The results revealed that there was normal distribution of

scores in each group ($p > .05$) except for the pretest listening of the experimental group, the listening gain scores of the control group. ($p < .05$). (see Table 2)

Table 2. Test of normality for the experimental and control groups in listening comprehension at the pre-test, post-test and gain scores

	group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test listening	male	.203	23	.184
	female	.154	29	.200*
Post-test listening	male	.165	23	.200*
	female	.220	29	.049
gain scores for listening	male	.166	23	.200*
	female	.163	29	.200*

To compare the mean scores of the experimental and control groups at listening pre-test, Mann-Whitney U test from non- parametric tests (since the distribution of scores for the experimental group at listening pre-test was non-normal) was run. Mann-Whitney U test is the alternative to the independent-samples t-tests in parametric tests (see Table 3).

Table 3. Mann-Whitney U for the experimental and control groups' listening comprehension at the pre-test

Test Statistics ^a				
	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test listening	310.500	635.500	-.498	.619

a. Grouping Variable: g1

The p-value (.619) was higher than the significance level of .05. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was no significant difference [$U=310$, $Z=-.498$, $p=.619$ (two-tailed)] between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups' listening comprehension at pre-test which indicates that the participants are homogenous at the begging of the study and are appropriate ones for a quasi-experimental research in the terms of listening comprehension ability ($p > .05$).

The descriptive statistics for the experimental and control groups in listening comprehension ability at the post-test are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the experimental and control groups in listening comprehension ability at post-test

		N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Post-test listening	Experimental	27	14	27	20.481	3.190
	Control	25	15	27	18.60	3.366

The descriptive statistics for the experimental and control groups in listening comprehension ability at the gain scores are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of the experimental and control groups in listening comprehension ability at the gain scores

		N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Pre-test listening	Experimental	27	-1	6	2.370	2.186
	Control	25	-4	3	.800	1.825

Since the distribution of scores for the experimental and control groups at the post-test listening was normal; to compare mean scores an independent-samples t-tests was applied. The p-value (.044) was lower than the significance level of .05 (see Table 6).

Table 6. Independent-samples t-tests for the experimental and control groups' listening comprehension ability at the post-test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances							t-test for Equality		
	F	sig	t	df	sig. (2-tailed) Difference	Mean Difference	95% confidence interval of the Difference		
							std. Error	Lower	Upper
Post-test listening Equal variances assumed	.207	.651	2.069	50	.044	1.881	.909	.549	3.708
Equal variances not assumed			2.065	49.145	.044	1.881	.911	.050	3.712

Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference [$t(50) = 2.06$, $p = .044$ (two-tailed)] between the mean scores of the experimental ($M=20.48$, $SD=3.19$) and control ($M=18.60$, $SD=3.36$) groups at the post-test listening. The difference indicates the effect of active learning instruction of listening on the intermediate Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension ability; thus, the first hypothesis that active learning instruction of listening comprehension has no significant effect on the intermediate Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension ability was rejected. The effect size, calculated via eta squared, was found to be 0.137. This indicates the strength of association between the dependent (post-test listening scores) and independent (active learning instruction) variables is almost large size (Dornyei, 2007).

To compare the mean scores of the experimental and control groups' listening gain scores, Mann-Whitney U test from non- parametric tests was conducted because the distribution of the experimental group's listening gain scores was non-normal. The p-value (.020) was lower

than the significance level of .05 ($p < .05$) (see Table 7):

Table 7. Mann-Whitney U for the experimental and control groups' listening comprehension ability at gain scores

Test Statistics ^a				
	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
listening gain scores	212.500	537.500	-2.231	.020

The table shows that there was significant difference [$U=212$, $Z=-2.231$, $p=.020$ (two-tailed)] between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups' listening comprehension ability at gain scores. It can be concluded that the effect of active learning instruction on the Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension ability was positively significant. The calculated effect size was .30 and this magnitude revealed the strong connection between the dependent (gain scores of listening comprehension ability) and independent (active learning instruction) variables.

The second question of the study considers the differences between males and females in listening comprehension ability after experiencing of active learning instruction in a term. To investigate this question first descriptive statistics of the males and females of experimental groups in listening comprehension ability at the pre-test, post-test, and gain scores were calculated.

Descriptive statistics of the males and females of experimental groups in listening comprehension ability at the pre-test, post-test, and gain scores are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8. Descriptive statistics of the males and females of experimental groups in listening comprehension at the pre-test, post-test, and gain scores.

		N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Pre-test listening	Male	12	14	26	18.111	2.832
	Female	15	15	22	17.920	4.009
Post-test listening	Male	12	15	27	20.166	3.904
	Female	15	16	25	20.733	2.604
Listening Gain scores	Male	12	-1	5	1.833	1.946
	Female	15	-1	6	2.800	2.336

To ensure the normality of the distribution of the scores in each variable, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run. The results revealed that there was normal distribution of scores in each group ($p > .05$) except for the pre-test listening of males and post-test listening of females. ($p < .05$) (see Table 9).

Table 9. Test of normality for the males and females of the experimental groups in listening comprehension at the pre-test, post-test and gain scores

	group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test listening	male	.203	23	.184
	female	.154	29	.200*
Post-test listening	male	.165	23	.200*
	female	.220	29	.049
gain scores for listening	male	.166	23	.200*
	female	.163	29	.200*

To compare the mean scores of the male and female at the pre-test listening, since the distribution of scores for the male group at the pre-test listening was non-normal, Mann-Whitney U test from non- parametric tests was run. The p-value (.980) was higher than the significance level of .05 (see Table 10):

Table 10. Mann-Whitney U for the male and female listening comprehension ability at the pre-test

Test Statistics ^a				
	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
listening gain scores	89.500	167.500	-.025	.980

The result revealed that there was no significant difference [$U=89.50$, $Z=-.025$, $p=.980$ (two-tailed)] between the mean scores of the male and female listening comprehension ability at the pre-test. It can be concluded that at the pre-test there was no difference between male and female in the terms of their listening comprehension ability. It means that males and females in experimental groups were homogenous at the beginning of the study.

The post-test listening scores of females had non-normal distribution; therefore, Mann-Whitney U test from non- parametric tests was run. The p-value (.477) was higher than the significance level of .05 (see Table 11):

Table 11. Mann-Whitney U for the male and female listening comprehension ability at the post-test

Test Statistics ^a				
	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
listening gain scores	75.50	153.500	-.712	.477

The result indicated that there was no significant difference [$U=75.500$, $Z=-.712$, $p=.477$ (two-tailed)] between the mean scores of the male and female listening comprehension ability at the post-test. It can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the terms of listening comprehension ability between males and females of the experimental groups.

The distribution of the male and female listening comprehension ability at gain scores was

normal; therefore and an independent-samples t-tests was used. The p-value (.262) was higher than the significance level of .05 ($p > .05$). (see Table 12).

Table 12. Independent-samples t-tests for the male and female of the experimental group in listening comprehension ability at the gain scores

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances							t-test for Equality		
	F	sig	t	df	sig. (2-tailed) Difference	Mean Difference	95% confidence interval of the Difference		
							std. Error	Lower	Upper
Listening gain scores Equal variances	.595	.448	-1.149	25	.262	-.966	.841	-2.700	.766
Equal variances not assumed			-1.173	24.939	.252	-.966	.824	-2.664	.741

It can be concluded there was no significant difference [$t(25) = 1.430$, $p = .165$ (two-tailed)] between the mean scores of the male ($M=68.33$, $SD=8.87$) and female ($M=66.46$, $SD=8.71$) listening comprehension ability at the gain scores ($p = .252$, $p > .05$). According to this result, it can be concluded that the listening comprehension ability of male and female EFL learners in experimental groups were not significantly different.

5. Discussions and Conclusion

The objective of the present study was to investigate the effect of active learning instruction in teaching listening comprehension on the intermediate Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension ability and the difference between male and female who experienced active learning instruction. Keyser (2000) states that the important characteristics of active learning are learners' engagement in something, more than just listening and improving different skills during learning process rather than just transmission of knowledge. According to Swain (1985), listening comprehension is considered as an important aspect of interlanguage communication and it is necessary for language acquisition; therefore, based on the logical reasoning, the researchers of this study presumed that active learning instruction in teaching listening comprehension might have a significant effect on the intermediate Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension ability.

The findings demonstrated that active learning instruction in teaching listening comprehension has significant effect on the intermediate Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension ability; moreover, it was revealed that male and female EFL learners, who have experienced active learning instruction of listening comprehension, did not performed significantly different in listening comprehension test of the study.

The results of this study confirm several research carried out in the domain of active learning (e.g., Wilke, 2003; Kalem and Fer, 2003; Akinoğlu and Tandoğan, 2007; Merwin, 2003) in which the effects of active learning was investigated on different areas. For example, the results of a study investigating the influence of active-learning methods on improving student performance and scientific interest in a large introductory oceanography course revealed that the learning process was improved by the use of active learning methods such as interactive activities and discussion instead of lecturing and teacher-fronted instruction in class (Yuretich, Khan and Leckie, 2001). Moreover, Kalem and Fer (2003) conducted a research whose main purpose was to determine the effects of the active learning instruction on learners' learning, teaching and communication processes. The findings indicated a positive effect of active learning instruction on students' learning, teaching, and communication processes. In a study conducted by Akinoğlu and Tandoğan (2007), as well, the results revealed a positive effect of problem-based active learning on learners' academic achievement and their attitudes towards the science course. The findings of the present study, mentioned studies and many others which were not mentioned in this study provide empirical supports for the effectiveness of active learning instruction in different areas. The studies revealed that active learning instruction and direct engagement of learner in learning process have positive effect on learner's achievement and success.

The findings of the present study bring some implications. Bransford, Brown and Cocking (1999) believe that the definition of learning goes beyond merely the comprehension of text and listening to lectures to the skills that require more learners' involvement, taking control of their own learning by involving in active learning and using meta-cognitive skills. Additionally, according to House (2009), active learning instruction can help learners to enjoy learning process. Thus, teachers and learners should get familiar with different aspects and benefits of learner-centered instruction such as active learning instruction and provide enjoying environment for teaching listening comprehension. The results of this study yield some implications for material developers and teacher trainers. They should provide some in service courses for EFL teachers to make them aware of the learner-centered instruction including active learning instruction aspects and advantages in teaching methodology. The findings can enlighten material developers and syllabus designers to include active learning instruction in the materials and syllabus. Wenger (1998) argues that active learning instruction helps learners to get familiar with each other better and it changes passive learners into active ones, they share their values and views and they create some groups for practicing. Therefore, the student-centered instruction in general and active learning instruction in particular could be helpful in teaching domain. Swain (1985) considered listening comprehension as an important aspect of interlanguage communication necessary for language acquisition. Therefore, the findings of this study may pave the way for EFL teachers to create appropriate and attractive environment which include engagement of learners for teaching of this essential skill.

This study suffers from some limitations such as active learning instruction encompasses different kinds of activities and tasks in class and out of class, but instructing all aspects of active learning takes time, and not all content may be covered in class within the time

available. Therefore, the researchers narrowed down the study to using peer teaching and four types of tasks as the instruction of active learning. Other researchers can investigate the effect of other types of activities and tasks of this kind of learning. In this study, the effect of active learning instruction was investigated on the listening comprehension ability, other researchers can consider other skills and components in active learning instruction such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar to find out whether similar result will be achieved or not. This study also can be conducted at high schools and universities in order to compare the results. Moreover, other researchers can carry out the research with different ages and levels of proficiency.

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