



# **The Effectiveness of Using Mental Imagery Strategy in Teaching a Unit in an English Language Course in Developing Listening Comprehension Skills among First-Grade Secondary Students**

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## The Effectiveness of Using Mental Imagery Strategy in Teaching a Unit in an English Language Course in Developing Listening Comprehension Skills among First-Grade Secondary Students

### Abstract:

The study aimed to identify the effectiveness of mental imagery strategy in developing Listening Comprehension skills of first grade secondary students at AlBukayriah city. The sample of the study consisted of (56) first year secondary school students, equally divided into control and experimental groups. The study used the quasi-experimental design. The researcher prepared a list of five listening comprehension skills, a test of listening comprehension skills, and by using independent samples t-test, the study revealed the following result: There were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the post-test of listening comprehension skills in favor of the experimental group. In light of the findings, the study recommended to: 1- Train English teachers to use mental imagery strategy in teaching listening comprehension skills. 2- EFL teachers should change their methods of teaching and select effective strategies which involve the students in the learning process and activate their role in the listening lessons. 3- Encouraging using strategies that enhance the student' self-learning during listening lessons such as: mental imagery in order to develop their listening comprehension.

**Keywords:** mental imagery, listening comprehension skills, English language, secondary students, metacognitive strategy.

المستخلص:

هدفت الدراسة إلى التعرف على فاعلية إستراتيجية التصور الذهني في تنمية مهارات الفهم السمعي لدى طالبات الصف الأول الثانوي بمدينة البكيرية. تكونت عينة

الدراسة من (٥٦) طالبة من طالبات الصف الأول الثانوي، تم تقسيمها بالتساوي إلى مجموعتين ضابطة وتجريبية. واستخدمت الدراسة المنهج الكمي التجريبي بتصميم شبه تجريبي. وقد أعدت الباحثة قائمة بخمس مهارات في الفهم الاستماعي، اختبار لمهارات الفهم الاستماعي، وبعد استخدام اختبار ت للعينات المستقلة في تحليل البيانات، توصلت الدراسة إلى النتيجة التالية: وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين متوسطي درجات المجموعة التجريبية والضابطة لصالح المجموعة التجريبية في الاختبار البعدي لمهارات الفهم السمعي لصالح المجموعة التجريبية. وفي ضوء النتائج أوصت الدراسة بما يلي: ١- تدريب معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية على استخدام استراتيجيات الصور الذهنية في تعليم مهارات الفهم السمعي. ٢- يجب على معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تغيير أساليب التدريس واختيار الاستراتيجيات الفعالة التي تشرك الطلاب في عملية التعلم وتفعيل دورهم في دروس الاستماع. ٣- تشجيع استخدام الاستراتيجيات التي تعزز التعلم الذاتي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التصور الذهني، مهارات الفهم الاستماعي، اللغة الإنجليزية، طالبات الثانوي، استراتيجية ما وراء المعرفة.

## **Introduction**

Listening is one of the most important skills in learning a language that enhances the process of communication. Through listening, students can improve their language and expand their knowledge. They will comprehend the ideas and get more information. Wang (2020) has asserted that our ability to produce language is dependent on our internalization of linguistic knowledge through receiving. So, communication requires the ability to listen and comprehend.

Listening is crucial for language learning because it gives students the auditory input, they need to engage in spoken communication. So, it serves as the basis for all linguistic and cognitive development (Malkawi, 2010). When it comes to second language (L2) instruction, listening has historically received the least attention and representation, making it the skill that has been taught the least effectively (White, 2006).

One of the fundamental skills to which students and teachers should give careful consideration when conducting the teaching and learning process is listening comprehension, particularly when teaching English (Siregar, 2017). Listening comprehension can be taught through using various strategies. Teachers need to adopt the appropriate strategy in teaching listening comprehension which can help the students to overcome the difficulties in comprehending spoken texts. Zhang (2012) stated that, a significant contributing factor in the learners' weakness in listening comprehension skills is the approach of teaching and learning.

Mastering effective listening comprehension strategies and using prior knowledge can aid learners in understanding most of the language input they come across when listening. Although there aren't many studies on teaching listening comprehension methods, what is known is that learners may be taught to employ strategies, and these procedures have been shown to improve their listening comprehension (Liu, 2008). Therefore, teaching strategies involves naming them, explaining how to use them, modeling through the think-aloud process, having students practice with partners and in groups, and having them practice on their own (Duke & Pearson, 2005).

Metacognitive strategies are crucial for efficient independent learning because it fosters forethought and self-reflection. Good metacognitive thinkers are also good intentional learners. That is, they are able to direct their learning in the proper ways to build understanding. They know when to use strategies and how to use them. Moreover, it would be beneficial for the teachers to lead them in the right direction by using appropriate instructional teaching strategies and giving the students adequate procedures

so that their metacognitive skills can develop and improve the way that concepts are learned (Jaleel & P., 2016).

Using mental imagery as one of the metacognitive strategies can help teachers to achieve the lesson objectives which will also lead to better outcomes in the process of teaching listening comprehension. El-Sayed et al., (2021) stated that, mental imagery strategy has been crucial to comprehension throughout history. The ancient philosophers held that imagery was a necessary component of all knowledge. They therefore placed a strong emphasis on visuals while creating or understanding discourse.

Considering the importance of listening comprehension and mental imagery strategy, this study will be carried out to investigate the effectiveness of implementing mental imagery strategy to teach listening comprehension skills in EFL context.

### **Statement of the problem**

Despite its significance, listening comprehension presents difficulties for teachers and students alike. The majority of students have difficulty in understanding foreign speakers. Some teachers work to assist learners in developing excellent listening skills, but they admit that they have no idea what goes through the students' minds when they are listening. Listening is a multifaceted, complicated skill (Almutairi, 2012). Thus, students' silence during oral class discussions may be attributed to their poor comprehension (Hayati & Jalilifar, 2009, p. 101).

From the researcher's own experience as a teacher of English, she observed that most of the students had a lack in EFL listening comprehension skills and they need more assistant and effort. Moreover, the results of the previous studies proved the necessity of using appropriate strategies for teaching listening

and developing students' listening comprehension, such as Al-Yami, (2008), Amin et al. (2011) and AlBdour, (2020).

Though offering listening exercises or playing a tape are helpful strategies, they are insufficient. Teaching listening comprehension skills is not accomplished with these approaches (Al-Yami, 2008). Teachers should improve their teaching strategies in order to get students involved in more metacognitive listening activities. So, these metacognitive learning exercises ought to help students develop their comprehension and teach them how to control their learning (Goh & Vandergrift 2011).

In the light of the above, mental imagery strategy is one of the metacognitive strategies that may contribute in developing the listening comprehension skills. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the effectiveness of implementing mental imagery strategy to teach listening comprehension skills among first-grade secondary students.

### **Research Questions**

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the listening comprehension skills suitable for first-grade secondary students?
- 2- What is the effectiveness of using mental imagery strategy in teaching a unit of English language course in developing listening comprehension skills among first-grade secondary students?

### **1.4. Purpose of the Study**

This study aimed to:

- identify a list of listening comprehension skills suitable for the first-grade secondary students.
- investigate the effectiveness of using mental imagery strategy in teaching a unit in an English language course in

developing listening comprehension skills among first-grade secondary students.

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

- English teachers: this study will provide a list of listening comprehension skills suitable for the first-grade secondary students and its findings might encourage the teachers to improve their methods in teaching listening comprehension skills.
- Syllabus designers: the study might assist English language curriculum designers in developing listening lessons.
- Further studies: the findings of this study might support other studies which implement mental imagery strategy in different language skills.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The current study was delimited to the following:

#### **Objectivity Delimits:**

- The study delimited to all listening lessons in unit 2 titled (Careers) from Mega Goal 1.1 book for the first-grade secondary.
- The study delimited to five listening comprehension skills.

#### **Spatial Delimits:**

The study was delimited to a sample of first-grade secondary at the third secondary school for female students in Al-Bukayriyah.

#### **Time Delimits:**

The study was carried out at the first semester of the school year 2024 – 2025 A.D.

#### **Terminology:**

The present study includes the following terms:

## **Mental Imagery**

Thomas (2007) defines mental imagery as a “quasi-perceptual experience, it resembles perceptual experience, but occurs in the absence of appropriate external stimuli. It is also generally understood to bear intentionality and thereby to function as a form of mental representation.”

In the current study, mental imagery can be operationally defined as a strategy that encourages students to form an image in their mind while listening to the audio text, depending on their senses and their prior knowledge.

## **Listening Comprehension**

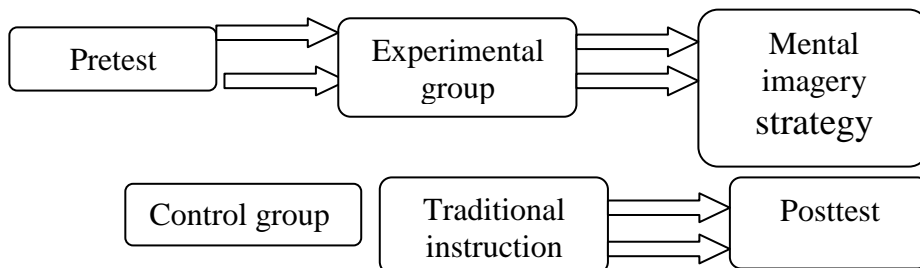
Listening comprehension is defined as a variety of processes used to interpret and make sense of spoken language. These include being aware of speech sounds, understanding word meanings, and comprehending sentence structure (Nadig 2013, as cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

Listening comprehension can be operationally defined in the current study as the process in which students interact with the audio text in order to interpret and understand the meaning of the spoken language through the context.

## **Design of the Study**

The study used the experimental quantitative method in a quasi-experimental design that includes a pre- and post-test for both groups. The experimental group was exposed to mental imagery strategy targeted at improving the students' listening comprehension skills, and the control group received the traditional method of instruction that is based on audio recording only.





**Figure 1:** Study design

### **Population of the Study**

The population of this study consisted of all female students of the first-grade secondary in Al-Bukayriyah Governorate, Qassim, in Saudi Arabi.

### **Sample of the study**

The participants of this study consisted of 56 students from one of the secondary schools in Al-Bukayriyah. It was divided randomly into two sections. One section was the experimental group consisting of 28 students while the other section was the control group consisting of 28 students. The average age of the participants is around 15-16 years old. The study was conducted during the first term of the school year 1446/2024.

### **Variables of the Study**

The current study included the following variables:

- 1- Independent variable: Mental Imagery strategy.
- 2- Dependent variable: Listening Comprehension Skills.

### **Instruments of the Study**

To achieve the objective of this study, the following instruments were used:

- Listening Comprehension List.
- Listening Comprehension Test.

### **Listening Comprehension Skills List:**

The list was prepared according to the following procedures:

### **Aim of the Listening Comprehension Skills List:**

The list aimed at identifying the listening comprehension sub-skills suitable for first-grade secondary students.

### **Identify sources for constructing the list, which are:**

- previous studies on listening comprehension skills such as: Manasrah (٢٠١٩), Al-Mansouri (2021) and Ahmed (2022).
- English language curriculum for first-year secondary students for the first semester of 1٤٤٦H.
- The opinions of experts and specialists in the field of curriculum of English language.

### **Determine the content of the list of listening comprehension skills:**

The researcher prepared the list in the light of the previous sources. It included -in its final form- five listening comprehension concerning understanding the meaning namely: identifying the main idea of the listening text, finding specific information, guessing the meaning of new words based on the context, arranging ideas or events according to a given listening text, mentioning the characters according to the listening text.

### **Validity of the listening comprehension list:**

The list was presented -in its initial form- to a group of experts in the field of Curriculum and EFL instruction in order to identify their views on: (the appropriateness of the skills for secondary students and to judge the validity of the skills listed). Then it was modified according to their views and recommendations (see appendix A).

### **Construction of listening comprehension skills test:**

The listening comprehension skills test was prepared according to the following steps:

**Aim of the test:**

The aim of the test was to measure the listening comprehension skills among first-grade secondary students.

**Sources of listening test construction:**

- The list of the listening comprehension skills previously identified.
- Reviewing the literature and previous studies related to teaching listening comprehension.
- Objectives of teaching listening comprehension to students in the first grade of secondary stage.

**Description of the test:**

The researcher prepared test which included the student's basic data and clear instructions that should be followed by students. The test consisted of a-10-item multiple choice questions and the number of alternatives were four to avoid guessing.

**Scoring the test:**

The researcher prepared an answer key for the test comprising question number and the correct choice. One mark was given to the correct answer and zero for the incorrect answer or left question.

**Validity of the test:**

In order to verify the validity of the test, the researcher, presented the test in its initial form to a group of arbitrators specialized in Teaching English to ensure its suitability for the student's level, its content appropriateness and the accuracy of its language. The necessary adjustments were made and the test was ready in its final form.

**Piloting the test:**

The researcher applied the test -after making the modifications indicated by the arbitrators- to a survey sample of

10 students from first secondary grade (not belonging to the original sample) in order to ensure the following:

- Determine the reliability of the test.
- Determine the difficulty, ease and discrimination factors of the test.
- Identify the clarity of the test and its instructions.
- Determine the time required for the test.

#### **Reliability of the test:**

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, as shown in the following table, the value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the test is (0.86), which is an acceptable value of reliability.

**Table 1 Cronbach's Alpha**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Listening Comprehension Test	0.860	10

#### **Difficulty, ease and discrimination factors of the listening comprehension test:**

The results in revealed that the difficulty coefficients of the test questions ranged from (0.30) to (0.50). The ease coefficients of the test questions ranged from (0.50) to (0.70). Hens, all these values are acceptable. The results showed also the discrimination coefficients for the test questions which ranged from (0.40) to (0.80). That is, all the discrimination coefficients fell within the range in which a discrimination coefficient is acceptable.

#### **The clarity of the test:**

The exploratory application of the listening comprehension test indicated that the test's language and instructions were clear, and suitable for the students' level.

**Duration of the test:**

In light of the exploratory application of the test, the time for answering the test was determined by counting the time of the first student and the time of the last student to answer the test, and then divided by two. Thus, the time allotted for the test was  $\frac{25+35}{2} = 30$  minutes.

**The Equivalence of Experimental and Control Groups:**

To ensure equality of the experimental and control groups in the listening comprehension test, the researcher applied pre-test on the students of the two groups. Then, an independent sample (t) test was used.

**Table Results of the Independent Sample T-Test for the pre-test**

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	T	Sig.
Experimental	28	5.8571	2.57789			
Control	28	5.6429	2.00396	54	0.347	0.730

Results in the previous table showed that the (t) value was (0.347) and statistically significant at (0.730) level, which was more than (0.05). This means that there were no significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the pretest. Thus, the experimental and control groups were equal in the pretest.

**Procedures of the study**

The researcher used the following procedures to answer the question of the study and test its hypothesis:

1. Reviewing the literature and previous studies related to "mental imagery" and listening comprehension skills.
2. Preparing a list of listening comprehension skills.
3. Presenting the list to the experts in teaching English as a foreign language to pinpoint the most important listening skills for first grade secondary students.
4. Preparing a listening comprehension pre-posttest in the light of the listening comprehension skills list.
5. Presenting the listening comprehension pre-posttest to the experts in the field of teaching English as a foreign language to verify its validity.
6. Verifying the reliability of the listening comprehension pre-posttest items using Alpha Cronbach.
7. Selecting the study sample from first grade secondary school in AL-Bukayriah.
8. Applying the listening comprehension pre-test to the two groups to identify the students' level in the identified listening comprehension skills.
9. Implementing the experiment using mental imagery strategy to the experimental group, while the control group was taught by using the traditional method which depends on listening to audio tape only.
10. Applying the listening post-test to the two groups to investigate the effectiveness of mental imagery strategy in developing the listening comprehension skills of the experimental group.
11. Analyzing the findings of the study statistically by using the T-test.
12. Discussing and interpreting the collected data.
13. Providing findings, recommendations, and suggestions for further studies.

### **Statistical Analysis**

To achieve the objectives of the study and to analyze the data collected, the study used a number of statistical methods through the statistical software package SPSS, which were as follows:

- Alpha Cronbach's reliability coefficient to ensure the reliability of the study tool.
- Independent-Sample T-test to find out the statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control and experimental groups in the pretest to ensure the equivalence of the two groups.

Independent-Sample T-test to find out the statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control and experimental groups in the post-test.

### **Findings of the Study**

#### **Findings of the first question:**

The first question is: What are the listening comprehension skills suitable for first-grade secondary students?

To answer this question, the researcher followed a set of procedures; including reviewing previous studies, and the opinion of specialists in teaching EFL. The sources and procedures for building the list were previously explained in the third chapter, and it included five skills as follows:

**Table The List of Listening Comprehension Skills**

	<b>Listening Comprehension Sub-Skills:</b>
<b>1</b>	Identifying the main idea of the listening text.
<b>2</b>	Finding specific information.
<b>3</b>	Guessing the meaning of new words based on the context.
<b>4</b>	Arranging ideas or events according to a given listening text.
<b>5</b>	Mentioning the characters according to the listening text.

#### **Findings of the second question:**

The second question is: What is the effectiveness of using mental imagery strategy in teaching a unit of English language course in developing listening comprehension skills among first-grade secondary students?

To answer this question, the following hypothesis was written:

There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the students in the experimental group and the scores of the control group in the results of the post-listening comprehension test in favor of the experimental group.

To test this hypothesis, (T) test was used for independent groups to identify the differences between the experimental and control groups in the post-test of the listening comprehension skills. The results were as follows:

**Table Results of the Independent Sample T-Test for the post-test**

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	T	Sig.
Experimental	28	7.1071	2.28261	54	3.989	0.000**
Control	28	4.7500	2.13654			

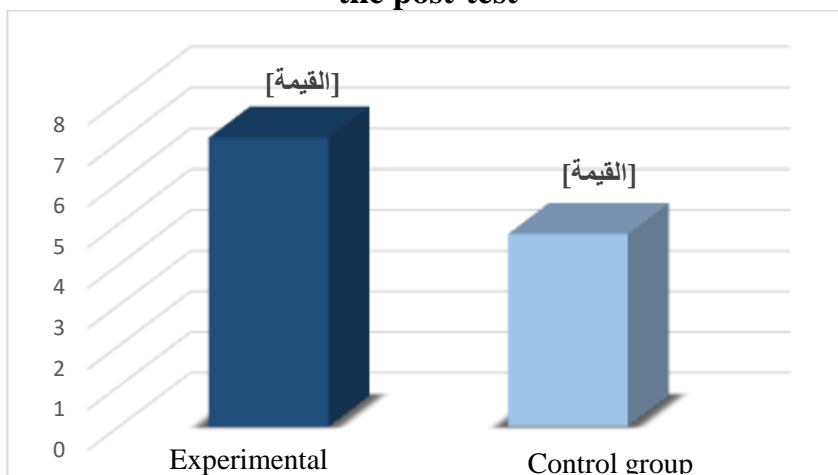
#### Significant differences at 0.01. level

Results in the previous table indicated that the (t) value is (3.989) and is significant at (0.01) level. These results showed that there are significant differences between the students' average scores in the experimental and control groups in the post-test in favor of the experimental group (see figure 2).



As a result, the researcher accepted the alternative hypothesis that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control group in the post-test, in favor of the experimental group.

**Figure 2 Differences between the results of the two groups in the post-test**



### **Summary of the Study and Findings:**

This study aimed to identify the effectiveness of using mental imagery strategy in developing Listening comprehension skills among first year secondary school female students.

The problem of the study was identified in the low level of first year secondary school female students in listening comprehension skills which prompted the researcher to conduct this study, which might contribute to overcome this problem by answering the following questions:

- What are the listening comprehension skills suitable for first-grade secondary students?
- What is the effectiveness of using mental imagery strategy in teaching a unit of English language course in developing

listening comprehension skills among first-grade secondary students?

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, answer its questions, and test its hypothesis; The researcher prepared a list of appropriate listening comprehension skills for first year secondary school students, and a test on listening comprehension skills, then the test was applied to the study sample, which consisted of (56) female first-year secondary school students. The study reached the following results:

- The study found five listening comprehension skills suitable for the first year of secondary school.
- There were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the post-test in favor of the experimental group.

#### **Study Recommendations:**

In light of the findings of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

- 1- Training English teachers to use mental imagery strategy in teaching listening comprehension skills.
- 2- EFL teachers should change their methods of teaching and select effective strategies which involve the students in the learning process and activate their role in the listening lessons.
- 3- Encouraging using strategies that enhance the student' self-learning during listening lessons such as: mental imagery in order to develop their listening comprehension.

#### **Study Suggestions:**

Based on the findings, and in light of the previous recommendations, the study suggests conducting the following studies:

1. Effectiveness of using mental imagery strategy in the development of other skills e.g. speaking, and writing skills.
2. The effect of using mental imagery strategy in developing students' attitudes towards studying English language.
3. A comparative study between effectiveness of using mental imagery strategy and one of the other teaching strategies in developing listening comprehension skills.

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