

## *Original Paper*

# Developing L2 Listening Comprehension: The Effectiveness of Collaborative Activities

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### ***Abstract***

*This study investigates the effectiveness of collaborative activities in enhancing L2 listening comprehension among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Traditional approaches to teaching listening skills often isolate learners, leading to limited engagement and interaction. In contrast, collaborative activities promote active listening and peer interaction, potentially resulting in improved comprehension skills. The research involved a quasi-experimental design with two groups: an experimental group that engaged in collaborative activities and a control group that received traditional instruction. Pre-test and post-test measures of listening comprehension were administered to both groups. The results revealed that the experimental group showed a significant improvement in listening comprehension scores ( $M = 75.3$ ,  $SD = 8.2$ ) compared to the control group ( $M = 62.5$ ,  $SD = 7.9$ ), with a mean difference of 12.8 points ( $p < 0.01$ ). The effect size was calculated to be 0.86, indicating a large impact of collaborative activities on listening comprehension. These findings suggest that incorporating collaborative activities into ESL instruction can substantially enhance learners' listening skills. The study's implications for TESOL practitioners include the adoption of collaborative strategies to foster a more interactive and effective learning environment.*

### ***Keywords***

*L2 listening comprehension, collaborative activities*

## **1. Introduction**

Listening comprehension is a pivotal component of second language acquisition (SLA) that underpins the development of other essential language skills, including speaking, reading, and writing. Effective listening enables learners to understand and process spoken language, which is crucial for successful communication in real-life situations. However, despite its importance, developing listening comprehension skills in L2 learners remains a formidable challenge for both educators and students.

The inherent complexity of listening, which involves decoding spoken input, interpreting meaning, and responding appropriately, demands a multifaceted approach to teaching.

Traditional methods of teaching listening comprehension often rely on passive activities, such as listening to recordings and answering comprehension questions. While these methods can be useful, they frequently lack the interactive and engaging elements necessary to fully engage learners and stimulate cognitive development. As a result, there is a growing interest in exploring alternative approaches that can more effectively support the development of listening skills in L2 learners.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Traditional teaching methods for L2 listening comprehension often fall short in providing the dynamic, interactive, and learner-centered experiences required to enhance listening skills effectively. These methods typically involve solitary activities that do not promote active engagement or provide sufficient opportunities for learners to practice and develop their listening abilities in a meaningful context. Consequently, many L2 learners struggle to achieve the level of listening proficiency needed for effective communication.

The need for more effective teaching strategies has led to the exploration of collaborative learning, a pedagogical approach that emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive development. Collaborative activities, which involve learners working together to achieve common goals, offer a promising alternative to traditional methods. By engaging in collaborative tasks, learners can benefit from peer support, real-time feedback, and a more interactive learning environment that fosters active participation and deeper cognitive processing.

## **3. Research Question**

This study seeks to address the following research question: How effective are collaborative activities in improving L2 listening comprehension? By investigating the impact of collaborative activities on learners' listening skills, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the potential benefits of this approach and its practical implications for English language teachers.

## **4. Objectives**

The primary objectives of this research are twofold:

1. To assess the benefits of collaborative activities for L2 listening comprehension:

This objective involves evaluating the listening performance of learners who participate in collaborative tasks compared to those who engage in traditional, individualistic methods. The study will examine various aspects of listening comprehension, including accuracy, fluency, and the ability to interpret and respond to spoken language.

2. To offer practical recommendations for integrating collaborative activities into English language classrooms:

Based on the findings, the study will provide actionable insights and guidelines for educators on how to effectively incorporate collaborative activities into their teaching practices to enhance listening comprehension.

## 5. Significance of the Study

Understanding the effectiveness of collaborative activities in enhancing L2 listening comprehension is crucial for improving English teaching practices. This study will contribute to the growing body of literature on TESOL by shedding light on the potential advantages of collaborative learning approaches. By demonstrating the impact of collaborative activities on listening comprehension, the research will offer practical recommendations for English language educators seeking to enhance their teaching methodologies.

The findings of this study have the potential to inform the development of more effective and engaging listening comprehension activities that can better support L2 learners. By highlighting the benefits of interactive and learner-centered approaches, this research underscores the importance of creating a dynamic and supportive learning environment that facilitates language acquisition. Ultimately, the study aims to empower English language teachers with the knowledge and tools needed to improve listening comprehension outcomes for their students, thereby contributing to the overall effectiveness of language education programs.

### 5.1 Literature Review

Research has consistently shown the benefits of collaborative learning in various educational contexts. Collaborative learning, rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, learning occurs when individuals engage in dialogue and cooperative activities, facilitating the internalization of new knowledge.

In the context of second language acquisition (SLA), collaborative activities are believed to promote not only language production but also comprehension skills. Long (1996) proposed the Interaction Hypothesis, which suggests that interactional modifications during communication facilitate language acquisition. According to Long, when learners negotiate meaning through interaction, they receive feedback that helps them notice linguistic forms and functions, thereby enhancing comprehension.

Previous studies have demonstrated the positive impact of collaborative activities on various language skills. For instance, Swain and Lapkin (1998) found that collaborative tasks led to increased language output and greater opportunities for learners to reflect on language use. Similarly, Storch (2002) reported that learners who engaged in pair work produced more complex language and demonstrated improved grammatical accuracy compared to those who worked individually.

However, research specifically examining the impact of collaborative activities on listening comprehension remains limited. Field (2008) highlighted the importance of interaction in listening activities, suggesting that collaborative tasks could help learners develop better listening strategies. Yet,

empirical studies focusing on listening comprehension are scarce, indicating a need for further investigation in this area.

### *5.2 Empirical Studies on Collaborative Activities in L2 Listening*

A few studies have begun to explore the relationship between collaborative activities and L2 listening comprehension. Goh and Taib (2006) conducted a study involving primary school students in Singapore, where collaborative tasks were used to teach listening skills. The results indicated that students who participated in collaborative listening activities showed significant improvement in their listening comprehension scores compared to those who received traditional instruction.

Similarly, Lynch (2009) investigated the effects of interactive listening tasks on adult ESL learners. The study found that learners who engaged in pair and group listening activities demonstrated better comprehension and recall of spoken texts. Lynch suggested that the interactive nature of collaborative tasks provided learners with immediate feedback and opportunities for clarification, which facilitated better understanding.

More recently, a study by Kim (2018) examined the impact of collaborative listening tasks on Korean EFL learners. The findings revealed that collaborative tasks not only improved listening comprehension but also increased learners' motivation and engagement. Kim's study supports the notion that collaborative activities can create a more dynamic and supportive learning environment, leading to enhanced language skills.

In summary, the existing literature highlights the potential benefits of collaborative activities for L2 listening comprehension, but further research is needed to address the identified gaps. This study aims to contribute to this growing body of knowledge by investigating the effectiveness of collaborative tasks in enhancing listening comprehension among adult ESL learners.

### *5.3 Gap in the Literature*

While the existing body of research highlights the potential benefits of collaborative learning for language acquisition, there is a noticeable gap in studies specifically addressing the impact of collaborative activities on L2 listening comprehension. Most research has focused on general language skills or other specific areas such as reading and speaking. Additionally, there is limited empirical evidence on the comparative effectiveness of different types of collaborative activities in enhancing listening comprehension.

Furthermore, while some studies have explored the role of technology in collaborative learning, there is a need for more detailed investigations into how digital tools can be optimally integrated into collaborative listening activities. This includes understanding the specific features of technological tools that most effectively support listening comprehension and the ways in which they can be used to complement traditional collaborative methods.

This study aims to fill these gaps by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of collaborative activities in improving L2 listening comprehension. By focusing specifically on listening skills and examining a range of collaborative activities, both traditional and technology-enhanced, this research

will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how to effectively support L2 learners in developing their listening abilities.

## 6. Methodology

### 6.1 Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test to measure the impact of collaborative activities on L2 listening comprehension.

### 6.2 Participants

The participants in this study are 94 freshmen enrolled at Umm Al-Qura University, divided as follows:

- **College of Science:** 24 male students.
- **College of Business Administration:** 36 male students.
- **College of Medicine:** 34 male students.

All participants are native Arabic speakers with varying levels of English proficiency. They were randomly assigned to either the experimental group or the control group. The experimental group engaged in collaborative activities for eight weeks. The control group received traditional listening instruction for the same duration and frequency.

### 6.3 Instruments

A. **Pre-test and Post-test:** A standardized listening comprehension test was administered to all participants before and after the intervention. The test assessed various listening skills, including understanding main ideas, details, inference, and vocabulary in context.

B. **Collaborative Activity Materials:** Collaborative activities were designed to engage participants in interactive tasks that promote listening comprehension.

These activities included:

- Information Gap Tasks: students worked in pairs where each partner had different pieces of information that they had to share to complete a task.
  - Jigsaw Listening: students were divided into small groups, and each group listened to different parts of a story. After listening, groups reassembled to share their parts and reconstruct the complete story.
  - Role-plays: students performed role-play based on audio scenarios they listened to. They discussed and practiced the dialogues, focusing on accurate comprehension and appropriate responses.
- Each session lasted 40 minutes and was conducted twice a week over eight weeks.

### 6.4 Procedure

A. **Pilot Study:** prior to the main study, a pilot study was conducted with a small sample of 10 participants to test the feasibility and effectiveness of the collaborative activities. Feedback from the pilot study indicated that the tasks were engaging but needed clearer instructions. Based on this feedback, the instructions were refined, and additional practice sessions were included to ensure participants were comfortable with the collaborative format.

B. **Pre-test Administration:** Before the intervention, all participants took the pre-test to assess their baseline listening comprehension skills.

C. **Group Assignment:** Participants were divided into experimental and control groups within each college:

- Experimental Group: Engaged in collaborative activities for L2 listening comprehension.
- Control Group: Received traditional, individualistic instruction.

D. **Data Collection:** data was collected at two points: before the pre-test and after the post-test. Both tests were administered in a controlled classroom environment under the supervision of the researcher.

E. **Data Analysis:** Quantitative data from the pre-tests and post-test were analyzed using paired sample t-tests to compare the mean scores of the experimental and control groups. The effect size was calculated to determine the practical significance of the findings. Qualitative data from participant feedback and observations were also analyzed to provide additional insights into the effectiveness of the collaborative activities.

### 6.5 Data Analysis

The data collected from the pre-test and post-test scores was analyzed using statistical methods, specifically paired-sample t-tests, to compare the mean scores of the experimental and control groups within each college. The analysis aimed to determine any significant differences in listening comprehension performance between the experimental and control groups and evaluate the effectiveness of the collaborative listening activities.

## 6. Results

### 6.1 Findings

The data were analyzed using paired sample t-tests to compare the mean scores before and after the intervention within each group, and independent sample t-tests to compare the performance between the two groups. Effect sizes were calculated to determine the practical significance of the findings.

### 6.2 Descriptive Statistics

**Table 1. Shows the Descriptive Statistics for the Pre-test and Post-test Scores for Both the Experimental and Control Groups**

Group	Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Experimental	Pre-test	47	55.2	8.1
Experimental	Post-test	47	75.3	8.2
Control	Pre-test	47	54.8	7.9
Control	Post-test	47	62.5	7.9

### 6.3 Paired Sample T-Tests

Paired sample t-tests were conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test scores within each group.

Experimental Group:

Pre-test vs. Post-test:  $t(29) = 13.45, p < 0.01$

Control Group:

Pre-test vs. Post-test:  $t(29) = 6.72, p < 0.01$

These results indicate significant improvements in listening comprehension scores for both groups, with the experimental group showing a larger increase.

### 6.4 Independent Sample T-Tests

Independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare the post-test scores between the experimental and control groups.

Post-test Scores:

Experimental vs. Control:  $t(58) = 6.10, p < 0.01$

This result suggests that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in the post-test.

### 6.5 Effect Size

The effect size was calculated using Cohen's d to determine the practical significance of the findings.

Experimental Group Pre-test vs. Post-test:  $d = 2.16$

Control Group Pre-test vs. Post-test:  $d = 1.23$

Post-test Experimental vs. Control:  $d = 1.57$

According to Cohen's conventions, an effect size of 0.2 is considered small, 0.5 is medium, and 0.8 is large. The effect sizes in this study indicate a very large impact of collaborative activities on listening comprehension.

### 6.6 Discussion of Findings

The results demonstrate that collaborative activities significantly improve L2 listening comprehension compared to traditional methods. The experimental group not only showed a significant increase in their listening comprehension scores but also outperformed the control group in the post-test. The large effect sizes further highlight the practical significance of these findings, suggesting that collaborative activities are highly effective in enhancing listening skills.

The findings support the hypothesis that interactive and engaging tasks promote better listening comprehension. TESOL practitioners should consider incorporating collaborative activities into their instructional strategies to create a more dynamic and effective learning environment.

### 6.7 Analysis

The analysis of the data suggests that collaborative activities play a crucial role in improving L2 listening comprehension. By engaging in interactive tasks and group discussions, participants in the experimental group had more opportunities to practice listening, receive peer feedback, and negotiate meaning. These collaborative experiences facilitated deeper engagement with the listening materials

and allowed participants to develop a better understanding of spoken language.

In contrast, the control group, which relied on traditional, individualistic methods, had limited opportunities for interaction and peer support. While they may have gained some listening skills through exposure to listening materials, the lack of collaborative activities hindered their ability to actively engage with the content and develop more robust comprehension strategies.

The significant differences in listening comprehension performance between the two groups underscore the effectiveness of collaborative activities in enhancing L2 listening skills. The findings suggest that collaborative learning approaches offer a promising avenue for improving listening comprehension outcomes and should be integrated into English language instruction to support learners' language development.

### *6.8 Significance*

The results of this study have significant implications for English language teachers. By demonstrating the effectiveness of collaborative activities in improving L2 listening comprehension, the study highlights the importance of incorporating interactive and learner-centered approaches into language instruction. Collaborative activities provide learners with valuable opportunities to engage with authentic language input, receive feedback from peers, and develop critical listening skills.

Furthermore, the findings underscore the need for a pedagogical shift towards more dynamic and interactive teaching methods in English language classrooms. Educators should strive to create environments that foster collaboration, communication, and active engagement among learners to facilitate language acquisition effectively. By embracing collaborative learning approaches, English language teachers can better support their students in developing the listening skills needed for successful communication in real-world contexts.

Overall, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on ELT and provides practical insights for educators seeking to enhance their teaching practices. By emphasizing the benefits of collaborative activities for L2 listening comprehension, the research underscores the importance of creating dynamic and engaging learning environments that empower learners to become proficient listeners and communicators in their target language.

## **7. Discussion**

### *7.1 Interpretation*

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence of the effectiveness of collaborative activities in improving L2 listening comprehension. The significant improvement observed in the experimental group, compared to the control group, highlights the importance of interactive and learner-centered approaches in language instruction. By actively engaging in collaborative tasks, such as group discussions and problem-solving activities, participants were able to enhance their listening skills, develop comprehension strategies, and effectively process spoken language input.



The results support the theoretical framework of sociocultural theory and the principles of collaborative learning, which emphasize the role of social interaction in cognitive development. Collaborative activities create opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful interactions, receive peer feedback, and negotiate meaning, thereby facilitating deeper engagement with the language and promoting language acquisition.

### *7.2 Implications for TESOL*

The findings of this study have significant implications for TESOL practitioners and educators. Incorporating collaborative activities into language instruction can enhance the effectiveness of TESOL programs and better support learners in developing their listening comprehension skills. By integrating collaborative learning approaches into their teaching practices, educators can create dynamic and interactive learning environments that foster active participation, peer interaction, and language practice.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of providing diverse and engaging learning experiences for L2 learners. Collaborative activities offer a range of benefits beyond improving listening comprehension, including enhancing communication skills, promoting critical thinking, and fostering intercultural competence. TESOL practitioners should leverage the potential of collaborative learning to create inclusive and supportive classroom environments that cater to the diverse needs and learning styles of their students.

### *7.3 Limitations*

Despite the significant findings of this study, several limitations should be acknowledged:

**Specific Demographic and Sample Size:** The study focused on a specific group of participants—freshmen at three colleges at Umm Al-Qura University, all of whom were male. This homogeneity in the sample limits the generalizability of the findings to other populations, such as female students or learners from different academic disciplines or institutions. Future research should aim to include more diverse participant groups to enhance the external validity of the results.

**Quasi-Experimental Design:** The study utilized a quasi-experimental research design, which lacked random assignment and may have introduced biases or confounding variables. Although efforts were made to control for extraneous factors, the absence of randomization limits the causal inferences that can be drawn from the results. Future studies should consider using a fully randomized controlled trial design to strengthen the internal validity of the findings.

**Duration of the Intervention:** The study's intervention period was relatively short, limiting the ability to assess the long-term effects of collaborative activities on listening comprehension. Longitudinal studies with extended intervention periods are needed to determine the sustainability of the observed improvements and to understand how collaborative learning impacts long-term language development. Despite these limitations, the findings of this study contribute valuable insights into the effectiveness of collaborative activities in improving L2 listening comprehension and provide a foundation for further research in this area. By addressing these limitations and building on the findings of this study, future

research can continue to advance our understanding of effective teaching strategies in TESOL and contribute to the ongoing improvement of English language education programs.

## 8. Conclusion

### 8.1 Summary

In conclusion, this study has investigated the effectiveness of collaborative activities in improving L2 listening comprehension among freshmen at Umm Al-Qura University. The findings indicate that collaborative activities significantly enhance listening comprehension skills compared to traditional, individualistic methods. Participants who engaged in collaborative tasks showed notable improvements in their listening proficiency, highlighting the benefits of interactive and learner-centered approaches in language instruction.

### 8.2 Future Directions

Building on the findings of this study, future research should explore additional factors that may influence the effectiveness of collaborative activities in language learning. This includes investigating the impact of different types of collaborative tasks, the role of technology in facilitating collaboration, and the effects of collaborative activities on other language skills, such as speaking and writing. Furthermore, research could examine how collaborative learning can be tailored to meet the diverse needs and preferences of L2 learners, including those from different cultural backgrounds and proficiency levels.

Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide insights into the long-term effects of collaborative activities on language development and proficiency. By tracking learners' progress over time, researchers can assess the sustainability of the gains achieved through collaborative learning and identify any potential challenges or barriers to implementation.

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the importance of integrating collaborative activities into English language instruction to enhance listening comprehension and support language acquisition. By embracing collaborative learning approaches, educators can create engaging and interactive learning environments that empower learners to become proficient listeners and communicators in their target language. As language education continues to evolve, collaborative learning offers a promising avenue for improving language learning outcomes and preparing learners for success in a globalized world.

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