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MOBILE MEDIATED LISTENING SKILL INSTRUCTION EFFECTS ON STUDENTS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION AND MOTIVATION

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Abstract

The study investigated mobile-mediated listening instruction (MMLI) effects on students' listening comprehension and motivation. Quasi-experimental non-randomized groups' pre-test-post-test research design was adapted. Two groups with 30 students were considered as experimental group and control group. MMLI approach was applied to the experimental group, and conventional approach was used to teach the control group. Tests and questionnaires were employed to collect quantitative data. Statistical tools such as independent sample t-test, paired samples t-test, chi-square, and Spearman's rho correlation were computed for the analysis. The results showed that MMLI approach had a strong and significant effect on students' listening comprehension. A statistically significant difference was confirmed between the experimental and control groups in terms of their listening comprehension and motivation levels. There was a positive and statistically significant relationship between achievement and motivation of the two groups, with a strong effect size. It was concluded that the MMLI approach is an alternative in mediating students' listening skills learning and increasing their motivation. Mobile technology is the opportunity to reconsider listening skills instruction in the technological era. Besides, M-learning platform package that incorporates text, audio, and tasks is believed to be designed to make students learn listening skills in their own time and pace.

Keywords: comprehension, mediation, mobile, motivation

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Introduction

The worldwide function of the English language encourages non-English-speaking countries like Ethiopia to use it as a medium of instruction. Besides, it is believed that learning English language is very important as it is the medium through which accessing the modern world is possible. Understanding this function, English is taught as a subject from grade one, and it is used as a medium of instruction from grade nine through colleges and universities nationwide in Ethiopia (Eba, 2013). In light of this fact, the language is offered as a common course and as a field of study in Ethiopian universities aiming at developing students' English language communication proficiency focusing on the teaching of English language skills, one of which is listening. About listening skills learning, Morley (2001) highlights its importance saying that listening is the skill we first experience in life and has a significant role in one's successful communication and academic achievement.

According to Rivers and Weaver "In fact, more than any other single language skill, listening is used twice as much as speaking, four times more than reading, and five times more than writing on average in a normal daily life"(as cited in Morley, 2001, p.70). Hamouda (2013) and Pourhosein and Banou (2016) also claimed that listening skill is a very important receptive skill that facilitates language learning by providing comprehensible input for learners, and it plays a vital role in developing learners' English language skills.
It is for this aim that today's schools and universities offer different English languagecourses to deve lop students' communicative skills through the instruction of English language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing as well as grammar and vocabulary; however, listening skills instruction is not practical in English as a foreign language (EFL) class as it is supposed to be. As Tekabe (2009) noted, the listening skills teaching materials are inadequate, and most of them are not aided by recorded texts. Thus, students' actual listening ability is below the expected level. Similarly, from the researcher's lived experiences, it has been informally observed that university students do have a lack of English language listening skills competence. This might happen because of various hindrances. Some of these might be poor English language teaching approaches and a lack of supplementary listening skills teaching materials such as audio and appropriate listening instruction devices. For this reason, the researcher has been motivated to undertake this study and indicate some alternatives so that listening skills instruction can be reconsidered. Lai and Li (2011) suggested that exposing EFL learners to technology-mediated English language learning is one way to improve, motivate, and engage students in language learning lessons (Ghalami & Ahangari, 2012). As Ellis (1997) stated, most importantly, for students to increase their language learning interest and need, utilizing appropriate EFL learning approaches and technologies is crucial; this motivates them to learn and practice English language skills frequently. To bring this, providing ample opportunities for technology-assisted language learning for students plays a great role. Mobile phone is one of the digital world technologies that may contribute to students' learning of listening skills to eventually improve their English language proficiency in general.

Therefore, it is with this assumption that this study aimed to investigate MMLI effects on students' listening comprehension and motivation from the perspective of Vygotsky's theory of mediation by focusing on the following research questions. (1) Does mobile phone-

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mediated listening instruction significantly affect students' listening comprehension? (2) Is there any significant difference between MMLI group and control group in their listening comprehension? (3) Is there any significant difference between MMLI group and control group in their motivation?, and (4) Is there any significant relationship between students' achievement and their motivation?

Literature Review

One of the main concepts of Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory is that the mind is mediated through three kinds of mediators, including material tools psychological tools (language), and other human beings. This means the individuals do not establish a direct relationship with the world unless these mediators help them create a relationship with the world in general and with their surrounding environment in particular (Nieto, 2011). Motteram (2013) also pointed out that when Vygotsky began his explorations that led to the development of socio-cultural theory, he was interested in 'tool', and this is often interpreted in the technological world to mean technology tools: from sticks to the latest technology and mobile phones, and these devices are certainly forms of tools that are decisive. Thus, mobile phone is the sticks for the modern world, in that they can be used by pupil to mediate their learning.

Therefore, mediation can be used here to mean objects that engage the learner in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). According to Vygotsky, the distance between a child's actual developmental levels determined by independent problem-solving is referred to as ZPD. It is also the higher level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under the guidance of humans or by using meditating tools" (Vygotsky, as cited in Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev & Miller, 2003). In the area of education, it is believed that this mediation bridges the gap between what students need and what they can accomplish independently, and this mediation is accomplished in the Zone of Proximal Development. Hence, mediation in terms of the Vygotskian perspective was considered and used as a framework for this study.

Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) and some empirical studies

Mobile learning is a form of learning that happens when mediated through mobile devices; a form of learning that facilitates students' learning and access to educational materials using mobile devices. Thus, this learning approach is commonly connected to mobile technology's function, particularly mobile phones (Cakir, 2015). Some studies have sought to explore how mobile technology benefits and challenges language learners by measuring learners' perceptions or specific language learning insights made through mobile device use. These studies have focused on specific contexts, mobile device use, and language skills. Among these, Demouy and Kukulska-Hulme (2010) studied experiences of students in using their own portable devices which means mobile phones to access listening and speaking practices for further exercises. It was suggested that for the support of students' practice of listening and speaking effectively on their own time and place, the appropriate use of mobile devices can play a vital role. Hence, it can be concluded that MALL is beginning to shift language learning from a traditional teacher-centered model to something that can provide learners with opportunities to work individually and collaboratively in problem-solving and meaningful negotiation.

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Similarly, Park and Slater (2014) conducted need analysis on language learners' real-world tasks that can be offered to employ mobile-assisted language learning (MALL). This study aimed to provide insight into the future development of pedagogic tasks that help learn English language via mobile devices. That is task-based language learning which suits the mobile-assisted language learning approach.

MALL: Its merits and limitations

Mobile phone is a modern and most powerful communication medium. It is more comfortable than email or chat as it might be considered a learning device. Students can manage and follow up on their learning process and their progress in their own space and time if they are adequately informed. This facilitates learners' access materials based on their learning needs with such a learning device. Learning through mobile phones or m-learning also provides an opportunity to learn individually for students so that they can learn every time and everywhere for they carry the device personally in their pocket (Miangah & Nezarat, 2012). Mobile learning, therefore, can also have advantages in creating quick and simple interactions with pupils and technology, and it provides flexible materials that can be accessed in different contexts (Rahimi & Soleymani, 2015).

Although learning service through mobile devices has some advantages, it has some limitations; as Miangah and Nezarat (2012) indicated, the device has some limitations as a small screen and reading difficulty. This is because most mobile devices are not designed for educational purposes, and it might be difficult for the learners to use mobile phones for the task to be carried out. Furthermore, students may not purchase mobile phones that are appropriate for specific learning tasks because of their high price.

Motivation

Initiation, direction, intensity, persistence, and quality of behavior, especially goal-directed behavior are theoretical constructs that are used to explain motivation (Brophy, 2010). Motivation is a theoretical concept used to explain why people do something and what they want to do. As Brophy (2010) explained motivation for learning differs from intrinsic which means enjoyment-driven motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to learners personally involved in learning activity because of internal reinforcement. It is the desire to engage learners in a task purely to participate in and complete a task to develop their language learning. It is because of this the students who are intrinsically motivated can understand and retain the concepts from the lessons learned, and they feel confident enough about learning even in unfamiliar learning situations and environments (Ellis, 1997).

The intrinsic motivation concepts including perceived ability, effort, concern of future consequences, self-regulation, persistence, choice and initiative, and the use of deep cognitive processes of learners correlate with their achievement if they are adequately practiced (Brophy, 2010; Thanh & Huan, 2012). Hence, students' intrinsic motivation is considered as a dependent variable in this study, and it has been determined using intrinsic motivation inventory questionnaire that was adapted from (Choi et al., 2010). The Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) is a measurement device that help assesses participants' experiences related to a target task during experiments. This

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tool is used to determine participants' interest/enjoyment, effort, and value/usefulness towards MMLI approach during the experiment.

Methodology

Research design and approach of the study

A quasi experimental non randomized control group pretest posttest research design was adap ted in this study because a popular approach to quasi-experimental is assigning data sources without randomization (Creswell, 2009). This design helped the researcher to take the data sources without random assignment. Two groups were selected: Group 1 as an experimental group and group 2 as a control group. Based on Levy and Ellis (2011) model of comparison, Group1 took treatment, whereas the control group (Group 2), is the group that did not take the treatment and served as the benchmarking point of comparison. At the beginning of the treatment, both groups (group 1 and group 2) might show similar performance in the pre-test; however, in the post test the groups may (may not) show differences.

Sample, research instruments, and materials

The study involved the first-year undergraduate pre-engineering students taking communicative English skills at Adama Science and Technology University in the 2020/21 academic year. Among 32 sections, two groups such as G13 and G26 which have 30 students each were sampled as an MMLI group and control group respectively using a non-random sampling technique. Teacher-made pre-tests and post-tests were utilized to investigate students' listening comprehension. A motivation inventory questionnaire was employed to determine the participants' motivation level they showed for the MMLI approach. In this study, materials refer to mobile phones, listening texts, audio, and tasks used during the study. For the experimental group even though students have mobile phones, using their own mobile phones during the intervention might cause contamination. Therefore, to control this, 30 affordable mobile phones were purchased and used. Concerning the listening tasks, texts that suit MMLI were adapted and converted into audio using text to audio converter software considering the contents of the existing materials used for control group to prepare similar materials. The material for the control group was the existing listening skills instructional material that was assisted by the conventional teaching devices (speakers) and the contents of the materials that was used for control group is similar with the contents of the materials that were adapted for experimental groups.

Reliability and validity of the instruments and materials

Based on Muijs (2004) suggestion, test-retest was conducted within two-week intervals to check pre-test and post-test items independently on 27 students who were not considered in the main study. Pearson's correlation reveals fairly high reliability is 0.811 and 0.797 for pre and post-test, respectively. To analyze the reliability of the motivation inventory questionnaire, Cronbach's

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Alpha was computed; the internal consistency of all items in the questionnaire was at a reasonably high level depicting 0.84.

Besides, before conducting the study, test items, questionnaire items, and the material that was used for intervention were reviewed and assessed by scholars in the area to ascertain their validity. The relevance of the material and tasks, their suitability to the research goals and objectives and arrangement of questions, was commented as well. Taking their comments into consideration, the necessary modifications were made before applying the material and the data gathering instruments during the actual study.

Procedure and methods of data analysis

The teachers were consulted to schedule the date for activities such as administering pre-test, posttest, questionnaire and the treatment schedule. The pretest was administered first to verify the two groups' initial homogeneity. Then, the lessons were offered for the experimental group for one semester. The control group students were directed to the conventional device (speaker) assisted listening instruction approach using the existing listening instruction material for one semester as well. During the intervention, the audios were uploaded to each mobile device in advance; then, the mobiles were taken to the students' listening instruction classroom. Following the intervention, a post-test and questionnaire were administered. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS21) software was used for the analysis of quantitative data using inferential statistical tools. This includes paired samples t-tests; independent samples t-tests, chi-square, and Spearman's rho correlation.

Results

In table 1 the independent samples test reveals (P= 0.978, t=0.28, df= 58); from this it was confirmed that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups at 0.05 of alpha level. Therefore, it can be noted that the experimental and control group performance in the pre-test is similar at the entry level since the p-value (0.978) is greater than 0.05. However, the independent samples t-test shows (P= 0.000, t=4.494, df= 58) which indicates a statistically significant difference between the two groups meaning, p-value (0.000) is less than the 0.05 alpha levels; hence, there is a significant difference between the experimental and the control groups in their post-test listening comprehension. From the results of the test analysis, listening comprehension performance of students in the experimental group increased significantly. In contrast, the listening comprehension improvement of the students in the control group is insignificant because the students in the control group did not get the exposure to MMLI that the experimental group treated with.

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Table 1. *Independent samples t-test that reveals initial homogeneity and or differences between the experimental group and control group*

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means								
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean D/ce	Std. Error D/ce	95% Confidence Interval of the D/ce Lower	Upper
Pre-test score	Equal variances assumed	.568	.454	.028	58	.978	.05767	2.06088	-4.06763	4.18296
Post-test score	Equal variances assumed	6.710	.012	4.949	58	.000	8.90033	1.79832	5.30060	12.50007

Table 2. *Paired samples t-test results about effects of MMLI on students' listening comprehension*

		Paired Differences					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Dv/n	sd Err M/n	95% Confidence Interval of the D/ce Lower	Upper			
Pair1	Post-test score. Pre-test score	14.54067	9.75480	1.78097	10.89816	18.18317	8.164	29	.000

The analysis of the paired sample T-test was computed to test the effect that MMLI has brought on the students' listening comprehension. This was done in comparing the pre-treatment test scores and the post-treatment test scores of the MMLI group. In Table 2, the statistical figures depict that (P=0.000, t=8.164, df= 29). Specifically, the p-value shows 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Consequently, it can be said that MMLI approach has a significant effect on listening comprehension of the MMLI group students. However, recognizing the significant effect based on p-value (0.000) does not specify whether this effect is strong or weak. Hence, to determine the strength or the effect size $Cohen's\ D$ was calculated based on the output statistics in Table 3 below.

Table 3. *Mean and standard deviation to check the effects size (strength) that MMLI had on students' listening comprehension*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Post test score	74.9263	30	5.15645	.94143
	Pre-test score	60.3857	30	8.99021	1.64138

D= M1 - M2 / spooled, where M1 is mean score of post-tests, and M2 is mean score of protest
- spooled is Std. Deviation1 + Std. Deviation2/2

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Therefore, $74.9263 - 60.3857/5.15645 + 8.99021/2 = \frac{14.5676}{7.07333} = 2.05$
As Cohen's D (2.05) reveals, MMLI had a strong effect on students' listening comprehension; it is because the Cohen's D (2.05) resultis greater than 1.00. To determine the effect size or to say either strong or weak, the cut-off points such as 0–0.20 = weak effect, 0.21–0.50 = modest effect, 0.51–1.00 = moderate effect, and >1.00 = are considered as parameters (Muijs 2004).

Table 4. *Differences or similarities between MMLI group and control group in terms of motivation*

Chi-Square Tests	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.306[a]	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	17.280	2	.000
N of Valid Cases	56		

The analysis of Pearson Chi-Square was computed to check the statistical significance level of MMLI group and control group, considering their motivation level. With this intent, the Chi-square was run, and it revealed that (chi-square = 17.877a, df = 2, p = 0.000) or chi-square =17.877 with 2 degrees of freedom at $p < 0.05$ level of significance. Thus, based on the results in Table 4, it can be said that there is a statistically significant difference between MMLI group and control group in their motivation; this is because the p-value is less than 0.05. However, the chi-square tests do not indicate how strong the difference was. Therefore, the different measure is required to look at the strength or the effect size of the difference. The effect size for the chi-square test, which is called phi, is calculated below to determine the effect size (see table 5 below).

Table 5. *The strength or weakness of the difference between MMLI group and control group in terms of motivation*

Symmetric Measures		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by	Phi	.546	.000
Ordinal	Cramer's V	.546	.000
N of Valid Cases		60	

According to Muijs (2004, p. 126), the cut-off points such as <0.1 weak,<0.3 modest, <0.5 moderate, <0.8 strong, and ≥ 0.8 very strong are considered to say the difference is either strong or weak, and moderate or modest. Hence, based on these cut-off points, the statistical difference between the MMLI group and control groups in terms of motivation is strong as the phi-test result (0.546) confirms.

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Table 6. *The relationship between achievement and motivation for mobile-mediated group and control group*

			Post-test score	Intrinsic Motivation
Spearman's rho	Post-test score	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.579**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	60	60
	Intrinsic Motivation	Correlation Coefficient	.579**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	60	60

Spearman's rho correlation coefficient (r) has been computed to see if mobile mediated and control group's achievement (score) and motivation have a relationship. As can be seen from the correlation coefficient (r=.579**) and p-value (0.000) in Table 6, there is a positive and a statistically significant relationship between students' achievements and their motivation with strong effect size as the cut-off points (<0.+/–1 weak,<0.+/–3 modest,<0.+/–5 moderate,<0.+/–8 strong ≥=+/–0.8 very strong. From this, it can be implied that as achievement increases motivation also increases and vice-versa.

Discussion

The results confirmed that MMLI had a strong and significant effect on students' listening comprehension as Cohen's D (2.05) and p-value (0.000) reveal. There is also a statistically significant difference between MMLI group and the control group in terms of their listening comprehension score and motivation level for p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05 in both cases. This finding coincides with the findings of the previous study (Park & Slater, 2014; Thabit & Dehlawi, 2012) that confirmed that MALL facilitated language learning; particularly, for listening and speaking skills. These findings also support the expression that claims the motivated student is involved and engaged in the processes of carrying out a task (Brophy, 2010). The intrinsically motivated student is more likely to retain the concepts learned and to feel confident about tackling tasks even in unfamiliar learning situations to achieve better (Ellis, 1997).

However, this finding is dissimilar from Miangah's and Nezarat's (2012) view that they assert mobile devices are not designed for educational purposes, and it might be difficult for the learners to use mobile phones for the task to be carried out. Thus, this result appeared to contradict the view that claims mobile phones are not appropriate devices to use for education purposes. The result of this study implies that mobile mediated listening instruction approach seemed to facilitate students' listening skills learning though the initial design of mobile devices is not for educational purposes. The approach also appeared to increase students' motivation levels. The approach might help the MMLI group students to increase their listening comprehension and motivation level compared to their previous performance and motivation. Concerning the participants' achievement and

motivation relationship, positive and a statistically significant relationship with a strong effect size was confirmed as the correlation coefficient(r=.579**) and the p-value (p=.000) show. This coincides with the works of literature that claim students' motivation, self-regulation and persistence correlate with the use of deep cognitive processes that is an achievement (Thanh & Huan, 2012). This implies that as achievement increases, motivation also increases or vice-versa, and that is to say one variable presupposes the other variable.

Conclusion

As the preceding section clarifies, mobile phone mediated listening instruction approach had a strong and significant effect on students' listening comprehension. This approach also resulted in increased students' motivation. Meaning, that the findings confirm Vygotsky's mediation theory that claims tools (mobile phones) can mediate students and their learning. From this, one can conclude that the approach appeared to contribute to the development of students listening skills and the improvement of their motivation because the approach may meet the 21st century students' learning needs as they are technological era students. Thus, employing MMLI for listening skills learning appears to be an alternative in which listening skills are reconsidered. This device is accessible so that students can learn listening skills via their own mobile phones in both classrooms and outside the classroom. Instructors can leave students with audio and take the assignment as appropriate in addition to classroom practices. This extends the opportunity of listening skills learning as equal as learning reading, grammar, and vocabularies at home in their own time and pace. What is more, confirming the educational advantages of MMLI is an indicator to design a package of M-learning platforms that incorporates text, audio, and tasks to make listening skills learning more practical. Further research can also be conducted in the future to check the effectiveness of mobile phones in teaching other English language skills.

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Competing interest

The authors have declared that there is no competing interest.

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