EXPLORING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING ARABIC LISTENING COMPREHENSION SKILL

Menerokai Pengalaman Guru Dalam Pengajaran Kemahiran Pemahaman Mendengar Bahasa Arab

[1]*Nazihah Ahmad Kamel*, & [2]*Assoc. Prof. Dr. Arifin Mamat*
[1]*Sekolah Izzuddin Shah*
[2]*International Islamic University of Malaysia*

Corresponding author: nazihahahmadkamel@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Listening plays a crucial role in fostering proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing. Despite its pivotal role as the foundational skill in language acquisition, there has been limited investigation into the experiences of educators in Malaysia regarding the teaching of Arabic listening comprehension skill. This gap in research presents a significant problem, as the lack of emphasis on listening comprehension can impede students' overall language proficiency. Therefore, this research aims to delve into the perspectives of secondary school teachers on Arabic listening comprehension and their instructional methods in this area. This will offer valuable insights for enhancing the effectiveness of teaching listening skills. Four participants, including one male and three female teachers, were interviewed using a semi-structured approach, selected through purposive sampling based on their extensive experience of over three years in teaching Arabic. Qualitative analysis was employed to dissect the gathered data, employing thematic analysis to discern prevalent themes and patterns. The findings unveiled five predominant teaching methodologies: elaboration, exercises, discussion, the audio-lingual method (repetition drill), and Total Physical Response (TPR). Nonetheless, further exploration is warranted to scrutinize the impact of teaching Arabic listening comprehension skill on students.

Keywords: Arabic listening comprehension skill, teaching Arabic, second language, teaching methodologies.

ABSTRAK

Mendengar memainkan peranan penting dalam perkembangan kemahiran bertutur, membaca, dan menulis. Walaupun ia memainkan peranan penting sebagai kemahiran asas dalam penguasaan bahasa, kajian terhadap pengalaman pendidik di Malaysia berkaitan pengajaran kemahiran pemahaman mendengar Bahasa Arab masih lagi terhad. Jurang dalam penyelidikan ini menimbulkan masalah yang ketara, kerana kekurangan penekanan terhadap kemahiran pemahaman mendengar boleh menghalang penguasaan bahasa Arab murid secara kesuluruhannya. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyelami pandangan guru sekolah menengah tentang pemahaman mendengar Bahasa Arab dan kaedah pengajaran mereka dalam bidang ini. Ini akan memberikan maklumat yang berharga bagi meningkatkan keberkesanan pengajaran kemahiran mendengar. Empat peserta, termasuk seorang guru lelaki dan tiga guru perempuan, telah ditemu bual secara separa struktur, dipilih melalui persampelan bertujuan berdasarkan pengalaman mereka yang luas selama lebih dari tiga tahun dalam pengajaran Bahasa Arab. Analisis kualitatif digunakan untuk menganalisis data yang diperoleh, dengan megaplikasikan analisis tematik untuk mengenal pasti tema-tema dominan dan corak yang lazim. Hasil kajian menemukan lima metodologi pengajaran utama yang digunakan oleh guru-guru: elaborasi, latihan, perbincangan, kaedah audio-lingual (pengulangan berulang), dan Tindak Balas Fizikal Total

(TPR). Walau bagaimanapun, penyelidikan lanjut diperlukan untuk menyiasat kesan pengajaran kemahiran pemahaman mendengar Bahasa Arab terhadap murid.

Kata kunci: kemahiran pemahaman mendengar Bahasa Arab, pengajaran Bahasa Arab, bahasa kedua, metodologi pengajaran.

INTRODUCTION

The instruction of Arabic as a Second Language (ASL) in Malaysian secondary schools is impacted by the nature of high-stakes assessments, which traditionally prioritize reading, writing, and speaking, while overlooking listening skill. Historically, listening has been undervalued compared to writing, reading, and speaking. Nunan (1997) once referred to listening as a 'Cinderella Skill', drawing a parallel to Cinderella's passive role in the fairytale, lacking a voice. Consequently, due to this oversight in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), many contemporary students lack proficient listening skill and respond passively to auditory stimuli (Al-khresheh, 2020; Ali, 2020). Listening plays a pivotal role in SLA, as emphasized by Talebinejad and Akhgar (2015), who argue for its increased emphasis among the four SLA skills. It is a crucial component for effective human interaction, with researchers demonstrating its significant impact on students' mastery of other language skills (Bozorgian, 2012). Recent studies highlight the substantial portion of communication time dedicated to listening, underscoring its paramount importance (Mendelsohn, 1994, as cited in Szczpaniak, Pathan, & Soomro, 2013). Kurita (2012) unequivocally asserts that "Listening comprehension is at the heart of language learning" (p.30).

While numerous studies in English as a Second Language literature underscore the significance of listening in English learning, only a limited number have investigated these aspects within the realm of Arabic as a second language. Moreover, scant attention has been paid to how Malaysian instructors teaching Arabic as a second language address listening skill. Hassan Basri (2005) observed a lack of emphasis on listening and speaking skills among many teachers, who often perceive these skills as less important. This perspective is partly shaped by the predominant focus on reading and writing in the teaching of Arabic as a Second Language (ASL) in Malaysian secondary schools, largely due to examination requirements (Razali, 2020). Considering the lack of studies regarding this issue from the perspective of Malaysian Arabic secondary high school teachers and how critical it is to know how the teachers teach listening as listening plays a big role in improving the other three language skills, this study contributes to the literature by making in-depth research on teachers' experience in teaching Arabic listening comprehension skills in order to understand on what is needed to improve students' comprehension skills.

Additionally, this study explores Malaysian teachers' approaches to teaching Arabic listening skill. Sueraya (2013) examined learners' perspectives on teaching methodologies used to teach Arabic speaking skill at the Centre for Foundation Studies (CFS) at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM). The findings revealed that learners were dissatisfied with the emphasis on memorization. They expressed a preference for communicative approaches that facilitate application, correction, and improvement. While several studies have explored the teaching of Arabic speaking skill in Malaysia, few have delved into how Malaysian instructors specifically tackle Arabic listening skill in the classroom. The researcher contends that exploring this issue from the teachers' perspectives would enrich existing literature. Therefore, it is essential to consider and evaluate teachers' views and experiences to discern the requirements for improving students' comprehension skill and propose effective solutions for teaching Arabic listening comprehension. Consequently, this research contributes to the literature by investigating Malaysian teachers' experiences in teaching Arabic listening skill.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Various attempts have been made in literature to define listening skill. For instance, Lundsteen (1979) defines listening as the capacity "to convert spoken language into meaning in the mind." Anderson and

Lynch (1988) further highlight the listener's pivotal role in the process, involving activation of diverse knowledge types, application of existing knowledge to comprehend spoken content, and efforts to grasp the speaker's intended meaning. Underwood (1989) characterizes listening as "the act of paying attention to and trying to comprehend what we hear." According to Mendelsohn (1994), listening comprehension entails understanding the spoken language produced by native speakers. Additionally, Purdy (1997) describes listening as "the active and dynamic process of attending, perceiving, interpreting, remembering, and responding to articulated desires, concerns, and information conveyed by other individuals." Imhof (1998) suggests that listening is "an active process of selecting and integrating pertinent information from auditory input, guided by personal objectives critical to listening."

Buck (2001) posits that hearing involves both linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge, with linguistic knowledge encompassing semantics, discourse structure, phonology, lexis, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics, while the latter requires contextual and worldly knowledge. Rost (2002) equates listening to experiencing contextual effects, indicating a neurological event overlaid with cognitive processes, such as interpreting and negotiating meaning. Jeon (2007) views listening as a spectrum of activities involving the apprehension, recognition, discrimination, or even dismissal of specific information, incorporating complex processes related to linguistic data, personal expectations, cognitive skills, and general knowledge. Listening entails interaction and negotiation with a speaker, drawing on the listener's prior experiences to better comprehend and interpret spoken content. Steinberg (2007) asserts that listening transcends mere hearing, delineating a four-stage process comprising detection and attention, comprehension and interpretation, retention, and response, noting that individuals may not always be conscious of these stages.

L2 listening is an interactive, cognitive process, which involves neurological, linguistic, semantic, and pragmatic processing while drawing on resources such as linguistic knowledge, world knowledge, and knowledge about the communicative context (Rost, 2011). Hence, according to Rost (2011), the ability to integrate in real time information from various knowledge sources is considered crucial for successful listening comprehension. A study by Brunfaut and Révész (2015) provides insight into the relationship between L2 listening and various task and listener characteristics. Their research focused on 93 non-native English speakers, examining the impact of linguistic complexity, task input and response, speed, and explicitness of input on task difficulty. Additionally, they explored the relationship between L2 listening and listeners' working memory and listening anxiety. Participants responded to multiple-choice listening items and took an English proficiency test. They also completed working memory tasks and a listening anxiety questionnaire. Using tools such as Cohmetrix, WebVocabProfiler, Praat, and the PHRASE list, the researchers analysed the listening input and responses. Task difficulty and participant ability were determined through Rasch analysis, and correlational analyses were conducted to investigate the association between task and listener variables with L2 listening. The study found significant correlations between L2 listening task difficulty and indicators of phonological, discourse, and lexical complexity, as well as referential cohesion. Moreover, better L2 listening performances were observed in less anxious listeners and those with higher working memory capacity, depending on the L2 listening measure used.

In the 1970s, IBM researchers Mills and Wirth pioneered both bottom-up and top-down techniques (Nunan, 2010). These approaches, bottom-up and top-down listening, represent distinct psycholinguistic methods for interpreting speech, and attempting one without the other is nearly impracticable (Oh & Lee, 2014). Listening comprehension, therefore, results from the integration of these two processes, known as top-down and bottom-up processes. Gough (1972) advocates for a bottom-up model of the listening process, which involves a sequential progression from letters to sounds, then to words, ultimately contributing to overall meanings. This process relies on the listener's bottom-up skills to decode words and phrases based on existing linguistic knowledge. Furthermore, according to Nunan (2010), the bottom-up approach is centred on the text and entails decoding sounds from individual units to complete texts, involving tasks such as listening for specific details, recognizing cognates, and identifying word order patterns. Conversely, through top-down processing, the listener generates inferences regarding the speaker's intended message. The top-down model posits that

listening is driven by meaning and proceeds from whole to parts. Nunan (2010) contends that the learner-centric top-down approach focuses on the listener's cognitive processes, reconstructing the speaker's intended meaning from incoming sounds and utilizing context as cues to interpret the main idea, make predictions, and summarize intentions. Top-down and bottom-up strategies collectively fall under the category of 'interactive strategies,' which emphasize both language comprehension and listener engagement.

As scholars continue to debate which process contributes more significantly to listening comprehension, research on bottom-up and top-down processing has predominantly focused on the utilization of either strategy (Field, 2004; Tsui & Fullilove, 1998). Some researchers (e.g., Hildyard & Olson, 1982; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) directed their attention to top-down processing. For instance, Hildyard and Olson (1982) observed that proficient listeners predominantly employed top-down processing, while less proficient ones relied more on bottom-up processing. Similar findings were noted among language learners, with more proficient individuals utilizing a top-down approach to understand messages, whereas less proficient learners tended to employ a bottom-up strategy (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Conversely, other researchers (i.e., Eskey, 1988; Perfetti, 1985) argued that proficient bottom-up skills are essential for effective L2 processing, positing that poor readers may struggle due to weak word recognition (bottom-up) abilities.

Initially, it was believed that only top-down processing could enhance L2 listening comprehension (Hildyard & Olson, 1982). However, recent recognition acknowledges the potential of both top-down and bottom-up listening strategies to significantly enhance listening comprehension (Nunan, 2010). Similarly, Vandergrift (2004) argued that successful students must learn to employ both strategies. Prior to receiving new information, students must process specific sounds (bottom-up), retain them in their working memory momentarily, and then interpret them (Nunan, 2010). Simultaneously, listeners must utilize their prior knowledge (top-down) to discern meaning in relation to existing knowledge and schemata (Brown, 2006). Incorporating both approaches is essential when designing courses, resources, and lessons. It is not only to enable students to distinguish between different sounds but also to apply their existing knowledge to comprehend auditory input.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) later identified three primary learning strategies: cognitive, metacognitive, and social/affective. Cognitive strategies can be further categorized into two types: top-down cognitive strategies and bottom-up cognitive strategies (Sulistyowati, 2019; Ibrahim et al., 2021). Harris (2003) describes metacognition as a guiding mechanism in learning, where learners employ strategies to plan, monitor, and evaluate their language use and language learning. They require the listener to develop a learning plan, reflect on the learning process, dynamically monitor their production and comprehension, and evaluate their learning upon completing an activity (Jie-Zheng, 2018; Utami et al., 2021). In a recent study, Xu and Huang (2018) explored the mediating role of listening metacognitive awareness in the relationship between both listening anxiety and listening performance, and test anxiety and listening performance. The research involved 402 Chinese EFL learners who completed a series of questionnaires. Through structural equation modelling analysis, the findings revealed that metacognitive knowledge of listening not only mediates the link between listening anxiety and listening performance but also the connection between test-related anxiety and listening performance. This highlights the critical role of metacognitive awareness in enhancing listening skills under anxiety-inducing conditions.

In a study conducted in Iran, Movahed (2014) also explored the impact of metacognitive strategy instruction on the listening achievement, metacognitive ability, and listening anxiety of EFL learners. The study involved 55 Iranian EFL learners studying English translation, who were randomly assigned to either an experimental group (n = 30) or a control group (n = 25). The experimental group received strategy instruction based on the Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari (2010) model over eight sessions, while the control group received traditional instruction. Data was gathered using the listening section of the TOEFL, the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ), and the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS). The results revealed that metacognitive strategy instruction significantly enhanced learners' listening proficiency and metacognitive awareness.

Additionally, it was found that strategic instruction helped reduce the listening anxiety of the participants.

Additionally, the emergence of schema theory stems from efforts to comprehend the connection between listening comprehension and prior knowledge. According to this theory, initially proposed by Bartlett (1932), meaning arises through the interaction between incoming information and pre-existing knowledge. Considerable research has been undertaken to explore the influence of schema on listening comprehension. Shih (1992) suggests that listeners can effectively absorb lectures if they develop sufficient understanding of the lecture topic. Safamanzar (1994) conducted a study at Air University involving 90 male college students, dividing them into control and experimental groups and providing them with different sets of listening passages. The experimental group received passages as pre-listening exercises along with a summary, leading to better retention of knowledge compared to the control group, indicating the beneficial impact of activating schemata on listening comprehension. Tudor and Tuffs (1991) examined the effects of activating text-relevant schemata on listening comprehension in advanced-level Belgian university students, finding that those exposed to formal schemata demonstrated greater progress.

Baltova (1994) investigated the processing of aural French as a second language in eighth-grade core French, analyzing the role of video and/or sound. The findings suggested that visual cues improved general comprehension and provided useful information. Chiang and Dunkel (1992) found that topic familiarity aids low-level second language learners' listening comprehension, with visual cues such as images and videos stimulating prior knowledge and enhancing comprehension. Shemshadi (1995) researched the influence of schema theory on students' listening comprehension, showing that learners' comprehension was positively impacted by schemata formation. Markham and Latham (1987) explored the influence of religious background on listening comprehension, revealing that participants were more successful in recalling passages related to their religion. Bacon (1992) found that successful listeners tended to utilize their personal, world, and discourse knowledge, while less successful listeners either structured imperfect meaning from their prior knowledge or ignored it entirely. Weissender's study (1987) explored the importance of both textual and content schemata in learning Spanish among intermediate and advanced learners, indicating that both types of schemata assisted in comprehension. Sadighi & Zare (2006) found that engaging students' background knowledge resulted in higher comprehension levels, aligning with the findings of the majority of L2 listening studies.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. The research objective is to find out how secondary school teachers teach Arabic listening comprehension skill.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How do secondary school teachers teach Arabic listening comprehension skill?

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed a qualitative case study approach. According to Nik Suryani et al. (2008), the case study requires in-depth information to explain the details of the research. An in-depth investigation is conducted for a predetermined period on a particular individual, entity, social group, or phenomenon. Hence, the researcher used a qualitative case study to examine the nature of teaching listening comprehension skill that occurred at Sekolah Menengah Agama Tengku Ampuan Fatimah which is one of the well-known Islamic religious schools in Pahang. The main purpose of the study was to describe in-depth the teachers' experience in teaching Arabic listening comprehension skill. Another reason for selecting a case study design was that it does not call for a hypothesis to guide the study. It helps analyse current events. The case study method, according to Yin (1989), helps resolve questions regarding the procedure of how, or why something is happening. Instead of where and when it is more interested in

the process of how and what. The nature of the data that was collected typically matched the researcher's notes.

Research Participants

Malay teachers who teach the Arabic language in Sekolah Menengah Agama Tengku Ampuan Fatimah, Pekan, Pahang, were selected as participants of the study. The participants consist of a male teacher and three female teachers. The teachers were selected through purposive sampling to fulfil the criteria needed for this research. Teachers who had more than three years of experience in teaching the Arabic language in the school were selected in order to provide as much insight as possible into the case under examination. The first teacher-respondent (coded as 'T1') is a 41-year-old female teacher who has 15 years of experience in teaching the Arabic language. She is currently teaching the Arabic language to Form 5 students. The second respondent (coded as 'T2') is a 34-year-old female teacher who has 7 years of experience in teaching the Arabic language. She is currently teaching Arabic to Form 4 students. Aside from teaching Arabic, she also teaches Balaghah for Form 4 students in preparation for the SMA (Sijil Menengah Agama) examination that is held every year for the Islamic state schools of Pahang. Meanwhile, the third teacher-respondent (coded as 'T3') is a 32-year-old female teacher who has 4 years of experience in teaching the Arabic language. She is currently teaching the Arabic language to Form 1 and Form 2 students. Furthermore, the fourth teacher-respondent (coded as 'T4') who is a 32-year-old male teacher has 5 years of experience in teaching the Arabic language. Apart from teaching Arabic, he also teaches Nahu and Sarf to Form 4 students in preparation for SMA (Sijil Menengah Agama) examination.

Research Instruments

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with four teachers from Sekolah Menengah Agama Tengku Ampuan Fatimah (SMATAF). In this study, Arabic teachers were instructed through recorded in-depth interview sessions to verbally convey their own opinions, thoughts, and experiences on the issue. The researcher conducted the interviews at specific times and venues, listening to each response before deciding on what to ask next based on what the participants said. Although the interviewer has prepared a list of questions in advance, the interview is meant to be conversational. The interviewer has the option to alter the questions' wording or sequence to achieve this. Thus, the researcher may gather the in-depth information required to answer the given research questions while the respondent can speak freely and openly. For this study, there are four interview sessions with four different teachers of the school that are carried out at different times and venues. The interviewer has a paper-based interview guide that the researcher uses when recording the semi-structured interviews. It is typically advisable to tape-record interviews and afterwards transcript these tapes for analysis because semi-structured interviews frequently involve open-ended questions and conversations may deviate from the interview guide. The semi-structured interview guide offers the researcher or interviewer of this study a clear set of instructions, which in turn produces accurate and comparable qualitative data.

Validity and Reliability

Emphasizing the credibility of the data is significant in addressing the issues of trustworthiness. The credibility of this research is established through the interviews with the selected respondents. The findings did not derive from the personal opinions of the researcher but rather from the people who are directly involved with the institution in the study. The four Arabic teachers are among the most experienced teachers in the school. They were selected based on their experiences of teaching the Arabic language for more than three years. With seniority comes maturity in expressing their views and opinion as compared to the other teachers. The selected teachers can be considered credible sources of information for the research. Therefore, the information obtained from the interview shall also be deemed credible. Meanwhile, reliability refers to the possibility of replicating the findings. To establish the reliability of the research, a pilot study was conducted by the researcher on May 2022 at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Ahmad, Pekan, Pahang. A pilot study is a small experiment established to test the logistics and collect data before a larger study to enhance the effectiveness and quality of the latter.

For this pilot study, two pilot interviews were conducted involving two Arabic teachers as the respondents. They came from the same school and were purposely selected to be interviewed. In the pilot study, all the respondents were comfortable with the interview questions. The result of the interview sessions with the teachers indicated that the techniques that are mostly used to activate stored schemata are pictures, discussions, and games.

Procedures of Data Collection and Data Analysis

In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews. Before commencing with the semi-structured interview, the teachers were told about the reason for the research and were reassured, verbally and in writing, that their choice to participate (or not), as well as any contributions made during the discussion, would be confidential and people would not know who the teachers are. The teachers were reassured that they could withdraw at any time during the discussions. The teachers agreed to participate in the study. The semi-structured interview that was conducted in the early month of July contains 12 items. The interview was audio-recorded by a phone sound recorder app. The interview was later transcribed by the researcher and shown to the participants to confirm everything that has been said. The data were analysed and coded using thematic analysis to identify overall themes and patterns throughout the data. The identified themes and key points were then compiled with reference to the research question.

FINDINGS

Teaching methodology is a way in which the teacher decides how to teach the material so the students can learn. Many different methodologies can be used by the teacher. To understand how these methodologies were utilized, the following is the analysis of how teachers teach the Arabic language based on in-depth interview sessions.

Five teaching methodologies used during the teachers' teaching of listening comprehension skill

Based on the interview sessions, the researcher identified five main teaching methods used to teach Arabic listening comprehension skill, namely: elaboration, exercises, discussion, audio-lingual method (repetition drill) and total physical response (TPR). Table 1 shows teaching methods used by the teachers to teach Arabic listening comprehension skill.

Table 1
Teaching Methods Used for Arabic Listening Comprehension Skill

Teachers	Teaching Methods
T1	Elaboration, Exercises, Discussion, Audio-lingual Method (Repetition Drill)
T2	Elaboration, Exercises, Audio-lingual Method (Repetition Drill), Total Physical Response (TPR)
T3	Elaboration, Audio-lingual Method (Repetition Drill)
T4	Elaboration, Exercises, Discussion

Elaboration is used by all of the participants to teach Arabic listening comprehension skill. Meanwhile, only T2 used TPR to teach Arabic listening comprehension skill.

1. Elaboration

The results of the interview sessions indicated that all respondents elaborated on the unfamiliar words during their teaching session. This can be seen from the following excerpts of teachers' interviews.

'... I also elaborate on certain points' (T1/DU26).

'... For advanced students, they have reached the level where they can read and understand. So, I just share the text, explain it in Arabic, then I will give them questions' (T2/DU28).

'... The most effective way for me is explaining the word. For example, 'maktabun', table, I explain what it is used for and where it is' (T3/DU24).

'... In addition, I also use the explanation method. For example, the students ask what does this mean? Then, I explain the meaning. For example, people use this place to cook, people are sentenced to punishment in this place and so on' (T4/DU14).

2. Exercises

Task-based exercises have an obvious benefit over conventional multiple-choice questions in that they not only assess students' listening comprehension but also motivate them to actively listen by using a variety of listening techniques. Based on the researcher's analysis from the interview conducted, the typical exercise given by the respondents is question and answer. For example:

'... Ermm. I usually use pictures and drawings. I draw a comic in Arabic and ask questions based on the comic' (T4/DU12).

T2 mentioned that she used this exercise in her teaching of listening comprehension skill after listening or reading a text. She stated:

'... For advanced students, they have reached the level where they can read and understand. So, I just share the text, explain it in Arabic, then I will give them questions. They will answer the questions based on their understanding of the text. It doesn't have to be written text. Sometimes, I also ask them to watch a video or listen to an audio and they answer the questions. We can also use story books and give them questions related to the story. Before I start the audio or video, I will usually provide the students with the topic of the lesson, and I instruct students to predict what words and ideas that will come in listening materials. The students are also trained to think on the questions that will be asked based on the topic provided' (T2/DU28).

T1 further agreed that giving exercises and giving questions are practical approaches to teach Arabic listening comprehension skills. She mentioned:

'… There must be practical approaches such as giving exercises or asking questions to students. If we listen to only one side, it will not be effective' (T1/DU20).

3. Discussion

In a discussion, listening is highly interactive. Each side will need to assess the other's arguments and answer in a way that is both socially and emotionally acceptable in addition to trying to understand each other's viewpoints. Both T1 and T4 hold discussions on listening comprehension skill as mentioned below:

'... I also have discussions and use a two-way communication with students' (T4/DU12).

'... Furthermore, I also give exercises and hold discussions in groups' (T1/DU26).

The findings of their study have significance on teachers' knowledge of which discussions help students become better speakers and how it may also influence their level of listening comprehension.

4. Audio-Lingual Method

According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), audio-lingual method is based on the aural-oral approach in which a student acquired oral language skills through oral practice based on analogy and repetition. One of the techniques of audio-lingual method listed by Larsen-Freeman (2000) is the repetition drill in which students repeat the teacher's model as accurately and quickly as possible. This technique is also used by T1, T2 and T3 in their teaching of listening comprehension skill. They stated:

'... To introduce a new word, like a 'dog' for example, I'll make the sound of the dog while showing a picture and say 'kalbun'. Or I'll just show them a video of a dog barking and say the word 'kalbun'. Then I ask the student to repeat after me. And then I show how the word is used in sentences and paragraphs' (T1/DU40).

'... For beginners, I usually use the technique that I've mentioned before. I use pictures and ask the students to repeat the word after me while pointing to the pictures. For example, 'hadza kitabun', this is a book. After they have mastered all the words and have a strong foundation on the basics of Arabic grammars, I will then use simple texts and ask them questions based on the texts' (T2/DU30).

'... I pronounce the words and sentences clearly and I ask students to focus and repeat. If he says he can't repeat, I will tell him again until he can repeat' (T4/DU14).

5. Total Physical Response (TPR)

Asher (1966) suggested the Total Physical Response (TPR) method that emphasized listening comprehension using instructions that students learn by copying the action of the teacher. T2 mentioned that this TPR method can make students more active and focused in class. She emphasized:

'... Teachers can also use movement to make the students active and focus in class. For example, I want to teach the sentence 'al-kitabu maftuhun', 'the book is opened' and 'al-kitabu mughlaqun', 'the book is closed'. So, I open the book while saying, 'al-kitabu maftuhun' and then I close the book while saying 'al-kitabu mughlaqun'. I repeat it a few times and after that, I open the book again and ask the students to explain what I did and they use the sentence to describe it. Then, I close the book again and ask the students to explain. Finally, when I say the sentence 'al-kitabu maftuhun', the students can use movement and books to describe the sentence' (T2/DU32).

The Least Beneficial Methods of Teaching Arabic Listening Comprehension Skill

Based on the interview sessions with the four interviewees, the researcher identified the four least beneficial methods recognized by the teachers, namely: 1) lack of visual aids, 2) Grammar Translation Method (GTM), 3) fast delivery of speech and no repetition, and 4) teacher-centred learning.

1. Lack of Visual Aids

T1 stated that students' comprehension will be lacking without the presence of visual aids. She emphasized:

'... It is less effective when we teach without using learning aids like slides, pictures, videos and so on. If the student just listens without looking at what that is heard, his comprehension will be lacking' (T1/DU44).

Hence, she suggested that teaching listening comprehension skill without the presence of any visual aids are the least beneficial method to students.

2. Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

T2 also suggested that GTM is the least beneficial method to teach since it relies too much on only reading and writing and does not require students to actively participate in class. She stated:

'... In my opinion, the method that is the least beneficial to students is if the teacher just read and he didn't show any pictures. He just translates the words. He read it himself and translates it. Hence, students do not participate in the classroom. He translates and the students write. There are also no questions and exercises. The teacher does not ask the students, 'ma hadza', what is this and this. He just translates. This makes it hard for the students to remember. So, this is the most ineffective way of teaching Arabic' (T2/DU32).

3. Fast Delivery of Speech and No Repetition

T3 identified both fast delivery of speech and no repetition as the least effective ways to teach listening comprehension skill since according to her, it will make it hard for students to remember the vocabulary and there will also be a possibility of them mispronouncing the words. She mentioned:

'... The least effective is when the teacher says the words quickly and not clearly. He also doesn't repeat. These will make it hard for the students to remember and they can also pronounce the words wrongly' (T3/DU28).

Since there is no repetition, no habit is developed and this in turn lessens the chances of more learning occurring, making it hard for the students to remember the new words. On top of that, the fast delivery of speech also makes it hard for the students to recognize the words and pronounce them well.

4. Teacher-Centred Learning

T4 found teacher-centred learning ineffective in teaching listening comprehension skill. Even if he described the words in detail, the students cannot remember the words taught. T4 explained:

'I notice that if I talk alone, I don't get many responses from my students. And when I asked them, 'what is this?' in Arabic, they cannot answer even though I have already taught the word and described it in detail before. I think this method, teacher-centred learning, is the least beneficial method to students' (T4/DU24).

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of the study was to explore teachers' experience in teaching Arabic listening comprehension skill in order to understand what is needed to improve students' listening comprehension skill and propose a solution for effective teaching of Arabic listening comprehension skill. The data collection process involved semi-structured interviews with four teachers from Sekolah Menengah Agama Tengku Ampuan Fatimah (SMATAF).

Teaching Methodologies

Based on the conducted interviews, the researcher identified five teaching methodologies employed by teachers when instructing listening comprehension skill, namely elaboration, exercises, discussion, the audio-lingual method (repetition drill), and Total Physical Response (TPR). All respondents reported elaborating on unfamiliar words to students. Additionally, TPR was utilized exclusively by T2 in teaching listening comprehension skill, despite evidence suggesting its superiority in certain language assessments over students taught using the audio-lingual method (Asher, 1966). Asher (1966) also noted the efficacy of TPR in enhancing students' writing and reading abilities. This method involves the teacher issuing commands in the target language (e.g., 'jump,' 'grit your teeth,' or 'clap your hands'),

with students expected to respond with corresponding full-body actions (e.g., jumping while clapping). LeBlanc (1986) similarly employed TPR to teach language courses in engineering and science faculties in Canada, observing significantly higher scores among the TPR group in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skill compared to control groups.

Schema Theory

It is found that T3 often used Quranic verses that students memorized that contain words that they need to remember to stimulate prior knowledge and enhance students' comprehension. For example, to remember the plural of 'bahrun', sea, and the plural of 'jabalun', mountain, she recited the verses from surah al-Takwir. This is similar to a study conducted by Markham and Latham (1987) that investigated the influence of religious background on listening comprehension. Their study showed that religious background affects listening comprehension. The results showed that the participants were more successful in recalling the passage that was related to their religion. Chiang and Dunkel (1992) also found in a study that topic familiarity aids low-level L2 language learners' listening comprehension. It has been found that visual cues like images and videos are useful for stimulating prior knowledge and improving comprehension. These are similar to the results found from the interview in which T1 mentioned that a lack of visual aids can affect students' comprehension. She further said that it is less effective when the teachers teach without using learning aids such as slides, pictures, videos and so on.

Bottom-Up and Top-Down Listening Strategies

In the early 1980s, it was believed that only top-down processing could enhance L2 listening comprehension (Hildyard & Olson, 1982). However, recent understanding acknowledges the effectiveness of both top-down and bottom-up listening strategies in significantly improving listening comprehension (Nunan, 2010). Vandergrift (2004) similarly asserts that successful students must adeptly utilize both strategies. Prior to receiving new information, students must first perceive specific sounds (bottom-up), retain them briefly in their working memory (typically a few seconds), and then interpret what they have heard (Nunan, 2010). Concurrently, listeners must also draw upon their prior knowledge (top-down) to contextualize meaning in relation to existing knowledge and schema (Brown, 2006). Incorporating both approaches is essential when designing courses, materials, and lessons, not only to help students distinguish between different sounds but also to enable them to apply their existing knowledge to comprehend auditory input.

T2 also employed a combination of both strategies in teaching Arabic listening comprehension skill. For advanced and proficient students, she primarily utilized a top-down approach, leveraging their ability to read and understand. She provided written texts, videos, or audio clips, instructing students to answer questions based on the material presented. Conversely, for beginners, she predominantly employed a bottom-up strategy, using the audio-lingual method by presenting a picture and having students repeat after her. Once students had memorized vocabulary and grasped basic Arabic grammar concepts, she introduced simple texts and prompted them with questions based on the content.

Metacognitive Strategy: Planning

Harris (2003) describes metacognition as a guiding mechanism in learning, where learners employ strategies to plan, monitor, and evaluate their language use and language learning. Based on the interview, it was found that metacognitive strategy of planning has been employed by T2. The planning stage involves setting a purpose, activating prior knowledge, and making predictions (Herlina et al., 2021). According to Bao and Guan (2019), planning is the process of understanding what needs to be accomplished to complete a listening task. Tanewong (2019) adds that during the planning and prediction stage, students are encouraged to gather hypothesis information by watching a video or looking at a photo, then predicting what they will hear and answering forthcoming questions. The teacher provides assistance with vocabulary and topic guidance. This is almost similar to T2 who taught listening skills by using videos and audio clips. After her students listened to it, they need to answer related questions. Before playing the audio or video clips, she introduced the lesson topic first and

instructed the students to predict the vocabularies and ideas that might appear in the listening material. This also involves training students to anticipate the questions they will encounter based on the given topic.

CONCLUSION

The findings from the study, "Exploring Teachers' Experience in Teaching Arabic Listening Comprehension Skill", hold significance for both present and prospective educators. They shed light on teachers' preferences in instructing Arabic listening comprehension skill, offering valuable insights for enhancing the effectiveness of teaching methods in this area. Understanding these preferences is crucial for devising solutions to improve Arabic listening comprehension instruction. By being aware of their teaching approaches, educators can make informed decisions and adapt their methods to better meet the needs of their students. Moreover, this reflective approach enables teachers to be responsive to their students' requirements and fosters greater flexibility in their instructional strategies. However, more research should also be carried out to see if the results are similar. Moreover, further research should also be conducted on the effects of teaching Arabic listening comprehension skill to students. Additionally, qualitative data on how teachers teach Arabic listening comprehension skill and questionnaire surveys on students' preferred teaching listening methods that teachers employed in their classes can also be conducted to unpack the relationship between methods of teaching Arabic listening comprehension skill and their effects on students. Future research could also involve larger numbers of teachers and students in order to investigate issues regarding the effects of teaching Arabic listening comprehension skill on students. Finally, this research helps in fulfilling the literature gap to conduct further research that contributes to society.

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