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The Effects of Two Pre-Listening Vocabulary and Enhanced Content-Related Supports on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension Sub-Skills

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Abstract
This study investigated the effects of two pre-listening supports of vocabulary instruction (VI) and enhanced content related support, including input repetition plus background knowledge (IR+BK), and vocabulary instruction plus background knowledge (VI+BK) on EFL intermediate learners' overall listening comprehension and its sub-skills. A total of 100 Iranian intermediate learners were assigned to four groups of 25 based on their scores in FCE test. Providing different forms of listening supports to the three groups, the results showed that the most effective type of support was providing IR+BK, followed by VI+BK. The least useful was VI support though it revealed better results than no pre-listening support. Regarding listening sub-skills, VI was the most useful for main idea questions, while IR+BK support had significant effects on listening for making inferences questions. There was not any noticeable difference among different kinds of supports regarding EFL learners' ability of listening for specifics. This study makes a contribution to the literature by introducing the enhanced form of pre-listening support to language teachers and test makers.
Keywords: listening comprehension, pre-listening support, enhanced content related support, listening sub-skills, EFL intermediate learners

INTRODUCTION

Listening is the most frequently used form of language skill which plays a significant role in daily communication and educational process. Yet, listening is probably the least understood, the least researched and, historically the least valued skill (Wilson, 2008). Language learners in EFL contexts usually have more difficulty understanding spoken

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language than written one (Chang & Read, 2006; Chung, 2002;) and teachers who want to get the most benefit of the classrooms for their second language students should consider the point that no other type of language input is as easy to process as spoken language, received through listening (Richards & Schmidt, 1983). However, as claimed by Buck (2001), it is not surprising because of the complexity of the listening process using linguistic and non-linguistic sources to interpret the incoming data. To comprehend the aural input, listeners must also segment language input, retrieve correct schemata for interpretation and make accurate inferences (Chung, 2002).

Since EFL learners have less exposure to spoken language and are less familiar in tackling the listening tasks, they should be tuned in knowing what to expect, both in general and for specific tasks (Underwood, 1989) rather than being asked to immediately engage in listening tasks (Chang & Read, 2006). The relationship between this tuning-in procedure and listening comprehension has been established in literature (e.g., Chung, 1999; Herron, 1994; Jones & Plass, 2002; Mueller, 1980; Omaggio, 1993) indicating that this preparation period has beneficial effects for the enhancement of the comprehension. Thus, learners can be provided with pre-listening support activities to listen selectively and effectively, to avoid distractions, and to retain information successfully (Rost, 2002).

As argued by Richards and Burns (2012), pre-listening activities aim to motivate the learner, to provide background knowledge, and to activate key vocabulary. Although it is generally acknowledged that various forms of support have a valuable role to play in the teaching of listening skills, regarding the role of different kind of supports in enhancing listening comprehension, previous research is still inconclusive. A number of studies have corroborated the effectiveness of background knowledge in the facilitation of listening comprehension in a more general way by exploring the influence of the learners' pre-existing knowledge base or content schemata (Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Hashemi, 2009; Long, 1990; Schmidt-Rinehart, 1994). In studies that indeed incorporated the teaching of background knowledge into the study design (Chang & Read, 2006; Chung, 1999), the results did not seem to be congruent. In addition, the effectiveness of teaching unfamiliar words as a type of pre-listening support has not decisively yet been confirmed or rejected. While some researchers confirmed its usefulness (Bonk, 2000; Chang & Haung, 1998; Pan, 2012), others doubted its values (Chang & Read, 2006; Chung, 2002).

This study aims to investigate the effects of these two listening supports in a new enhanced form i.e. presenting two supports alongside each other for activating learners' schemata to address their insufficient background and linguistic knowledge. In other words, learners will be provided with either background knowledge plus input repetition and background knowledge plus vocabulary support as enhanced form of content related support. Furthermore, this study aims to give a more comprehensive view over the effectiveness of these supports on listening sub-skills of EFL Iranian intermediate learners i.e. listening for main idea, listening for details and making inferences (based on Weir's taxonomy, 1993).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background Knowledge Enrichment

One of the most researched advance organizers in the literature is providing background knowledge. It is considered as the pre-existing knowledge of learners that pertains to the topic of the main task. Most previous studies confirmed the effect of providing learners with prior knowledge to help their listening comprehension (Chiang & Dunkel, 1992; Long, 1990). They demonstrated that this type of advance organizer plays a critical role in aiding learners to comprehend and retain information better. According to Hasan (2000), using clues from the context and background knowledge reduces the intensity of listening effort for learners. Markham and Latham (1987) measured the influence of religion-specific background knowledge on adult ESL learners' listening comprehension. They showed that students adhering to a specific religious group participants recalled more main-idea units. Long (1990), in another study, showed that participants generally did better on the listening passage with more background knowledge. However, he suggested that schemata can also have a dysfunctional impact if not applied appropriately. Chiang and Dunkel (1992) also generally acknowledged the helpfulness of background knowledge for comprehension test. Hayati and Dastjerdi (2012) conducted a similar study to investigate the effect of cultural familiarity on improving Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension. The results indicated that greater familiarity with specific culturally-oriented language listening material would improve Iranian EFL learners' listening proficiency.

Furthermore, though the majority of studies have indicated the positive relationship between learners' background knowledge and their listening comprehension, there are a few studies which incorporated the teaching of background knowledge as a pre-listening support into classroom settings. Therefore, it remains unclear whether activating background knowledge would be effective for test questions directly related to the listening task. Chang and Read (2006) enriched learners' background knowledge by providing them with an L1 reading passage related to the listening topic. Their findings revealed that on the whole, this type of listening support is effective. Farrokhi and Modarres (2012) attempted to find out the extent to which "content related support" assisted EFL language learners with their performance on listening comprehension questions across low proficiency (LP) and high proficiency (HP) levels. Sixty learners including two experimental groups and one control group participated in this study. The results revealed that vocabulary group outperformed two other groups at low proficiency level while in high proficiency level, content group was better. This study suggested that in designing pre-task activities, the type of support and the learners' proficiency level need to be taken into account.

In order to investigate the effects of background knowledge support and at the same time, improve some of the limitations in previous studies, this study incorporated the teaching of background knowledge in an enhanced form to induce deeper processing. In a study done by Herron, Cole, York, and Linden (1998), no significant difference was found between providing the two conditions of major-scene summary in declarative

advance organizer condition and interrogative advance organizer condition though both outperformed control group. It was therefore suggested that future studies would use the true/false condition in which learners would be provided with true/false main-scene summaries that might not be as distractive as interrogative advance organizer condition. In addition, in this study, background knowledge was provided alongside input repetition to make one enhanced form of content related support. Hatch (1983, as cited in Chang & Read, 2006) states that repetition provides more processing time and clarifies the relationship of syntactic forms. Though the input material is commonly repeated in listening comprehension to make the information clearer and more comprehensible to the learners, relatively little research has been conducted on input repetition support (Chang & Read, 2006). The existence of interaction and interdependence between bottom-up and top-down models of processing has been indicated in research (Buck, 2001; Tsui and Fullilove, 1998; Vandergrief, 2003). As we listen, we make use of bottom-up factors (i.e., the words and individual sentences the listening contains) as well as top-down factors such as our background knowledge, familiarity with the topic, and the structure of the listening text (Field, 2008 as cited in Richards & Burns, 2012). Thus, in order to practice both bottom-up and top-down processing, the present study also aims to use the true/false mode of background knowledge plus vocabulary instruction support as an enhanced form of content related support.

Vocabulary Instruction Support

In the bottom-up model of processing, unfamiliar vocabulary is the most-recognized factor that hinders successful listening comprehension (Chang & Read, 2006; Chung, 2002; Chung & Hung, 1998). It is also one of the major factors considered to contribute to the difficulty level of listening tasks. Therefore, it is imperative to pre-instruct unfamiliar words before students engage in listening tasks. Regarding the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction, previous research is inconclusive. While Chung and Huang (1998) demonstrated that students in "vocabulary" condition outperformed those in "main character" and "combined" conditions, Chung (2002) indicted that the advance organizer, or vocabulary teaching, was less effective than the combined group and question-previewing group, but was still better than the control group. Chang and Read's (2006) study is also another example that involves the investigation of vocabulary instruction. In their study, students were provided with L1 (Chinese) equivalent meanings to teach L2 unfamiliar words, L2 pronunciation, and also the listening of target words in longer connected speeches. They showed that vocabulary instruction was the least helpful type of listening support among the four different kinds of support. Farrokhi and Modarres (2012) attempted to find out the importance of "glossary of unknown vocabulary items" on Iranian EFL language learners' performance on listening comprehension questions across low proficiency (LP) and high proficiency (HP) levels. The results confirmed the beneficial effect of this support in low proficiency level. In a study done by Pan (2012), the effects of multi-faceted lexical instruction on the TOEIC aural performance of Taiwanese EFL learners were investigated. Forty seven participants were provided with lexical instruction in which vocabulary was instructed

in a multi-faceted way i.e. they received both exposure to single lexical items and multiword units, and they also engaged in a variety of oral activities. The findings of this research clearly indicated that this pre-instruction support improved the TOEIC aural performance of Taiwanese learners.

However, in the literature, the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction as a pre-listening support on helping learners' comprehension has not yet been agreed upon. Thus, the question of whether vocabulary instruction should be permanently viewed as the least helpful type of advance organizers or some modifications can be made to this support is worth further investigation. In addition, the effect of listening supports has never been investigated on listening comprehension sub-skills, which is a way to understand the nature of the listening process (Richards & Burns, 2012). Besides the assumption that there are identifiable listening skills, there seems to be an agreement in the language testing literature that these skills can be arranged in a hierarchy order from lower level ones like understanding utterances at the literal level to higher level ones like inferencing and critical evaluation (Buck, 1991; Rost, 1990; Weir, 1993). As claimed by Buck (2001), these sub-skills are useful because they tell us more about the nature of listening process. Therefore, the present study focused particularly on tapping the effectiveness of two forms of "enhanced content related support" and "vocabulary instruction support" as pre-listening supports on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' listening ability in general and listening sub-skills in particular.

Thus, the current study was designed to seek answers to the following research questions:

1. Are there any significant differences between the effects of vocabulary instruction (VI), vocabulary instruction plus background knowledge (VI+BK), and input repetition plus background knowledge (IR+BK) on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' overall listening comprehension?
2. Are there any significant differences between the effects of VI, VI+BK, and IR+BK on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' ability of listening for the main idea?
3. Are there any significant differences the effects of VI, VI+BK, and IR+BK on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' ability of listening for specifics?
4. Are there any significant differences between the effects of VI, VI+BK, and IR+BK on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' ability of listening for making inferences?

METHOD

Participants

The current study used a quantitative experimental design. One hundred EFL learners were chosen from an initial pool of one hundred and twenty intermediate learners at a private English language institute to participate in this study. Based on the participants' scores in FCE test, four groups each containing 25 were formed. The participants were both male and female and their age variance ranged from 14 to 29 years old. They consisted of 36 female and 64 male EFL learners and possessed different educational

background due to their age variance. While most were school students, a few were university students or involved in some jobs.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the participants

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Score	120	4.00	28	14.59	5.23

Instruments

The materials and instruments used in this study included an English proficiency test including the First Certificate of English (FCE) test, three listening tasks, main-scene summary sentences (enhanced background knowledge), key-word definition, key-word sentence practices, and listening comprehension tests. They are specified as follows.

First Certificate of English (FCE) test

The First Certificate in English (FCE) was originally offered in 1939. This test is published by the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (UCLES). FCE has widespread recognition in commerce and industry, e.g. for public contact or secretarial work in banking, airlines, catering, etc.

Listening tasks

Three listening tasks including six conversations on three topics: *Travel, Traffic*, and *Touring a city* were used to measure participants' listening comprehension. The three tasks (six passages) were excerpted from the book "*Tactics for listening*" second edition by Jack C. Richards. This book is a three-level series of listening textbooks including basic, developing, and expanding levels. Since this study focused on intermediate level, the tasks for this study were taken from *developing tactics for listening*. One criterion for selecting the passages was that though they might generally look familiar for the learners, their content was unlikely to be familiar to them, at least in English. In addition, according to the authorities in the English Institute where the data were collected, the book was not used in the learners' English course of study. So, the participants had little chance to have heard such topics before.

Table 2. Analysis of the three listening tasks

Listening tasks	Travel		Traffic		Touring a city	
	One way	IS	One way	IS	One way	IS
Total words	101	174	103	66	165	137
Speech rate per min.	188 wpm	196 wpm	70 wpm	168 wpm	146 wpm	180 wpm
Duration	33″	57″	25″	37″	1′12″	44″

Note. wpm = words per minute; IS = interacting speakers

Enhanced background knowledge sentences

For the Enhanced Background class, the treatment was to give main-scene summary sentences. Four main-scene declarative sentences were designed for each listening passage in order to activate and develop the participants' "background knowledge" as a

pre-listening task. These sentences were used to describe the backgrounds of major events happened in each scene, rather than the details of the events. They were to equip participants with general ideas about the overall content of listening passages. So, generally each task included eight main scene sentences.

In order to promote deeper processing, these scene summary sentences were devised in a true/false condition (Herron et al., 1998). So, participants needed to listen more attentively to judge the truth value of false sentences. To increase the similarity between two listening passages, the ratio of true and false statements were also controlled to be similar; that is two true and two false sentences for every passage. However, it should also be noted that the information gained from this listening support was used mainly to facilitate students' comprehension, and it would not appear as the exact answer to the questions in the post-listening comprehension test.

Key-Word support material

The criterion for choosing the words as target to present in the vocabulary instruction session was based on the pilot study. The written printed form of listening audios was given to ten randomly chosen learners of intermediate level in a pilot study. They simply skimmed over the passages and underlined the words they did not know most. Accordingly, this word list was used for the current study to judge which words may be more unfamiliar to students and thus deserve pre-listening vocabulary instruction.

Seven, six and seven words in the three listening tasks of *Travel*, *Traffic*, and *Touring a city* respectively were unfamiliar for the learners in the pilot study. Therefore, they were labeled as target words for pre-teaching. In addition to this presentation of unfamiliar words, key-word sentence practice was devised in order to help participants review their newly-learned vocabulary in context and to promote more solid vocabulary knowledge and authentic vocabulary use. The practice was made in a single-slot deletion format, in which participants were asked to fill in appropriate target word in each sentence.

Preparation of Multiple-choice Items

For each task which included two passages, a set of 10 teacher-made multiple-choice comprehension questions was developed, forming a listening comprehension test of 30 items. The questions in this study were in the order of content of the talks. The items of the tests were based on factual information in the text and could not be answered correctly without having listened to and understood the relevant part of the text. These items test the participants on three listening comprehension sub-skills, i.e. listening for the specifics, listening for the main idea and making inferences about what they hear (based on Weir's taxonomy, 1993). Therefore, in each talk, two of the multiple-choice items asked for specific information like facts, numbers, etc.; two items focused on the inferencing ability of the listeners, which means each question requires the participant to combine the factual information in the text with their background knowledge to make appropriate inferences and finally one of the items required the listener to find

the main idea. Since the relative shortness of the texts made it difficult to obtain sufficient items, for reliable measurement in each talk, there was only one question to check the understanding of the main idea.

Since materials for the test have been taken from a standard book, *Tactics for listening*, second edition by Richards, it could be claimed that the content validity of the listening comprehension test was of high value. Yet, some testing experts were asked to review and judge it. They suggested that some modifications should be made in the items and choices of the test.

Procedure

Pilot Study

In order to estimate the reliability of the main test and also to find appropriate instructions and time required for answering the test, a pilot study was done. Thus, 15 intermediate learners, whose general characteristics were exactly similar to the participants in the main study, were decided to participate in the pilot study. They were given the test and consequently some of the items and some of the choices which were identified as non-functional were deleted and replaced with other ones. There were also some vocabularies in the test which were recognized to be difficult for the learners of this level, as many students asked their meaning, so they were replaced with some easier vocabulary items. This pilot highlighted the need to familiarize the students with the listening test procedure. It also indicated that the reliability of this test was quite high. Therefore, the high reliability of this test confirmed the suitability of it for collecting the data of this study.

Main Study

The data of this study was collected through the administration of some pre-task activities to the learners in one session for each group. On the day of the test, the procedure was explained by the teacher before the class began the test. The first experimental group received a vocabulary instruction support (VI). They were familiarized with the definitions of the words and their use in different contexts. In order to ensure their retention of the words, they were also involved in the key-word sentence practice. After spending about 10 minutes on the vocabulary support, they listened to the main test and answered multiple choice questions on the answer sheet. On the whole, participants spent 45 minutes on both doing the pre-listening activity and answering multiple-choice questions. The second experimental group was provided with a vocabulary instruction plus background knowledge support (VI+BK). Participants in this group learned the topic first, read four main-scene summary statements for each talk which might be true or false and they also received vocabulary pre instruction support. This group spent the first 10 minutes of their preparation time reading and discussing the background material, followed by a 10–minute vocabulary support. It took about 55 minutes for this group to do the assigned pre-listening activity and answer the multiple-choice item questions. For the third experimental group, the learners were given input repetition alongside background knowledge support. Four

main-scene summary statements for each talk in an attempt to activate learner's background knowledge were provided to participants in true/false format. The participants were allowed to read and discuss the true/false enhanced background knowledge support sentences. The average time spent on this pre-listening support was about 10 minutes. Moreover, this group had another chance to listen to talks for the second time and then answer the questions. It generally took about 50 minutes for this group to do the enhanced pre-listening activity and answer the multiple-choice item questions.

There was also a fourth group who did not receive any form of pre-listening support and acted as a control group. After receiving appropriate instructions, they listened to the test and answered the multiple-choice questions. The scoring method for the test used in this study was dichotomous, that is each correct answer received one score and an incorrect answer received null. Therefore, the maximum possible score for the test in this study was 30 for the 30 items including 6 items for the main idea, 12 items for specifics, and the 12 remaining items for making inferences.

Data Analysis

After collecting the data, a number of statistical tests were performed to investigate the research questions. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) Version 22 was used to perform all the statistical analyses in this study. To examine the four research questions, separate one-way ANOVAs were conducted to see whether there were any statistically significant differences across the four groups of the study. The minimum alpha for confirmation of the research hypotheses was .05.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

The first research question addressed the difference between EFL learners' overall listening comprehension score in VI, VI+BK, and IR+BK groups. In order to investigate the first research question, a one-way ANOVA was carried out on the dependent variable i.e., overall listening comprehension score. The minimum alpha for confirmation of the research question was .05. At first, the descriptive data of learners' overall listening scores with respect to control and three experimental groups are demonstrated in Table 3 and the results of the ANOVA are reported in Table 4.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for overall listening scores

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control Group	25	15.40	1.848
VI	25	16.12	1.666
VI+BK	25	16.68	1.842
IR+BK	25	18.04	2.131
Total	100	16.56	2.090

Note. VI= vocabulary instruction; VI+BK= vocabulary instruction plus background knowledge; IR+BK= input repetition plus background knowledge.

Table 3 shows that the mean scores of the three experimental groups i.e., VI, VI+BK, and IR+BK are higher than the mean score of the control group. But the significance of these differences needed to be checked; hence, ANOVA was carried out to examine if there was a significant difference between the groups (see Table 4).

Table 4. One-way ANOVA on overall listening scores

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Between Groups	93.600	3	31.200	8.834	.000	.216
Within Groups	339.040	96	3.532			
Total	432.640	99				

The results of the ANOVA, demonstrated in Table 4, revealed that the differences between the four groups were statistically significant, $F = 8.83$, $P < .05$. In addition, the small effect size ($\eta_P^2 = .216$) revealed that a small proportion of the variance in the dependent variable was attributable to the factor in question. Thus, an effect size of .216 indicates that the treatment group outperformed the comparison group by nearly a quarter of a standard deviation. Table 4 does not show which group is different from the other group. Therefore, the statistical significance of the differences between each pair of groups is provided in Table 5 giving the results of the post-hoc Tukey HSD tests.

Table 5. Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests for the overall listening scores

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control Group	VPI	-.720	.532	.531	-2.11	.67
	VPI+BK	-1.280	.532	.082	-2.67	.11
	IR+BK	-2.640*	.532	.000	-4.03	-1.25
VPI	Control Group	.720	.532	.531	-.67	2.11
	VPI+BK	-.560	.532	.718	-1.95	.83
	IR+BK	-1.920*	.532	.003	-3.31	-.53
VPI+BK	Control Group	1.280	.532	.082	-.11	2.67
	VPI	.560	.532	.718	-.83	1.95
	IR+BK	-1.360	.532	.057	-2.75	.03
IR+BK	Control Group	2.640*	.532	.000	1.25	4.03
	VPI	1.920*	.532	.003	.53	3.31
	VPI+BK	1.360	.532	.057	-.03	2.75

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As reported in Table 5, Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score of IR+BK group (M =18.04) was significantly larger than the mean score of the VI and control groups, M = 16.12 and M = 15.40, respectively. In addition, there were not any significant differences between the other groups. All in all, post-hoc tests revealed that, considering the overall listening comprehension ability, learners who received input repetition plus background knowledge support significantly

outperformed those who had vocabulary pre-teaching and those who took no pre-listening support.

Research Question 2

The second research question tried to investigate if there was any significant difference between EFL learners' scores of listening for main idea in VI, VI+BK, and IR+BK groups. In order to investigate the second question, another one-way ANOVA was utilized on the scores of listening for main idea across the four groups. The descriptive data of students' scores in the control and the three groups are displayed in Table 6. Afterwards, the result of ANOVA is presented in Table 7.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for scores of listening for main idea

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control Group	25	3.84	.800
VPI	25	4.72	1.021
VPI+BK	25	4.48	.963
IR+BK	25	4.32	.748
Total	100	4.34	.934

As reported in Table 6, the mean score of the control group (M = 3.84) was smaller than that of the other three groups. Among the three experimental groups, the mean score of the VI (M = 4.72) is the largest and that of the IR+BK is the lowest (M = 4.32). But the significance of these differences needed to be checked using the results of one-way ANOVA presented in Table 7.

Table 7. One-way ANOVA on scores of listening for main idea

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Between Groups	10.360	3	3.453	4.358	.006	.120
Within Groups	76.080	96	.793			
Total	86.440	99				

The results of the ANOVA, illustrated in Table 7, showed that there were statistically significant differences between the groups regarding the scores of listening for main idea, F = 4.358, P = .006. However, ANOVA could not indicate the location of the significant differences between the four groups. As a result, to find exactly where the differences among the four groups occur, post-hoc Tukey HSD tests were conducted.

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test, shown in Table 8, revealed that only the difference between the VI and control group reached significance, P = .004. As depicted in Table 8, no other significant differences were found between the remaining groups. Therefore, results displayed that students' listening for the main idea was significantly better in the vocabulary pre-teaching group than in the control group.

Table 8. Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests for scores of listening for main idea

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control Group	VPI	-.880*	.252	.004	-1.54	-.22
	VPI+BK	-.640	.252	.060	-1.30	.02
	IR+BK	-.480	.252	.232	-1.14	.18
VPI	Control Group	.880*	.252	.004	.22	1.54
	VPI+BK	.240	.252	.776	-.42	.90
	IR+BK	.400	.252	.390	-.26	1.06
VPI+BK	Control Group	.640	.252	.060	-.02	1.30
	VPI	-.240	.252	.776	-.90	.42
	IR+BK	.160	.252	.920	-.50	.82
IR+BK	Control Group	.480	.252	.232	-.18	1.14
	VPI	-.400	.252	.390	-1.06	.26
	VPI+BK	-.160	.252	.920	-.82	.50

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Research Question 3

The third research question addressed the difference between the effects of VI, VI+BK, and IR+BK on learners' ability of listening for specifics. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the three approaches to pre-listening support (i.e., VI, VI+BK, and IR+BK) on ability of listening for the specifics. In what follows, the descriptive data of learners' listening for specifics scores with respect to the four groups are reported in Table 9 and the results of ANOVA are presented in Table 10.

Table 9. Descriptive statistics for scores of listening for specifics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control Group	25	7.44	.870
VPI	25	7.52	1.295
VPI+BK	25	7.44	1.227
IR+BK	25	7.92	1.115
Total	100	7.58	1.139

Table 10. One-way ANOVA on scores of listening for specifics

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Between Groups	3.960	3	1.320	1.019	.388	.031
Within Groups	124.400	96	1.296			
Total	128.360	99				

As appeared in Table 9, the mean scores of listening for specifics were not equal for all of the four groups. However, as illustrated, the mean score of the IR+BK group is higher than that of the other three groups. Moreover, results of the ANOVA in Table 10 revealed that, as far as listening for specifics was concerned, there were no significant

differences between any of the VI, VI+BK, IR+BK, and control groups, $F = 1.019$, $P = .388$. On the whole, findings obtained from ANOVA showed no significant differences between the four groups.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question aimed to investigate if there was any significant difference between EFL learners' scores of listening for inferences in VI, VI+BK, and IR+BK groups. In order to examine the last question, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the scores of listening for inferences across the four groups. First, the descriptive data related to inference scores in the four groups are displayed in Table 11. Next, ANOVA results are presented in Table 12.

Table 11. Descriptive statistics for scores of listening for inferences

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control Group	25	4.08	1.412
VPI	25	3.88	1.201
VPI+BK	25	5.04	1.136
IR+BK	25	5.80	1.041
Total	100	4.70	1.418

Table 11 depicted that inference mean score of the VI group (M = 3.88) was smaller than that of the control group (M = 4.08). On the contrary, the means of the VI+BK and IR+BK groups were both larger than the mean of the control group. Later, a one-way ANOVA was performed to check the significance of these differences (see Table 12).

Table 12. One-way ANOVA on scores of listening for inferences

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Between Groups	59.560	3	19.853	13.668	.000	.299
Within Groups	139.440	96	1.453			
Total	199.000	99				

ANOVA results, demonstrated in Table 12, revealed that the differences between the four groups were statistically significant, $F = 13.668$, $P = .000$, $\eta_P^2 = .299$. Additionally, to find out the statistical significance of the differences between each pair of groups, the results of post-hoc Tukey HSD tests are presented in Table 13.

Table 13 revealed that, with regard to listening for making inferences, learners in VI+BK and IR+BK groups performed significantly better than learners in VI and control groups ($P < .05$). As presented in Table 13, no other significant differences were found between the other groups. Accordingly, results indicated that students' scores of listening for inferences were significantly higher in two of the experimental groups i.e., VI+BK and IR+BK.

Table 13. Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests for scores of listening for inferences

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control Group	VPI	.200	.341	.936	-.69	1.09
	VPI+BK	-.960*	.341	.030	-1.85	-.07
	IR+BK	-1.720*	.341	.000	-2.61	-.83
VPI	Control Group	-.200	.341	.936	-1.09	.69
	VPI+BK	-1.160*	.341	.005	-2.05	-.27
	IR+BK	-1.920*	.341	.000	-2.81	-1.03
VPI+BK	Control Group	.960*	.341	.030	.07	1.85
	VPI	1.160*	.341	.005	.27	2.05
	IR+BK	-.760	.341	.123	-1.65	.13
IR+BK	Control Group	1.720*	.341	.000	.83	2.61
	VPI	1.920*	.341	.000	1.03	2.81
	VPI+BK	.760	.341	.123	-.13	1.65

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Effects of Two Enhanced Content Related Support

The findings of the current study reveal that the two enhanced content related supports of BK+ IR and BK+ VI supports are effective in enhancing listening comprehension. The possible reasons why both types of enhanced content related pre-listening supports are beneficial for EFL learners is that both of them are theory-based. Such true/false mode contributes to better learning because students are engaged in hypothesis testing in which they test their self-formulated hypotheses and learn from mistakes. Thus, this way of presenting information leads to a deeper level of processing (Anderson, 1985). In addition to the presentation of background knowledge, students in these two classes are further led to receive either a vocabulary or an input repetition support. All in all, these two supports are proved to cognitively and emotionally prepare students to deal with listening tasks and enable them to bring pertaining prior knowledge as resources to overcome listening tasks. Furthermore, extending the results of past studies relating to the role of background knowledge though in a more general way by exploring the influence of the learners' pre-existing knowledge base or content schemata, such as Markham and Latham (1987), Long (1990), Chiang and Dunkel (1992), Schmidt-Rinehart (1994), Hashemi (2009), Hayati and Dastjerdi (2012), this study demonstrates that background knowledge taught in class in advance of listening tasks indeed facilitates listening comprehension. Regarding the usefulness of background knowledge, pre-listening support in the present study is also in line with prior studies (e.g., Chang & Read, 2006; Farrokhi & Modarres, 2012 & Herron et al., 1998).

With regard to listening sub-skills i.e. listening for the main idea, listening for specifics and listening for making inferences, the current study demonstrated that background knowledge support (BK) is the most effective for inferential questions. In other words, the enhanced content related support groups who had received background knowledge outperformed others on questions for making inferences. According to Mendelsohn (1995), the important role for pre-listening activities is "to activate the students' existing knowledge of the topic in order for them to link what they comprehend and to use this as a basis of their hypothesis-information, prediction, and inferencing" (p. 140). Possible reasons may be either due to the relative shortness of items for main idea sub-skill in comparison to the other two sub-skills which included double amount of test items. While there were twelve (12) items for checking each of the listening for the specifics and making inferences sub-skills, six (6) items were made for checking main idea sub-skill because of the shortness of the tasks. So, it is likely that the factor of chance could have been higher for answering main idea questions in comparison to the other two sub-skills or maybe it can be related to other intervening supports playing a negative or positive role when presented alongside background knowledge i.e. input repetition (IR) or vocabulary instruction (VI).

Effects of Input Repetition (IR) Support Accompanying Background Knowledge (BK)

It was shown that when introducing two supports at the same time, input repetition plus background knowledge (IR+BK) is the most efficient form of enhanced content related support for learners' overall listening performance. As claimed by Chang and Read (2006), repetition has always been an important strategy in second language learning and teaching, and, according to Hatch (1983), it also provides more processing time and clarifies the relationship of syntactic forms for learners. The current study also confirms the results of past studies done on the efficiency of input repetition like Berne (1995), Chiang and Dunkel (1992), and Chang and Read (2006). Thus, it is shown that learners can benefit from this enhanced form of support even with topics they are not familiar with.

Regarding the three listening sub-skills of listening for the main idea, listening for specifics, and listening for making inferences, input repetition support (IR) played a major role for inferential questions by possibly giving more time to learners to think, process and make deductions about the material they received. For the listening for specifics, it appears that when learners are listening to a talk, they can understand the details of the talk without the requirement to get the second chance of repetition though IR alongside BK support group performed better than the three other groups although the difference was not significant. In helping learners for answering listening for main idea questions, surprisingly, IR support performed slightly weaker than vocabulary instruction support (VI). The possible reasons could be firstly since the number of listening for main idea items were less than two other sub-skills due to the relative shortness of texts, this increased the chance of accidental good performance and

secondly maybe the role of the repetition of input over listening for main idea questions was not as effective as listening for inferences.

Effects of Vocabulary instruction (VP) Support Accompanying Background Knowledge (BK)

The combination of bottom-up and top-down processing in this enhanced form of support led to a significant result in comparison to vocabulary instruction (VI) and no pre-listening support groups. It seems that learners in this enhanced form of content related support relied upon their increased command of vocabulary knowledge to build a more solid mental model of the text, which in turn improved their comprehension. In addition, since they could resort to effective top-down processes of background knowledge (BK), their level of comprehension of L2 spoken text increased. So, learners not only had the opportunity to decode the smallest units (phonemes and syllables) in this enhanced form of support but they could also use background knowledge to predict content.

Effects of Vocabulary instruction (VI) Support

The results of current study indicated that offering vocabulary instruction support improved learner's overall listening comprehension in comparison to no pre-listening support group. So, its value cannot be ignored as claimed by Chung and Huang (1998), Bonk (2000), Chung (2002), Tsai (2002), Farrokhi and Modarres (2012), Pan (2012). But the improvement of VI support is not as significant as two enhanced content related supports i.e. background knowledge plus input repetition (BK+IR) and background knowledge plus vocabulary instruction (BK+VI).

In addition, VI support was the least useful form of support for overall listening comprehension of EFL intermediate learners revealing the point that pre-teaching words is not enough for activating schemata of learners. As Chang and Read's study showed the pre-teaching vocabulary tends to encourage learners to focus on the target vocabulary rather than the meaning of the whole passage as a whole. This problem was somehow tried to be resolved by introducing sentence practice but short term memory is also involved in this process so it could not be removed completely. The results of the current study demonstrate that vocabulary can be introduced besides another support like background knowledge to lead to a better result.

Given that both enhanced form of pre-listening supports have been shown to be significantly outperform control class, we come to the conclusion that two types of supports are effective in facilitating Iranian intermediate learners' English listening comprehension. Therefore, it can be claimed that the role of background knowledge and schemata is important in EFL listening because there are frequently significant mismatches between the speaker's and listener's schemata in the second language learning which lead to misunderstanding. In addition, in designing any kind of enhanced support, it was shown that input repetition is an essential part which cannot be ignored.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Some pedagogical implications can be drawn from the present study to be used by teachers, practitioners, and syllabus designers. Material developers can consider the point of incorporating enhanced content related pre-listening supports to make learners prepared for the main listening tasks. The results of this study are very promising to EFL teachers because it implies that there are more choices of theory-based enhanced pre-listening activities at hand. They could have the flexibility of choosing between these two enhanced types of pre-listening supports in terms of their teaching resources, personal teaching styles and so on without worrying whether their choice may be less effective than the other for their students. Or they could simply alternately use one of them so as to increase the variability and richness of teaching. Teachers could also be confident of these two types of enhanced listening techniques because both of the supports are theory-informed and research-proved.

There is surely a scope for further investigation since providing different kinds of pre-listening support is almost a new area in language pedagogy. First, this study introduced two enhanced forms of listening support by providing two supports at the same time. There are many other kinds of support that can also be introduced alongside each other. The arrangement of these enhanced forms can also be manipulated, for example, in vocabulary instruction support input repetition can also be included. Second, regarding the level of proficiency, one level (intermediate) was considered in this study. Future research can consider other levels of language learning or divide participants into two levels of high and low proficiency levels. Third, while in the present study multiple-choice item test was used for measuring the performance of learners, other types of questions like matching, true/false, or filling in the blank items can be used to check the effects of these enhanced supports. Other types of sub-skills can also be taken into consideration. Fourth, the effect of background knowledge support on learners with the same proficiency but different ages and genders in separate groups can also be dealt with in the future studies. Last, background knowledge was provided in some true/false sentences in this study. There can be other creative ways of introducing this support like a short comic text which also includes the key words of main task.

In accomplishing different parts of this study, there were some limitations. The first limitation restricting the generalizability of the findings was that of the level of proficiency of learners. While in the most studies done in the area of pre-listening support there are two levels of high and low, this study focused on intermediate level of proficiency. There possibly may be different results for either high proficiency or low proficiency levels. The second limitation is concerned with the listening materials used in this study. Although the topics were all generally unfamiliar to the learners, it seems there could have been better options which demand more background knowledge. The issue of the number of participants and also generalizability of data which involve human samples is another limitation. Controlling variables such as fatigue, unwillingness to participate especially regarding listening skill and the affective mood may have influenced the results.

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