IMPACT OF VOCABULARY PRETEACHING AND CONTENT PREVIEWING ON THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION OF ARABIC-SPEAKING EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of pre-listening activities on Arabic-speaking EFL learners' comprehension of spoken texts.
Background	This study aims to contribute to the current research and to increase our understanding about the effectiveness of pre-listening activities. Specifically, this study seeks to clarify some of the research in this area that seems to be incongruent.
Methodology	The study investigates two widely implemented activities in second language (L2) classrooms: vocabulary preteaching and content previewing. Ninety-three native-Arabic speaking EFL learners, whose proficiently levels were beginner, intermediate, or advanced, were randomly assigned to a control group or one of three experimental groups: the vocabulary-only (VO) group, content-only (CO) group, or vocabulary + content (VC) group. Each of the experimental groups received one of the treatments to determine which pre-listening activity was more effective and whether additional pre-listening activities yield additional comprehension. Listening comprehension of the aural text was measured by a test comprising 13 multiple-choice and true-false questions.
Contribution	The present study provided additional explanations regarding the long-standing contradicting results about vocabulary preteaching and content previewing.
Findings	The results showed that pre-listening activities had a positive impact on Arabic-speaking EFL learners' listening comprehension, with the VO group significantly increasing their scores on the posttest compared to those of the control or other groups. Vocabulary preteaching was particularly beneficial for more advanced learners. With regard to which pre-listening activity contributed the most to better listening comprehension, vocabulary preteaching was the most effective. Content

	previewing did not increase comprehension for the CO group and had no additional benefit for the VC group.
Recommendations for Practitioners	The results of this study suggest that providing L2 students with instruction on single words, multi-words, and idioms in the upcoming aural input has a positive impact on listening comprehension. The study provides positive evidence that vocabulary knowledge and word recognition play a major role in understanding L2 aural texts. It also provides support for the practice of vocabulary teaching in L2 listening classes
Recommendations for Researchers	This paper recommends that researchers explore new pre-listening activities that have never studied. Future research should be extended to include other nations and contextual situations to extend our knowledge about the effect of pre-listening activities. As far as listening comprehension can only be achieved when listeners are attentive and engaged, the listening text should be interesting and the lexical coverage of the listening text should be appropriate for all participants.
Future Research	The results are to be interpreted carefully because they are limited by the students' L2 proficiency, demographic, and cultural backgrounds (i.e., first language (L1) proficiency, age, gender, Middle Eastern culture). Results might be quite different if the study was conducted with different populations who have different life and language learning experiences (Vandergrift & Baker, 2015). Therefore, the results of this study indicate there is much room for improvement and a need for further research.
Keywords	Arabic-speaking EFL learners, content previewing, L2 listening, pre-listening activities, vocabulary preteaching

INTRODUCTION

Second language (L2) listening and listening comprehension has recently begun to capture the attention of global researchers from varied educational and cultural backgrounds and experiences. L2 listening publications have produced numerous distinguished reference books (e.g., Field, 2008, 2019; Ockey & Wagner, 2018; Rost, 2013; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012) and seminal empirical studies (e.g., Chang, 2007; Cross, 2015, 2017; Siegel, 2011, 2014; Vandergrift, 2007; Vandergrift & Baker, 2015; Yeldham, 2016; Yeldham & Gruba, 2016), tapping into diverse topics and current issues in the field. As the number of readers interested in articles about L2 listening has increased in the last few years, several scientific journals have opted to devote special issues to L2 listening and made web announcements calling for unique research ideas. L2 listening research has largely focused on best teaching practices and learning strategies that have the potential to improve listening comprehension and enhance L2 listening skills inside and outside the classroom. An underlying reason for the interest in L2 listening research is that L2 aural texts cause different comprehension problems for students in foreign language environments, particularly in one-way listening situations where there is no way to see or interact with the speaker (Chang & Read, 2006).

An important portion of L2 listening research has focused on the impact of pre-listening activities on facilitating comprehension of spoken texts. This area of research has interested many scholars and practitioners because there is a belief that pre-listening activities prepare students for listening and help reduce L2 listening anxiety (Chang & Read, 2008). Pre-listening activities that have received attention from researchers include vocabulary preteaching, content previewing, pre-reading questions, topic discussion, and phonological input (e.g., Barjesteh & Ghaseminia, 2019; Berne, 1995; Elkhafaifi, 2005; Jafari & Hashim, 2012; Madani & Kheirzadeh, 2022; Mihara, 2015). The purpose of this study is to contribute to the current research and to increase our understanding about the effectiveness of pre-listening activities. Specifically, this study seeks to clarify some of the research in this

area that seems to be incongruent. For example, there are studies that suggest that vocabulary pre-teaching is useful to EFL Taiwanese college students (e.g., Chung, 2002; Hsu & Hsu, 2007; Pan, 2012) and to EFL Iranian university students (e.g., Farrokhi & Modarres, 2012; Madani & Kheirza-deh, 2022). On the contrary, there are other studies that found no effect of vocabulary preteaching on listening comprehension by English-speaking learners of Spanish (e.g., Berne, 1995), EFL Tai-wanese students (e.g., Chang & Read, 2006), and EFL Chinese students (e.g., Li et al., 2012). Similarly, while there is a line of studies that confirmed the benefit of content discussion on listening pro-cessing of aural input to English-speaking learners of Spanish (e.g., Schmidt-Rinehart, 1994), there are other studies that found no effect on Chinese EFL learners (e.g., Chiang & Dunkel, 1992) and ESL learners of different first language (L1) backgrounds (e.g., Jensen & Hansen, 1995).

Due to some contradicting results found by the small number of previous studies, there is certainly a need for more research on pre-listening activities. This study attempts to contribute to the current research and to increase our understanding about the effectiveness of pre-listening activities by re-cruiting Arabic-speaking EFL learners as a population who have never been investigated in pre-lis-tening studies. To that end, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent does vocabulary preteaching and content previewing affect Arabic-speaking EFL learners' listening comprehension?

2. Does the impact of the two pre-listening activities differ among Arabic-speaking EFL learn-ers across different language proficiency levels?

3. How does Arabic-speaking EFL learners' listening comprehension compare across different pre-listening treatments?

LITERATURE REVIEW

PRE-LISTENING ACTIVITIES

From a pedagogical perspective, it does not seem fair to throw students right into the listening text without preparation. Students need to be tuned in so that they have an idea about what they are about to hear. This is called a *pre-listening stage*, which is designed to prepare students to focus on the actual listening task (Chang & Read, 2006). The rationale for the pre-listening stage is that existing knowledge about concepts, facts, and language are helpful when individuals need to process any type of information. When pre-listening-activities are presented in this stage, students can create new knowledge built on their existing knowledge. This connection between new knowledge and old knowledge assists students to more effectively process listening input they encounter (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

The pre-listening stage can be a short activity to introduce new vocabulary and sentence structures to students or an activity to preview the content of the upcoming listening text, which is designed to enhance students' engagement with the listening material. Other pre-listening activities include pre-viewing questions, listening to relevant topics, and discussing relevant topics. Without this pre-listen-ing stage, students cannot leverage their everyday listening skills and background information to make connections between what they expect and what they hear (Rost, 2013; Underwood, 1989). By performing pre-listening warm-up activities, students can be reminded of the vocabulary and the content that they will encounter in the upcoming listening task. More importantly, Buck (1995) points out that pre-listening activities provide a context for interpretation of the specific texts and can acti-vate students' prior knowledge. Mendelsohn (1995) argues that the critical role for pre-listening activi-ties 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). This study focuses on two types of pre-listening activities: vocabulary preteaching and con-tent previewing.

VOCABULARY PRETEACHING

Vocabulary plays a vital role in the construction and comprehension of any text in any language. Language texts are composed of words (main and function words of different lengths and difficulty). Therefore, word recognition and vocabulary knowledge are the key to understanding any listening text in any language (Rost, 2013; Wallace, 2022). In L2 listening research, there is a significant finding that L2 vocabulary plays a robust role in comprehension of L2 texts. The importance of vocabulary knowledge is more evident in listening to L2 texts because adequate comprehension of L2 aural texts requires a cohort of overwhelming receptive processes including phonological knowledge (e.g., auditory discrimination), syntactic knowledge, metacognition about listening, and working memory (Field, 2003; Mecartty, 2000; Vandergrift & Baker, 2015; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). If vocabulary proficiency falls short when dealing with the L2 listening demands, comprehension breakdowns could not be compensated for by the other existing language abilities. That being established, L2 practitioners have realized the importance of vocabulary for listening comprehension of L2 texts and investigated the impact of vocabulary teaching prior to listening to new texts. However, as stated earlier in this article, there is no total agreement on the effectiveness of vocabulary preteaching.

As mentioned earlier, vocabulary preteaching, as well as the other preparatory activities, can provide a context for interpretation and can activate prior knowledge that is useful for prediction and inferencing (Buck, 1995; Mendelsohn, 1995). Chung (2002) was one of the first studies that investigated the impact of vocabulary preteaching on listening comprehension of English-language videos. Question previewing was also included in the investigation that was carried out on EFL Taiwanese college students. Participants were assigned to three types of treatment (vocabulary preteaching, question previewing, and a combined treatment between of vocabulary preteaching and question previewing) and a control group. Vocabulary preteaching was found to have a positive effect on listening comprehension as students in the combined treatment, and those in the vocabulary preteaching treatment outperformed the control group. While the study concludes that "vocabulary preteaching can increase students' word power and help them understand texts more easily" (Chung, 2002, p. 239), it emphasizes that the maximum benefit of vocabulary preteaching can be achieved if it is combined with question previewing.

Hsu and Hsu (2007) was another study of L2 listening that focused on lexical collocation. The study was designed to explore the impact of collocation preteaching on Taiwanese beginner and advanced EFL learners who were also English majors prior to taking a listening comprehension test. For a period of three weeks, two different types of instruction were given: single-word vocabulary instruction and collocation instruction. The results showed that participants in the collocation instruction group gained higher mean scores in the comprehension test than students in the single-word vocabulary teaching. The study, however, found no significant difference between participants based on the language proficiency level. Chen and Tsai (2012) argued that Hsu and Hsu's study "was focused on the pre-listening phase of instruction and the product of listening, rather than the listening processes that help language learners improve overall as listeners" (p. 192).

One of the latest studies that found evidence of the usefulness of vocabulary preteaching was Madani and Kheirzadeh (2022). Four types of pre-listening activities were investigated in the study: vocabulary preteaching, content discussion, pre-reading questions, and topic discussion. As far as vocabulary preteaching is concerned, new and difficult words in the target listening task were taught to the elementary- and advanced-level EFL student participants in the study. After students' mastery of these words was orally checked, the two groups of students were post-tested on two different multiple-choice tests. The study found that vocabulary preteaching had resulted in better listening comprehension for both groups.

While these studies all point to the benefits of preteaching vocabulary, Berne (1995) was one of the early studies that suggested that the impact of preteaching vocabulary was minimal compared to other types of listening assistance. Berne investigated the effect of question previewing, preteaching

vocabulary, and repeated input on English-speaking learners of Spanish. A video-taped lecture was played then the subjects responded to a multiple-choice question test and a written recall test. The lecture was played again and the multiple-choice test was administered again. The study found after the first listening that subjects who previewed the questions outperformed those who studied vocabulary. After the second listening, the results showed that all students including the control group significantly improved their listening comprehension. The study concluded that repeated input was the most effective form of listening support.

Chang and Read (2006) was another study that revealed that vocabulary preteaching was not as effective as once assumed. The participants in their study were Taiwanese EFL college students enrolled in a mandatory English listening course. The investigation was focused on three types of pre-listening support: previewing the questions, providing background information about the topic, and vocabulary preteaching. Students were provided with vocabulary lists and were given 25 minutes to study words by themselves. After that, the pronunciation and the meanings of words were given by the teacher. Lastly, mini dialogues were played to the students to practice hearing how the target words sounded in actual speech. The results indicated that providing information about the topic was the most useful pre-listening activity. In contrast, vocabulary preteaching was the least effective type of pre-listening support. The researchers concluded that these "findings are generally consistent with the results of the small number of previous studies in this area but there is certainly scope for further investigation" (Chang & Read, 2006, p. 375). The study's explanation for these finding relied on students' reports from follow-up interviews. Beginner students stated that they did not have a solid knowledge of the target words before the listening task. Advanced students reported that the newly introduced vocabulary list distracted them from understanding the listening.

Although the studies that included vocabulary preteaching in their investigation have provided very insightful information, they have been criticized for not paying attention to the type of pre-listening vocabulary. As noted by Pan et al. (2018), "in all of the existing studies on pre-listening vocabulary instruction, with the only exception of Hsu and Hsu (2007), the instruction was on single words" (p. 192). The current study was designed carefully to include different types of vocabulary in the vocabulary preteaching treatment.

CONTENT PREVIEWING

The second important pre-listening activity is content previewing of the input that students are about to encounter in the listening task. Similar to vocabulary preteaching, content previewing makes the context easier to interpret and activates one's schema (Buck, 1995). Content previewing provides students with a good understanding of upcoming concepts and facts imbedded in the aural input, which should enhance their engagement with the listening task. Poor listening proficiency could be compensated for by the study of the topics in the aural input prior to the listening task (Chang & Read, 2006). Compared to vocabulary preteaching, content previewing seems to have attracted less attention from researchers as many fewer studies have been conducted (e.g., Chang & Read, 2006, 2008; Madani & Kheirzadeh, 2022).

As previously mentioned, content previewing and providing background information about the topic was one type of pre-listening support investigated by Chang and Read (2006). For about 25 minutes, students individually read prepared background materials written in Chinese; then, for other 25 minutes, the teacher led a class discussion on the topic. The study found that students in the content previewing group outperformed the other groups. The authors concluded that content previewing resulted in better listening comprehension than the other forms of listening support for students. In a similar study, Chang and Read (2008) examined the effects of vocabulary preteaching, content previewing, question previewing, and repeated input on reducing anxiety, and consequently increasing listening comprehension when taking L2 listening tests. Students in the content previewing and repeated listening groups achieved significant higher scores in the listening test than the other groups.

Similar results were found by Madani and Kheirzadeh (2022), who investigated the impact of content previewing in addition to the three other types of listening support. Content previewing was achieved through a class discussion led by the teacher to help students focus on and engage with the content of the listening task. After the students participated in the discussion, they listened to the recording. The results indicate that content discussion resulted in higher listening scores for advanced students.

This study sets out to investigate two important pre-listening activities: vocabulary preteaching and content previewing. Because most previous studies taught only single-word vocabulary as treatment for the vocabulary preteaching, this study aims to include single words, multiword lexical items (collocations), and idioms in the investigation. Topic discussion and content previewing were considered as one type of pre-listening support because by looking at how they were usually carried out in previous studies, it was determined that they share many basic features. Question previewing was not included in the investigation because it is sometimes not considered as a pre-listening activity in previous studies. For example, Chang and Read (2008) declared that "all four groups were allowed to preview the questions, so this was in fact the control condition" (p. 8). Repeated input is obviously not a pre-listening activity, so it was not investigated.

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were 93 speakers of L1 Arabic (M_{age}= 18.66 years, SD = .41) who were studying English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. They were pre-university male students enrolled in a preparatory year program in a Saudi public university. For the first half of the program's study load (12 credit points), students are given an English course consisting of two different classes: reading/writing class and listening/speaking class. In the other half of the program's study load (12 credit points), students are taught scientific courses such as math, physics, biochemistry, and computer science. Typically, students have been learning English in public schools for approximately eight years before joining the program.

The participants were recruited through convenience sampling (they were taught by the author). The advantages of this sampling strategy are (a) participants usually have the desired characteristics for the purpose of the research and (b) the sampling usually results in willing, informative participants, which is necessary for a rich dataset (Aiken, 1997; Dörnyei, 2007). The teacher collected paper consents from participants to be part of the experiment and assured them that their grades would not be affected by the outcomes of the study.

The participants, who were randomly assigned by the program to four similar-size classes, were assigned to four different research groups (three empirical groups and a control group). Twenty-four participants were assigned to a vocabulary-only (VO) group, 21 participants were assigned to a content-only (CO) group, 24 participants were in a vocabulary + content (VC) group, and 24 were assigned to a control group. According to the students' self-report, their listening proficiency levels were a mix of beginner, intermediate, and advanced. A Kruskal–Wallis H nonparametric test was conducted to test for significant differences between the four groups in listening proficiently levels. According to the results of Kruskal–Wallis test in Table 1, there was no significant difference prior to treatment in listening comprehension ability across the experimental and control groups (χ^2 (3, N = 90) = 6.32, p = .09).

Table 1. Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for Listening Proficiency Levels Across the Four Groups

Group	Beginner (1)	Intermediate (2)	Advanced (3)	Total	*Median**	*Mean rank*	Kruskal-Wallis Test*
VO	3	10	11	24	2.0	57.15	$\chi^2 = 6.32$, $p = .09$
CO	7	8	6	21	2.0	43.57	
VC	4	15	5	24	2.0	46.46	
Control	5	17	2	24	2.0	40.40	
Total	19	50	24	93			

Note. **** Medians, rather than means, were calculated, and a nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis H test was performed rather than a parametric t-test because the proficiency level data were ordinal (not scale).

LISTENING INPUT

The listening text used in this study was a 4.54-min talk between two friends about local newspapers selected from the ESL Lounge Student website. The transcript of the talk was analyzed using Lextutor VocabProfilers (Cobb, 2018) and the BNC/COCA word lists (Nation, 2017) to determine its lexical profile (the proportion of words that are found in different word-frequency lists). Results of the analysis showed that the transcript contained 831 running words and that the most frequent 2,000-word families together with proper nouns provided 95.2% coverage of the script's total running words. In the research of lexical coverage and vocabulary size necessary for adequate listening comprehension of English texts, 95% lexical coverage was found to be sufficient for adequate listening comprehension (e.g., van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2013). Thus, the lexical coverage of the transcript was believed to be appropriate for all participants across the three listening proficiently levels.

DATA COLLECTION

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

For each group, the data was collected during their scheduled classes in a single session of approximately one hour depending on the group classification and the type of treatment. At the beginning of each session, the researcher announced to the students the purpose of the study and explained research procedures in details. Questions and inquiries raised by participants regarding research procedures or data collection were answered in an appropriate manner. When it was believed that the research purpose and procedures were clear to students, the researcher began collecting data. The data collection procedure involved three stages for the experimental groups and two stages for the control group as follows.

In the pre-test stage, the pre-test materials were first distributed, then the listening input was played twice to the students. Test materials were handed out before listening began because, in this study, question preview is not considered as a pre-listening activity (Chang & Read, 2008) even though previous studies reported a facilitating role of question preview on comprehension (e.g., Chung, 2002). After the second listening, the students were given 10 minutes to finish the test.

In the treatment stage, treatment was given to the experimental groups for approximately 30 minutes depending on the type of treatment. The VO group received vocabulary preteaching instruction, the CO group was supported by providing them with content previewing, and the VC was given both vocabulary instruction and content previewing. For the VO and VC groups, vocabulary preteaching involved providing students with a translation list of 22 key single words, multiword lexical items (collocations), and idioms (see Appendix A). Also, a spoken (recorded) list of the vocabulary along with the translation was provided and played so that students got familiar with the pronunciation of the new vocabulary items. The inclusion of the target vocabulary items was in consultation with the two experienced teachers teaching students with the same characteristics. Unfamiliar and difficult lexical items in the listening input in relation to students' cultural and language backgrounds were

included in the list. For the CO and VC groups, content previewing involved providing students with an outline supported with pictures stating the main themes and supporting points of the listening input (see Appendix B; pictures are omitted in the appendix). The researcher illustrated the outline, summarized the main themes and supporting points of the talk, and responded to students' questions.

Finally, the post-test stage was similar to the pre-test stage except that students were able to keep the supporting materials (i.e., the vocabulary list and the outline) while taking the test. As opposed to the pre-test stage, no time restriction was set after the second listening in this stage because students were allowed to refer to the supporting materials during the test to maximize the benefit of the pre-listening activities. However, all student finished the test in a time similar to the pre-test.

COMPREHENSION TEST

Listening comprehension of the aural text was measured by one test comprising 7 multiple-choice questions and 6 true-false questions (see Appendix C). The test was created by the website from which the listening text was obtained, and no modifications were made. The reliability of the test was checked by computing the internal consistency of the 13 items using the Cronbach Alpha p coefficient. The reliability coefficient ($N = 93$, Cronbach's alpha = .71) is considered acceptable in the field of L2 acquisition (Dörnyei, 2007). The same test was used as a pre-test and as a post-test. The scoring process for the test assigned 1 point for each correct answer, with a possible total score of 13. Two experienced English teachers were consulted about the validity of the test; they agreed that the test questions could be answered correctly only by listening to the aural text and by comprehending the content. Also, we opted not to translate the test into participants' L1 in order to maintain its authenticity and validity, although it is suggested to write listening comprehension tests in the test-takers' L1 if they are all from the same L1 background (e.g., Buck, 2001). Nevertheless, translation of some words into Arabic was provided verbally to students upon request.

RESULTS

THE EFFECT OF VOCABULARY PRETEACHING AND CONTENT PREVIEWING ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION

The first research question, "To what extent does vocabulary preteaching and content previewing affect Arabic-speaking EFL learners' listening comprehension?", concerns the effect of pre-listening activities on listening comprehension measured by comparing the average scores of the pre-test and the post-test using the paired samples *t* test. To find out if there was a significant difference in the average scores between the two tests for each group in the study, data were split by groups in SPSS then a paired samples *t* test was performed for each group. The paired samples *t* test is the appropriate test to perform in quasi-experimental studies in which the same measure is used for the same participants at two time points (i.e., as the pre-test and post-test) before and after the intervention (Dörnyei, 2007). As shown in Table 2, the paired samples *t* tests indicate that only for the VO group was the average score of the post-test was significantly different from the pre-test ($p = .037$). For all the other groups, the average score of the post-test was not significantly different from the pre-test ($p > .05$).

**Table 2. Paired-Sample t-Tests for the Pre-test and Post-test Scores
Across the Treatment and Control Groups**

Group	N	Pre-test mean (SD)	Post-test mean (SD)	t	d	p
VO	24	8.41 (2.44)	9.66 (2.05)	-1.848	23	.037
CO	21	7.42 (1.98)	8.00 (2.32)	-.760	20	.456
VC	24	7.75 (2.47)	8.54 (2.76)	-.975	23	.340
Control	24	7.41 (1.99)	7.50 (2.30)	-.134	23	.895

THE INFLUENCE OF L2 LISTENING PROFICIENCY IN PRE-LISTENING ACTIVITIES

Since previous studies found that the impact of pre-listening activities was influenced by students' L2 proficiency (e.g., Madani & Kheirzadeh, 2022), data were analyzed by listening proficiency levels using a paired samples *t* test in order to provide the answer to the second research question, "Does the impact of the two pre-listening activities differ among Arabic-speaking EFL learners across different language proficiency levels?" As Table 3 shows, the paired samples *t* tests indicated that the average scores of the post-test were significantly higher in the VO and VC groups for the advanced students only ($p < .05$).

**Table 3. Paired-Sample t-Tests for the Pre-test and Post-test Scores
Across the Groups Split by L2 Listening Proficiency**

Group	L2 listening proficiency	N	Pre-test mean (SD)	Post-test mean (SD)	t	d	p
VO							
	Beginner	3	9.00 (3.60)	7.33 (2.51)	.472	2	.683
	Intermediate	10	8.50 (2.01)	9.30 (1.56)	-1.395	9	.196
	Advanced	11	8.18 (2.71)	10.63 (1.85)	-2.516	10	.031
CO							
	Beginner	7	7.14 (1.34)	6.85 (1.06)	.420	6	.689
	Intermediate	8	8.37 (2.06)	7.87 (2.23)	.413	7	.692
	Advanced	6	6.50 (2.25)	9.50 (2.94)	-1.772	5	.137
VC							
	Beginner	4	8.75 (4.27)	5.00 (1.41)	1.567	3	.215
	Intermediate	15	7.73 (1.98)	8.46 (2.26)	-1.000	14	.334
	Advanced	5	7.00 (2.44)	11.60 (.54)	-3.944	4	.017
Control							
	Beginner	5	7.40 (2.19)	7.40 (1.94)	.000	4	1.000
	Intermediate	17	7.29 (1.89)	7.35 (2.28)	-.096	16	.925
	Advanced	2	8.50 (3.53)	9.00 (4.24)	.000	1	.942

THE COMPARISON OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION ACROSS DIFFERENT PRE-LISTENING TREATMENTS

The answer to the third research question, "How does Arabic-speaking EFL learners' listening comprehension compare across different pre-listening treatments?", was sought by performing a one-way ANCOVA to examine any statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores among the four research conditions (i.e., VO, CO, VC, and Control groups). Pre-test scores were entered in the model as covariates. The results indicate that, after controlling for the pre-test scores, there was a significant difference between the four groups on the post-test score (F (3, 88) = 3.98, p = .01). A Bonferroni post-hoc test of the post-test revealed that the VO Group had significantly higher scores than the CO group ($p < .05$) and the Control group ($p < .001$), indicating that the listening comprehension was significantly different. There was no significant difference between the CO, VC groups and Control group on the post-test score ($p > .05$).

DISCUSSION

The paired t test showed that the average score of the post-test was significantly higher for only the VO group. Hence, regarding the first research question (whether vocabulary preteaching and content previewing enhance listening comprehension), the results indicated that vocabulary preteaching increases listening comprehension. This contradicts the findings of some studies that showed that vocabulary preteaching was not useful such as Chang and Read (2006, 2008). Those studies explained that vocabulary preteaching failed to assist listening comprehension because an adequate acquisition of new words takes some time before students can adequately utilize them in upcoming listening tasks. Chand and Read's studies also suggested that the provision of a vocabulary list should be provided to students long enough before listening in order to prevent hindered comprehension caused by inadequately learned vocabulary. However, this study contradicts Chang and Read's (2006, 2008) findings.

Our results are consistent with previous findings that providing students with a list of vocabulary from the aural input could increase listening comprehension (e.g., Chung, 2002; Hsu & Hsu, 2007; Madani & Kheirzadeh, 2022). Our study is in line with the results of research in L2 vocabulary learning and L2 listening that provided support for the critical role of vocabulary in listening comprehension. The reason why vocabulary preteaching was so effective for the VO group could be that the aural text used was short and the vocabulary list was relative inclusive, so students gained a good grasp of the most important vocabulary and, therefore, understood the context of the listening input. As stated by Chang and Read (2006), "preparatory activities can provide a context for interpretation and can activate background knowledge" (p. 376). While neither the context nor content of the aural input was explicitly previewed in the VO group, vocabulary preteaching was perhaps enough to create the same or similar effects.

With regard to explicitly providing students with the content of the input prior to listening, the results suggested that content previewing did not increase listening comprehension. This is in contrast to Chang and Read (2006, 2008) and Madani and Kheirzadeh (2022). The reason why content previewing was not effective in this study may be that "acquiring of background knowledge contributed to a more global understanding of the text which takes longer time and more effort to process" (Chang & Read, 2008, p. 4). Another reason could be that the theme or the topic of the listening input, which was a critique of three newspapers in the UK, did not interest students or was not familiar to them because of the different cultural backgrounds or due to their young ages. According to Leeser (2004) and Long (1990), listening comprehension is highly influenced by topic familiarity. Hence, students might have suffered from *controlled processing* of the input. As opposed to *automatic processing*, controlled processing occurs when students consciously focus on specific parts of the listening when the topic of the aural text is unfamiliar to them (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Controlled

processing hinders students from keeping up with the incoming input and, consequently, causes breakdowns in comprehension.

Some studies suggested that combining two treatments would lead to better results, such as combined treatment of vocabulary preteaching and question previewing resulting in better listening comprehension (e.g., Chung, 2002); and combined treatment of vocabulary preteaching and providing background knowledge leading to better reading comprehension (e.g., Hsieh, 1999). However, this study found that the combination of vocabulary preteaching and content previewing was also not effective for students, The reason could be that learning new lexical items and processing new content from unfamiliar aural input in a relatively short period of time was a difficult task for students to perform. Students' comprehension was hindered by the heavy learning load that needed to be processed within a few minutes. Similar results were found by Chiang and Dunkel (1992) and Jensen and Hansen (1995). Although according to the results in Table 3, the combined treatment did lead to gains only for the advanced students; we assume that their performance was mainly influenced by vocabulary preteaching rather than by content previewing due to the reasons explained above.

The impact of L2 listening proficiency in pre-listening activities was evident in the results of this study, although the results must be interpreted carefully because of the small sample sizes, particularly for the beginner and advanced proficiency levels. The analysis indicated that pre-listening activities worked better only for the most proficient students. For examples, only advanced students achieved significantly higher post-test scores in the VO and VC groups. Our results are in disagreement with previous studies that found that the effect of vocabulary preteaching was similar among students of different proficiency levels (e.g., Hsu & Hsu, 2007; Madani & Kheirzadeh, 2022).

The comparison of listening comprehension across the four different pre-listening treatments using ANCOVA revealed that the vocabulary preteaching treatment was the only effective condition, resulting in significantly better listening comprehension for students overall. The content previewing and the combined treatment conditions were not effective because no significant higher scores were detected by the data analysis. However, these results were affected by the small sample sizes in the research groups (average group size = 23.25). According to Dörnyei (2007), factor analytic and other multivariate procedures (such as ANCOVA) require at least 100 participants in each group.

CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to increase our existing knowledge about pre-listening activities, to contribute to the current literature, and to provide additional explanations regarding the long-standing contradicting results about vocabulary preteaching and content previewing. The results of this study suggest that providing Arabic-speaking EFL students with instruction on single words, multiwords, and idioms in the upcoming aural input has a positive impact on listening comprehension. The study provides positive evidence that vocabulary knowledge and word recognition play a major role in understanding L2 aural texts. It also provides support for the practice of vocabulary teaching in L2 listening classes. With regard to the impact of the second pre-listening activity (i.e., content previewing), the results provide no evidence for its effect on listening comprehension. The study provides possible explanations for these findings; however, the reader might have been left with more questions than answers. Finally, the results are to be interpreted carefully because they are limited by the students' L2 proficiency, demographic, and cultural backgrounds (i.e., L1 proficiency, age, gender, Middle Eastern culture). Results might be quite different if the study was conducted with different populations who have different life and language learning experiences (Vandergrift & Baker, 2015). Therefore, the results of this study indicate there is much room for improvement and a need for further research.

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APPENDIX A

TARGET VOCABULARY ITEMS

1. Be too awful for words
2. Horoscopes
3. Campaign
4. Strike a nerve with
5. Populist journalism
6. Article
7. Out-of-date healthcare facilities
8. Thank heavens for that
9. Devote
10. Feel ashamed
11. Needs to meet all the needs
12. Famine
13. Ambitious journalist
14. Fish for
15. Cynical
16. Place an ad
17. Wreck
18. Exaggerate
19. Morbid
20. Bet
21. Efficiency
22. It's survival of the fittest

APPENDIX B

CONTENT PREVIEWING

Ben Vs. Gemma	
Ben likes:	**Gemma likes:**
The Times	The Herald
Ben dislikes:	The City Journal
The Herald	**Gemma dislikes:**
The City Journal	The Times

The Times	The Herald	The City Journal
Points mentioned:	**Points mentioned:**	**Points mentioned:**
- The jobs section 20 pages every day with sports 5 pages every day to baseball stats - Campaign for the children's hospital - Price	- A story about another newspaper - Baseball news - The jobs section	- Baseball news - Famine in Africa last week

APPENDIX C

LISTENING COMPREHENSION TEST

1. Why does Gemma mention the horoscopes in The Times?
   - o   To say it was a serious paper.
   - o   To say something she was going to miss.
   - o   As a way of criticizing the newspaper.

2. What is Gemma's attitude towards the children's hospital campaign carried out by The Times?
   - o   They were being hypocritical.
   - o   It was always doomed to failure.
   - o   It was very popular.

3. How does Ben justify the heavy baseball coverage in The Times?
   - o   There is little else to write about.
   - o   There's no shame in celebrating success.
   - o   The Times gives a lots of space to baseball because the other newspapers don't.

4. What does Ben think about those who work for The Journal?
   - o   They write awful, boring articles.
   - o   They write articles which are of little relevance to him.
   - o   They would like to write for bigger and better newspapers.

5. What does Gemma think will happen to the jobs that are currently advertised in The Times?
   - o The local economy will be affected but not destroyed.
   - o People will find in the ads in other newspapers.
   - o One of the other newspapers will open a local jobs newspaper.

6. What two purposes does Gemma think local people use a local newspaper for in the age of TV and Internet?
   - o Jobs and obituaries.
   - o Jobs and TV listings.
   - o To find out what's on locally and who's died.

7. What do Gemma and Ben agree about?
   - o They will both stop buying local newspapers.
   - o Prices are likely to rise in the near future.
   - o There are too many local newspapers.

8. The Times is closing down.
   - o True
   - o False

9. There are three other newspapers in their city.
   - o True
   - o False

10. Gemma likes baseball.
   - o True
   - o False

11. The Times has a good jobs section.
   - o True
   - o False

12. The Times is expensive.
   - o True
   - o False

13. There were more local newspapers in the past.
   - o True
   - o False

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