บทความวิจัย

ผลของกลวิธีการตั้งคำถามก่อนฟังและการตั้งคำถามหลังฟังต่อความเข้าใจในการฟังภาษาอังกฤษ

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ 2 ประการคือ เพื่อเปรียบเทียบผลของการใช้กลวิธีตั้งคำถามก่อนฟังและการตั้งคำถามหลังฟังที่มีต่อความเข้าใจในการฟัง และเพื่อศึกษาเจตคติของนักศึกษาที่มีต่อกลวิธีทั้งสองกลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นนักศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษชั้นปีที่ 3 มหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์ วิทยาเขตปัตตานี จำนวน 58 คนโดยแบ่งเป็นกลุ่ม A จำนวน 29 คนได้รับกลวิธีตั้งคำถามก่อนฟังและกลุ่ม B จำนวน 29 คน ได้รับกลวิธีตั้งคำถามหลังฟัง เครื่องมือที่ใช้คือ แบบทดสอบวัดความสามารถทางการฟังและการตอบคำถามเกี่ยวกับเจตคติต่อกลวิธีที่ใช้ วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้ t-test พบว่า กลวิธีทั้งสองส่งผลต่อระดับความเข้าใจในการฟัง กล่าวคือ กลุ่มที่ใช้กลวิธีตั้งคำถามก่อนฟังสามารถตอบคำถามชนิดจับความได้ดีกว่าอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ ส่วนกลุ่มที่ใช้กลวิธีตั้งคำถามหลังฟังสามารถตอบคำถามชนิดตีความได้ดีกว่า ในด้านเจตคติต่อกลวิธีที่ใช้ พบว่า กลุ่มที่ใช้กลวิธีตั้งคำถามก่อนฟังพึงพอใจในระดับสูงต่อกลวิธีนี้ ขณะที่กลุ่มที่ใช้กลวิธีตั้งคำถามหลังฟังมีความพึงพอใจในระดับกลาง ข้อเสนอแนะสำหรับการทำวิจัยต่อไป คือ วัดการใช้กลวิธีทั้ง 2 แบบต่อความสามารถทางการฟังของบุคคลเดียวกัน และเสนอแนะให้ครูพิจารณาและเลือกใช้กลวิธีทั้ง 2 แบบให้เหมาะสมกับชนิดของคำถาม

คำสำคัญ: กลวิธีคำถามก่อนฟัง, กลวิธีคำถามหลังฟัง, ความเข้าใจในการฟัง, เจตคติ

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Effects of Pre-Listening Question and Post-Listening Question Techniques on English Listening Comprehension

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were twofold: 1) to compare the effects of two questioning techniques, pre-listening and post-listening techniques, on listening comprehension, and 2) to investigate the subjects' attitudes towards the two techniques. Fifty-eight of third year English major students at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani were the subjects in the study. The pre-listening question technique was administered to Group A of 29 subjects and the post-listening question technique to Group B of 29 subjects. Listening comprehension tests were the instrument of the study. Both groups were also asked to give information related to their attitudes towards the techniques administered. The data were analyzed using a series of t-tests. It was found that both techniques had an effect on the subjects' listening comprehension. The subjects to whom the pre-listening question technique was administered performed significantly better in responding to local questions. The subjects given the post-listening question technique, on the other hand, gained significantly higher scores on global questions. Regarding the subjects' attitudes towards the techniques administered, the subjects were highly satisfied with the use of the pre-listening question technique whilst those given the post-listening question technique expressed a moderate preference. Therefore, it is recommended that further research be carried out using a single subject group exposed to both techniques. It is also suggested that classroom teachers use the two techniques in accordance with the question types.

Keywords: attitude, listening comprehension, pre-listening question technique, post-listening question technique

Introduction

The use of comprehension questions is a common method in assessing listening skill (Buck, 2001). Very often teachers give students questions in order to test their listening ability. Hence, the question-answer approach is one of the techniques most frequently used in giving language practice in the listening-speaking session (Ur, 1984; Byrne, 1986). In practice, questions are placed at different stages of listening activities. The questions might be given to students before listening to the listening text-the pre-listening question technique or after listening to the listening text - the post-listening question technique. Whether to implement the former or the latter practically depends on the teachers' decision. Criticisms on both approaches from scholars and researchers have subsequently followed.

The advantages of previewing questions in listening comprehension practice have been experienced. Lingzhu (2003) suggested that by reading the questions prior to listening to the text, questions can serve as useful guide for students to help them filter out unimportant information and focus on significant information. She also argued that questions should be given before listening because in the real world listeners always know the topic or some information about it before listening. In addition, pre-listening questions have been found to help listeners eliminate ambiguous interpretations of the message and to focus on the purpose of listening (Willis, 1981; Thompson, 1995). Another advocate, Buck (1990), suggested that previewing questions gave useful clues about the content of the story. He believed that the questions would encourage students to try to listen for answers to the questions. Without reading the questions before listening to the text, they would understand less. Another advantage of this technique was confirmed by Mendelsohn (1995) that this technique help to activate the students' existing knowledge of the topic. The students would also use questions given before listening as a basis for prediction and inference.

Despite the above mentioned strengths, some ESL scholars have suggested using an alternative technique: the post-listening question technique. This technique was believed to encourage listeners to understand the global meaning of the listening text (Ur, 1984; Underwood, 1989). This is maintained that by receiving the questions after listening, listeners would not be led to pay more or less attention to particular parts of the text. Instead, they would concentrate equally on all parts of the listening text. It is further argued that this technique encourages listeners to summarize the text heard (Weir, 1993). Therefore, they would understand the overall meaning of the text before reading the questions leading to their being able to demonstrate the listening ability through responding to the questions.

Considering the strengths of both the pre-listening question and the post-listening question techniques stated above, it could be concluded that each technique enhances students' listening ability differently. However, not much research to assure the effects of the use of these two techniques on listening has been carried out. Buck (1990) and Sherman (1997) are the only two

scholars having an interest in the effects of question positions on listening skill. As for Thailand, the database on Thai Dissertations has revealed no studies conducted in this area of interest. Although some studies in Thailand have focused on the effects of question positions in reading comprehension, it is too simplistic to connect the observed effects on reading to listening comprehension. Thus, English teachers are still not convinced which technique represents the best way to increase students' listening ability in responding to questions. Therefore, we are interested in investigating the effects of the pre-listening question and the post-listening question techniques on English listening comprehension in order to provide useful information for English teachers in using each method appropriately. Together with this main purpose, and with the assumption that attitude could be a factor affecting the ability to do listening tests, we would also like to find out the subjects' attitudes towards the technique administered to them.

Purposes

The purposes of the present study were (1) to examine the effects of the pre-listening question and the post-listening question techniques on listening comprehension among all subjects, the good listeners, and the poor listeners, (2) to examine the effects of the pre-listening question and the post-listening question techniques on the enhancement of the subjects' ability to respond to both local and global questions, and (3) to investigate the subjects' attitudes towards the two techniques.

Methodology

Subjects

Seventy-four third year university students from Prince of Songkla University, Pattani were initially invited to join the study. The listening section of a standardized test from a TOEFL test was administered to all the students. Based on the scores, 58 students out of 74 students were selected as the subjects in the study. That is, 58 subjects with comparable listening proficiency were identified and they were then divided into 2 groups of 29 subjects each, named Group A and Group B, respectively. According to the scores, each group was further divided into two sub-groups of the high and the low listening proficiency groups of 8 subjects each. Eight subjects who got the top high scores of each group were categorized as good listeners and Eight subjects who got the bottom low scores of each group categorized as poor listeners. In each group, the 13 students who had scores in the middle between the high and low ranges were not studied.

Instruments

Besides the TOEFL test used to group the subjects, four English listening comprehension tests were administered. The test sets consisted of 4 stories: *Reception Service, Ann Web interview, Wilar the crocodile man, and Sue's story.* All of the four texts were adapted from a commercial textbook *Intermediate Matters 1996* (Bell and Gower, 1996). 40 short-answer questions were constructed based on the stories to tap two levels of information, local and global. The local questions required the subjects to locate specific details or information from the text. The global questions, on the other

hand, required the subjects to synthesize or infer information from the text. Totally, 40 questions were elicited from the 4 texts and the number of each question type in each text was different, as shown in Table 1 below.

In addition, 2 questionnaires were used to find out the subjects' attitudes. Each questionnaire was constructed and modified based on the features which were reviewed and compiled by ESL scholars (Underwood, 1989; Buck, 1990; Weir, 1993; Sherman, 1997; and Lingzhu, 2003). All items in the 2 questionnaires were weighted following a Likert five point rating scale. Eleven items were constructed for the questionnaire of the pre-listening question technique and 10 items for the questionnaire of the post-listening question technique (see Figure 6 and 7).

Testing Procedure

Before the actual test administration, the subjects in both groups were given the information about the topic of the text, the question types they were going to answer, and the meanings of unfamiliar words. Afterwards, both groups were taking the actual tests administered to them.

Group A subjects, using the pre-listening question technique, were given a handout containing questions prepared specifically for this research. They had 5 minutes to study those questions before giving the handout back to the researchers. Then, they listened to the text twice during which they were allowed to take notes. After that, the subjects were given the question handout again; this time they were allowed 15 minutes to write down their answers on the answer sheet. Group A subjects were required to do this procedure to all 4 texts.

Unlike the test administration using the pre-listening question technique, Group B subjects were administered the post-listening question technique after listening to the text twice. Like Group A subjects, they were allowed to take notes while listening. Different from Group A, however, they did not see the questions before listening. Instead, they were given the question handout only after they had listened to the text. They also had 15 minutes to answer the questions on the answer sheet. This procedure was applied to Group B subjects in every text.

Immediately after the subjects finished the 4 tests, they were given the attitude questionnaires. Subjects in Group A answered the attitude questionnaire related to the pre-listening question technique while subjects in Group B answered the attitude questionnaire related to the post-listening question technique.

Table 1 Number of Test Items at the Two Comprehension Levels

No.	Text	Type of listening question		No. of questions
		Local questions	Global questions	
1	Reception service	5	2	7
2	Ann Web interview	7	3	10
3	Wilar the crocodile man	7	4	11
4	Sue's story	8	4	12
Total		27	13	40

Data Analysis

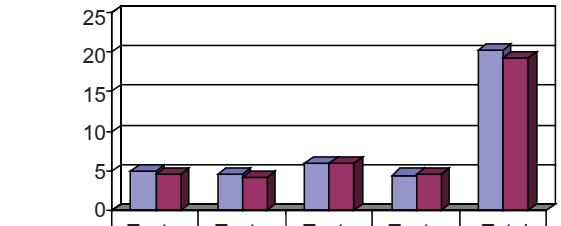
The data analysis was carried out using the computer package program. The raw scores derived from the 4 listening tests were first calculated into mean scores, and then a series of t-tests was run to determine if there were differences between the mean scores. In addition, the data obtained from the five-point rating scale were analyzed to find the mean scores of the subjects' responses to each item in the questionnaires. The ranges of the mean scores of each level were then used to interpret the level of agreement.

Findings

Effects of Pre-Listening Question and Post-Listening Question Techniques

Through the series of t-tests, the subjects' listening comprehension levels were determined. Figures 1-3 presented below illustrate the levels of listening comprehension of all the subjects, the good listeners and the poor listeners.

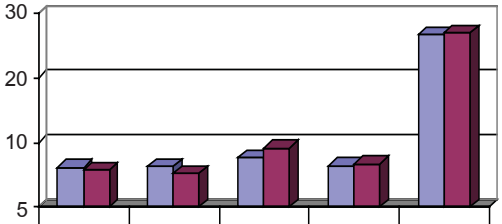
Figure 1: Listening Comprehension of All Subjects.



	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Total
Group A	5	4.67	5.95	4.52	20.14
Group B	4.59	4.17	5.97	4.55	19.28

The data in Figure 1 show that both groups A and B performed nearly the same on every text especially texts 3 and 4. The mean scores of both groups were not found to be significantly different at the 0.05 level on any of the texts. The same was found for the composite scores. That is, the group means of the composite test scores were not significantly different ($P < 0.05$). This suggested that neither technique influenced the subjects' listening comprehension levels to a different degree.

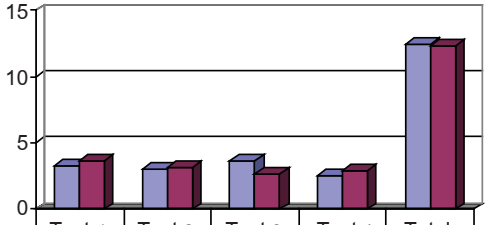
Figure 2 Listening Comprehension of the Good Listeners



	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Total
Group A	6.13	6.31	7.69	6.5	26.63
Group B	5.75	5.19	9.19	6.75	26.88

Figure 2 shows no significant differences in the performance of the good listeners in Group A and B at a level of 0.05 when comparing individual text or all four texts combined. The mean scores of both groups A and B were nearly the same. This indicated that each technique affected the good listeners' listening comprehension levels equally.

Figure 3 Listening Comprehension of the Poor Listeners



	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Total
Group A	3.25	3.06	3.63	2.5	12.44
Group B	3.63	3.19	2.63	2.88	12.31

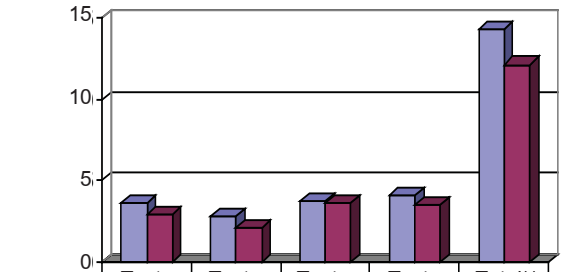
Figure 3 shows that the mean scores of group A and B were nearly the same on every text.

Moreover, there were no significant differences at the 0.05 level on the texts separately or generally. This suggested that the two techniques were not different in affecting the listening performance of the poor listeners.

Figures 1-3 presented above show that there are no significant differences between the mean scores of groups A and B on all subjects, among the good listeners and among the poor listeners when compared the texts separately or generally. This was observed across the texts and across the subjects' listening proficiency level. Hence, it can be concluded that neither technique had a different effect on the subjects' listening comprehension levels.

Besides, the study also established the information regarding the question types. The results are presented in figures 4 and 5 below.

Figure 4 Listening Comprehension of All Subjects from Local Questions

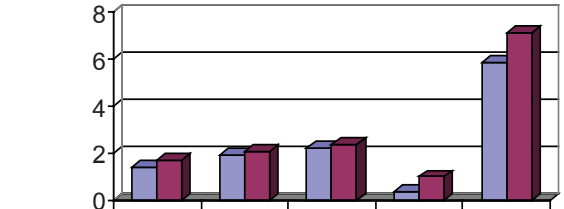


	Text 1*	Text 2*	Text 3	Text 4	Total**
Group A	3.62	2.78	3.74	4.14	14.28
Group B	2.9	2.1	3.59	3.55	12.14

** Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level*

The data in Figure 4 show that the mean scores of Group A were higher than those of Group B when compared on each text and on all texts together. Significant differences were found at the 0.05 level on texts 1 and 2 and at the 0.01 level when considering all 4 texts. This suggested that the pre-listening question technique enhanced Group A subjects' ability to respond to local questions.

Figure 5 Listening Comprehension of All Subjects from Global Questions



	Text 1*	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4**	Total **
Group A	1.38	1.9	2.21	0.38	5.86
Group B	1.69	2.07	2.38	1	7.14

** Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level*

Results from Figure 5 indicate that the mean scores of Group B were higher than those of Group A on every text. There were significant differences on text 1 at the 0.05 level and on text 4 at the 0.01 level. In addition, statistically significant differences at the 0.01 level were found between the mean scores of both groups when compared all texts. It could be concluded that the post-listening question technique enhanced Group B subjects' ability to respond to global questions.

In summary, the 2 figures presented above show that subjects in Group A could better comprehend local questions and subjects in Group B were better able to answer global questions. This implies that the pre-listening question technique is more suitable in asking for local information while the post-listening question technique works better with global information.

Subjects' Attitudes

Group A subjects were administered a questionnaire related to the pre-listening question technique and Group B subjects provided a

questionnaire related to the post-listening question technique. Their attitudes were coded and calculated for the mean scores, as presented in figures 6 and 7 below. However, since each group experienced different techniques, their attitudes could not be compared.

The items related to attitudes towards the pre-listening question technique were grouped into three aspects: items presenting the advantages of the pre-listening question technique on increasing listening comprehension (items 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 11); items activating background knowledge of the topic (items 3, 5, 6); and items triggering subjects' use of a selective strategy (item 7, 8).

Results showed that all subjects agreed in all items of the questionnaire based on the criteria for the rating scale interpretation of Som-in (1988). They all agreed that this technique enhanced their listening comprehension, helped activate their background knowledge, and enabled them to use a selective strategy. In addition, based on Best (1977), their attitudes were positive with the total average mean scores of 3.94. This can be interpreted as the subjects' satisfaction of the technique and it is viewed as a useful technique

Figure 7 illustrates Group B subjects' responses to the items related to their attitudes towards the post-listening question technique. It was found that their responses to some items could be defined as "agreement", whereas some were "not sure", following the criteria for the rating scale interpretation of Som-in (1988). The subjects agreed with items 1, 5, 6, 9, 10. However, items 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8 were considered at the level of "unsure". According to Best (1977), the total average mean scores in this questionnaire represented neutral attitudes. The criteria for the rating scale interpretation of Som-in (1988) are shown in Table 2 and of Best (1977) in Table 3.

Figure 6 Group A Subjects' Attitudes towards the Pre-Listening Question Technique

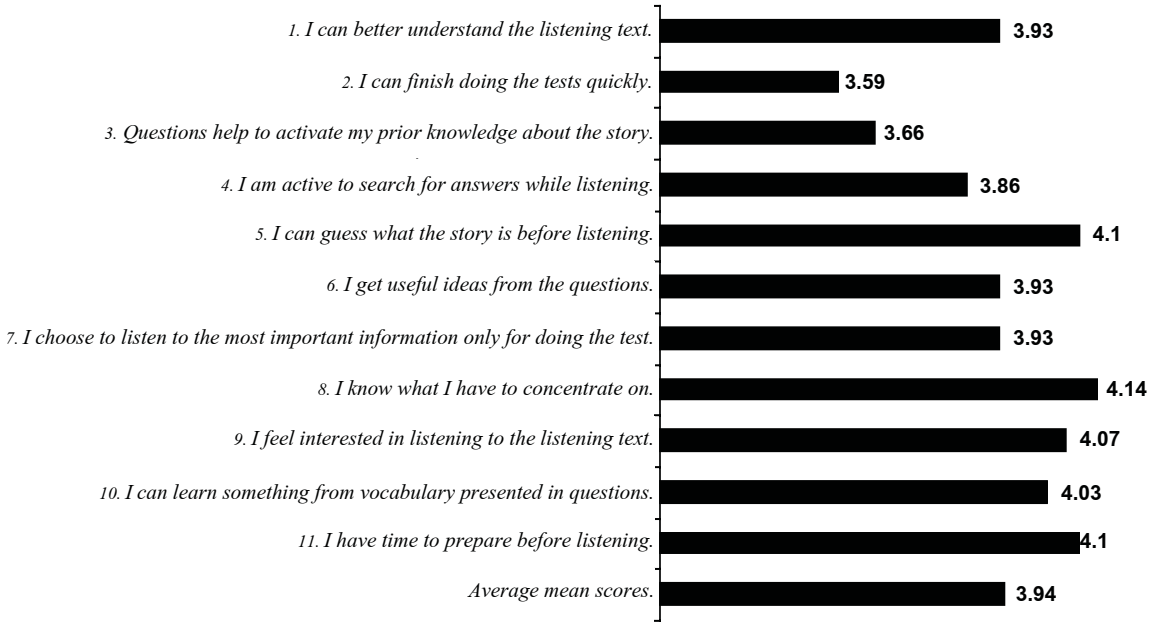


Figure 7 Group B Subjects' Attitudes towards the Post-Listening Question Technique

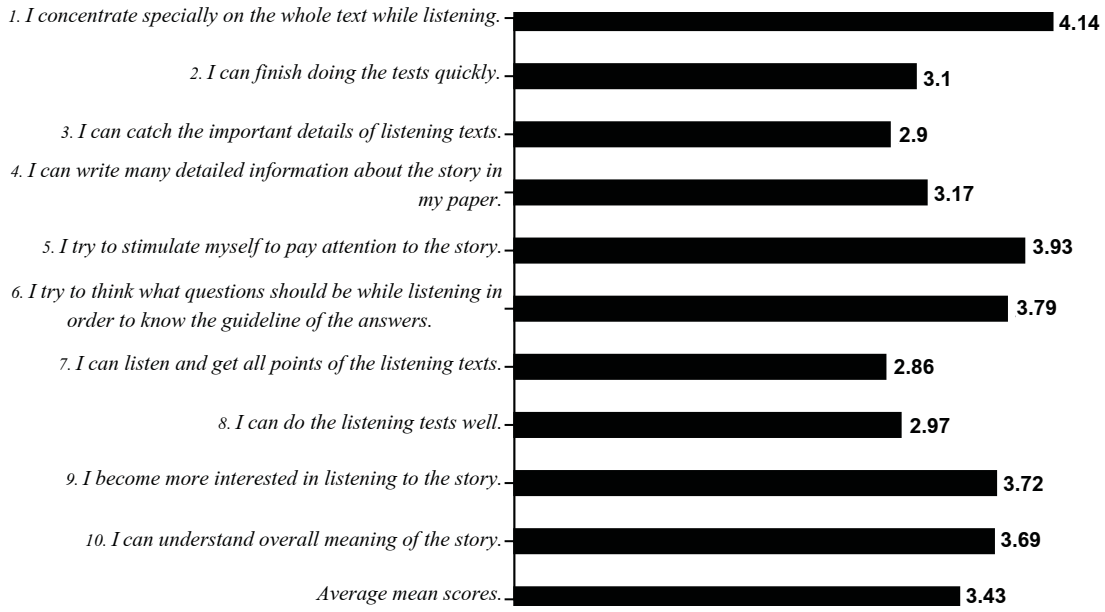


Table 2 Criteria of Rating Scale Interpretation

Ranges of the Total Mean Value	Interpretation of Preference	Level of Agreement
4.21-5.00	Most	Strongly agree
3.41-4.20	Much	Agree
2.61-3.40	Moderate	Uncertain
1.81-2.60	Slightly	Disagree
1.00-1.80	Least	Strongly disagree

Table 3 Criteria of Rating Scale Interpretation

Ranges of the Total Mean Value	Interpretation of Preference
3.68 – 5.00	Most
2.34 – 3.67	Moderate
1.00 – 2.33	Least

In conclusion, the subjects were highly satisfied to use the pre-listening question technique and expressed a moderate preference towards the post-listening question technique.

Discussion

As demonstrated, the two techniques had no different effect on listening comprehension levels when compared: (1) among all subjects, (2) among the good listeners, and (3) among the poor listeners. There could be two possible reasons for this.

Firstly, each technique has its own advantages which affect how the subjects respond to questions about a text. ESL scholars (Brown and Yule, 1983; Buck, 1990; Bacon, 1991; Thompson, 1995 and Lingzhu, 2003) have confirmed at least 5 advantages of the pre-listening question technique. It helps students (1) to establish listening purposes

(2) to choose appropriate listening strategies (3) to know what to expect (4) to build up their expectations about the incoming input and (5) to activate students' prior knowledge. Certain advantages of the post-listening question technique have also been attested. It helps encouraging students (1) to understand the global meaning of the listening text (2) to extract the main ideas and important details from spoken input and (3) to understand the overall meaning of the listening text (Weir, 1993; Underwood, 1989). Results from the present study help confirm the previous findings that subjects benefit from both methods leading to their approximately equal amounts of listening achievement.

Secondly, the subjects' unfamiliarity with the subject matter of the listening texts could be another important reason why they were able to perform similarly in listening comprehension tests. Buck (1990) claimed that when the topics were not familiar to the students, they could not relate the questions given before listening to the listening texts. Because of this, students might neglect the questions given to them before listening and be unable to gain advantage from the pre-listening question technique. As a result, the questions would not provide them with necessary background knowledge to be used in dealing with the content of the text.

Exploring in detail, the findings related to the question types showed that the subjects performed better on local questions than global questions when they were treated with the pre-listening question technique. On the other hand, the subjects achieved higher levels in listening comprehension on global questions when they were administered the post-listening question technique. One possible explanation is that global questions require subjects to understand texts as a whole. Thus, the post-listening question technique could be more beneficial to subjects than the pre-listening question technique. This is because the post-listening question technique may help the subjects to understand the overall meaning of the listening text (Weir, 1993). This supports the view that if the questions are only given after the text, students will have to listen to the whole text more carefully because they do not know what the questions are until the end (Underwood, 1989).

Unlike global questions, local questions only require students to pick up specific details, and students may get the correct answers even if they do not understand the entire text. Hence, students answering questions under the pre-listening question technique are more likely to get the correct answers for local questions than for global questions especially when they try to concentrate on specific details without understanding the entire text. This is because by using the pre-listening question technique, students are guided to listen out for particular information (Thompson, 1995; Lingzhu, 2003).

Furthermore, the subjects' positive attitudes towards the pre-listening question technique could be accounted for in relation to the effectiveness of pre-listening tasks. This technique has been shown to reduce students' anxiety before listening. This is because pre-listening tasks allow the students to prepare to listen to texts; their stress

is thus decreased. This seems to be borne out by the subjects' opinion that a pre-listening task in the form of questions was helpful to them. However, it is interesting that the subjects' attitudes towards the pre-listening question technique did not correspond to their test performance since their test scores were broadly equivalent to the test scores of subjects who experienced the post-listening question technique. This might suggest that subjects perceived the pre-listening question technique as mentally facilitating.

Conclusion

To conclude, the pre-listening question and the post-listening question techniques had no different effect on the subjects' overall listening performance. However, based on the scores achieved on each question type, it is interesting to note that the two techniques affected the subjects' success in answering each question type differently. On one hand, the subjects could better understand local meaning when questions were given to them before listening. On the other hand, the subjects achieved higher scores on global questions when the questions were given to them after listening. This suggests that the pre-listening question and the post-listening question techniques influence local and global questions in different manners. When considering the subjects' attitudes, it was found that the subjects had positive attitudes towards the use of the pre-listening question technique and neutral attitudes towards the use of the post-listening question technique. However, the subjects' positive attitudes towards the pre-listening question technique were not paralleled with their listening comprehension levels since the test scores obtained from the pre-listening question technique were not different from those achieved under the post-listening question technique. Therefore, the pre-listening question technique seems to have a positive psychological value for subjects but does not have any actual positive effect on their comprehension levels.

Posing question can hardly be avoided in listening classes. In order to implement questioning technique in an appropriate manner, it is advisable that teachers analyze types of questions before conducting a listening activity so that different types of questions are applied appropriately. However, because a listening test normally consists of both local and global questions, English teachers are suggested to make careful judgments on question type to be employed in a listening test. Although subjects had positive attitudes towards the pre-listening question technique, placing questions before listening might hinder global comprehension. English teachers, therefore, might consider using other pre-listening activities such as brainstorming, discussion, or vocabulary explanation to help students to prepare for listening to a text. Lastly, it is recommended that further research be conducted using a single subject group, but received both questioning techniques rather than having two comparable groups as carried out in the present study. In so doing, the results might be more reliable to confirm the effects of the two techniques.

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