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DEVELOPING EFL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC LISTENING SKILLS ENHANCES THEIR SELF-EFFICACY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of improving academic listening skills among English as Foreign Language (EFL) students from Turkmenistan who are enrolled in educational institutions in Uzbekistan, encountering both linguistic and non-linguistic challenges that obstruct proficient listening. In consideration of the substantial challenges these students face, which include limited language proficiency, cultural divergences, and variations in personal learning styles, this study delineates the primary obstacles to their academic achievement.

Subsequently, a comprehensive intervention treatment plan was devised over a four-month period, employing a task-oriented methodology that incorporates interactive activities, collaborative projects, and targeted feedback specifically aimed at enhancing listening abilities while addressing these challenges. A pivotal component of this methodology involved the formulation and evaluation of an experimental English literature curriculum and Integrated Language Skills curriculum, which integrated listening comprehension as a fundamental aspect to facilitate students' understanding of the subject matter, concurrently fostering critical listening skills through the examination of literary works and discussions. Additionally, the intervention placed a significant emphasis on metacognitive strategies by motivating students to contemplate their listening processes, establish objectives, and assess their comprehension, thereby promoting heightened self-regulation in their educational endeavors.

Moreover, a dedicated Google Classroom platform was established to provide students access to a variety of lecture resources, encompassing collected listening lectures and audio materials (YouTube videos), as well as practice assessments designed to promote autonomous learning and the enhancement of these competencies beyond the classroom setting. This digital platform offers students the opportunity to engage with listening input materials at their individual pace, thus reinforcing the skills acquired throughout the program.

The results reveal that participants within the treatment group exhibited notable advancements in their academic self-efficacy and overall academic performance in comparison to their counterparts in the control group. This outcome underscores the necessity of addressing listening challenges within the framework of English as a Foreign Language instruction and illustrates how improved listening capabilities can serve as a pathway to enhanced academic success.

The ramifications of this research extend beyond individual advantages, proposing that a heightened focus on task-based methodologies and metacognitive strategies for the development of listening skills within language education could yield improved academic outcomes for EFL learners at large. Consequently, this investigation bears practical implications for educators and curriculum developers by advocating for the establishment of more inclusive and effective language learning environments, with a concentrated emphasis on the cultivation of listening skills as central to EFL education. The amalgamation of an

experimental English literature course, complemented by a meticulously designed online platform and metacognitive training, has the potential to significantly elevate students' capacity to practice and refine their listening skills, thereby facilitating progress toward academic accomplishment.

Keywords: listening comprehension, self-efficacy, task-based approach, academic performance, metacognitive strategies, etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

Listening constitutes a foundational competency in the process of language acquisition, serving a pivotal function in academic achievement, particularly among students engaged in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) studies. Within the framework of Uzbekistan, EFL learners often confront substantial linguistic and non-linguistic obstacles that hinder their capacity to listen effectively (Khodjakulova & Miceikiene, 2024). These impediments may arise from diverse origins, encompassing restricted language proficiency, cultural variances, and individual differences in learning styles. Such barriers not only obstruct students' comprehension during instructional sessions and dialogues but may also lead to diminished levels of academic self-efficacy, thereby adversely impacting their holistic educational experiences (Flowerdew & Miller, 1997).

A task-based approach in education has been validated through the use of audiovisual and audiolingual methods, incorporated into curriculum content focused on building communicative competence. This approach aligns with B2+ language proficiency, covering topics at a B2+ level, such as everyday life, social interactions, and education, and culture- areas essential for high-level EFL students majoring in philology. Furthermore, the application of Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) standards, as outlined in Presidential Decree 1875 (December 10, 2012), for listening comprehension at various instructional stages is suggested as a way to evaluate and refine audio-lingual exercises in university language teaching. This strategy serves as a "mind tool" to enhance students' abilities to critically analyze and assess listening materials.

According to the CEFR evaluating listening comprehension is particularly challenging because these processes are internal, and their assessment depends on observing external behavior. Such behavior can manifest as overt verbal responses (like speaking or writing) or through non-verbal cues. Additionally, the complexity of listening comprehension adds another layer of difficulty in designing tasks that effectively measure these skills.

The amount of research work investigated the problem. Scientists have conducted research studies in teaching English as a foreign language in the Republic of Uzbekistan as J.J. Jalolov, M.T. Irisqulov, G.T. Makhkamova, T.K. Sattorov, B.R.Samatova, G.S Sabirova, I. Tukhtasinov, K. Muradkasimova, N. Kushieva, H. Mamatkulov, D.Isroilova, F.R. Musaeva and similarly, abroad, the current issues have been investigated in the scholar works of E.N. Solovova, E.I. Passov, A.V.Papov, Gavin Dudeney, Nicky Hockly 2 and others.

From an evolutionary perspective, spoken language appeared long before writing. While every community relies on speech, many languages even today lack a written form, as writing systems only began a few thousand years ago. Although speaking and writing fulfil similar communicative functions, the advent of writing as a cultural technology has deeply impacted cognitive processes, communication, education, and societal development. Human communication originally centered on direct, face-to-face oral interaction (Samatova & Khodjakulova, 2024). However, with advancements in information technology, the gap between written and oral communication has been minimized, enabling written exchanges to simulate real-time face-to-face interaction.

In face-to-face contexts, listening comprehension is inherently linked to speaking. While listening and reading comprehension share many features, listening has specific challenges that often make its assessment more complex than that of reading comprehension.

Numerous taxonomies developed over the past fifty years have identified a wide array of skills (from 10 to 35) integral to listening comprehension. These taxonomies highlight the importance of various factors, including the characteristics of the spoken text (text types), the listener’s skills and knowledge, the situational context (language use domains), and the purposes for listening.

A key consideration in assessing listening comprehension is whether to evaluate it in an interactive format,

such as through an interview or discussion, or by having individuals listen to or watch recordings. Other critical factors include the input's length, speed, frequency of exposure, and linguistic characteristics (such as text type and accent).

Since listening comprehension is commonly assessed through tasks involving questions or other items, it's crucial to recognize that item difficulty varies and can be strategically adjusted by modifying both the characteristics of the listening text and the task itself.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Listening stands as a pivotal ability in the journey of mastering a language, particularly for EFL learners in Uzbekistan, who grapple with a myriad of obstacles that hinder their grasp of auditory understanding. These hurdles encompass restricted language skills, cultural nuances, and distinct learning preferences, all of which can adversely affect their academic confidence and the entirety of their educational journey. To confront these challenges, a thorough intervention blueprint centred on task-based techniques and reflective cognitive strategies is suggested. This initiative aspires to amplify listening capabilities, thus elevating academic achievements and self-assurance among EFL scholars (Khodjakulova, 2024).

Task-Based Learning and Technology Integration Engaging in task-based learning, which embraces dynamic and context-rich listening activities, has proven to dramatically boost listening comprehension by fostering participation and retention (Eragamreddy, 2024). The incorporation of digital innovations such as language learning applications, podcasts, and vodcasts offers versatile and convenient avenues for ongoing education, crafting a tailored and immersive auditory landscape (Mukhtorova & Ilxomov, 2024).

Listening Strategies and Metacognitive Approaches Proficient listening tactics encompass active, responsive, and focused listening, which empower learners to maintain fluency, capture key concepts, and navigate meaning (Vandergrift, 1999), (Sharif et al., 2024). Metacognitive techniques inspire students to introspect on their listening habits, establish personal ambitions, and evaluate their understanding, nurturing self-regulation and fruitful educational results (Vandergrift, 2003), (Bashirli, 2024).

Curriculum Design and Resource Utilization in a pioneering English literature curriculum that integrates listening comprehension as a core component can immerse students in the analytical examination of literary pieces, bolstering both textual insight and auditory processes (Bashirli, 2024). The unification of multimedia resources and interactive tasks within platforms like Google Classroom fosters independent learning and reinforces the skills honed throughout the program (Eragamreddy, 2024).

While the suggested interventions concentrate on refining listening abilities through task-centered and reflective cognitive strategies, it remains crucial to explore low-tech alternatives to guarantee equitable access to listening materials globally. This method can assist in bridging the divide for learners lacking access to digital resources, thereby advancing inclusivity in language education (Eragamreddy, 2024).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Methodology design

1 Independent and Dependent Variables

- Independent Variables: - Intervention Framework: The implementation of Task-Based Learning (TBL) and metacognitive strategies serves as the primary independent variable. These instructional approaches aim to enhance students' listening comprehension. - Linguistic and Non-Linguistic Challenges: The specific linguistic barriers (e.g., unfamiliar vocabulary, idiomatic expressions) and non-linguistic factors (e.g., cultural differences, anxiety) that affect students.

- Dependent Variables: - Listening Comprehension Skills: Measured through pre-tests and post-tests to assess improvements in listening abilities after the intervention. - Students' Self-Efficacy: Evaluated through surveys and questionnaires that gauge the students' confidence in their listening skills and overall language proficiency. - Academic Performance: Indicators such as grades or scores on assessments related to listening tasks or overall English language proficiency may serve as a measure of academic success.

In this model (Figure 3), we hypothesize that the independent variables (the implemented intervention and the barriers faced by students) will positively influence the dependent variables, enhancing listening comprehension skills, boosting self-efficacy, and ultimately leading to improved academic performance.

Below in Figure 1, we can see a flow diagram that outlines the research process. This helps illustrate the steps taken in our study on enhancing listening skills among Turkmen EFL learners. This study employed a mixed methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. The

timeline for the research was set for four months, allowing sufficient time for data collection, intervention, and analysis.

2. Research Population: The research population consists of Turkmen students in Uzbekistan who are learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). These students face various linguistic and non-linguistic challenges that affect their listening comprehension abilities. The study focused on gathering insights from 200 EFL students from Tashkent Institute of irrigation and agricultural mechanization engineers National Research University in Uzbekistan.

3. Data Collection: This phase outlines the methods employed to gather baseline data, including pre-tests, surveys to measure self-efficacy, and qualitative data from interviews and focus groups. (Figure 2.). Each aspect of the research model was investigated through various data collection methods:

- Listening Comprehension Tests: Evaluating the direct impact of the intervention on students' listening skills, providing quantitative data for analysis.

- Surveys/Questionnaires: Measuring students' self-efficacy and perceptions of their challenges, thereby capturing qualitative insights alongside quantitative data.

- Interviews and Focus Groups: Collecting deeper, qualitative understanding of how the intervention and challenges influence students' experiences and outcomes.

4. Interventions Applied: Details the educational strategies utilized during the study. This captures how TBL and metacognitive strategies were integrated into the learners' curriculum. This approach emphasizes engaging students in meaningful listening tasks that encourage active participation and practical application of language skills. To effectively gather data and evaluate the intervention's impact, the following research instruments were utilized:

- Listening Comprehension Tests: Pre-tests and post-tests were developed to assess students' listening skills before and after the intervention. These tests were included various auditory materials such as lectures, monologues, and authentic listening experiences relevant to the students' cultural context.

- Surveys/Questionnaires: A structured questionnaire was administered to assess students' perceptions of their listening skills, confidence levels, and the challenges they face in learning English. Questions incorporated Likert-scale items and open-ended questions to capture both quantitative and qualitative responses.

- Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a select group of students to gain deeper insights into their experiences with the task-based learning approach, as well as their perceptions of linguistic and non-linguistic barriers. Approximately 15 students were interviewed after completing the intervention.

- Focus Groups: Two focus group discussions were organized, each comprising 6-8 students. Focus groups explored collective experiences and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the task-based learning approach and the listening strategies employed during the study.

5. Post-Assessment: After implementing the interventions, a follow-up assessment is conducted through post-tests and additional surveys to evaluate the impact on listening skills and self-efficacy.

6 Data Analysis: The collected data undergo both quantitative and qualitative analysis to understand improvements in listening skills and self-efficacy, as well as any correlations with academic performance. Quantitative Data: Pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using statistical methods to identify significant improvements in listening comprehension. Surveys were analyzed for frequency distributions and patterns using software SPSS. Qualitative Data: Thematic analysis was conducted on interview and focus group transcripts to identify key themes, patterns, and insights regarding students' experiences and challenges related to listening skills.

7. Findings & Results: Summarizes the outcomes of the research, highlighting improvements in listening comprehension, self-efficacy among students, and any observed relationships with overall academic performance.

8. Conclusions & Recommendations: Concludes the process with insights drawn from the findings, addressing implications for EFL instruction and suggesting future research opportunities.

This PRISMA schema effectively illustrates the comprehensive approach taken in the study, emphasizing each phase of the methodology and the connections between them. It serves to clarify the pathway from identifying the research population to analyzing results and drawing conclusions.

9. Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting the study, ethical approval was obtained. Participants provided informed consent, ensuring their understanding of the study's purpose and their rights, including confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study anytime.

3.2. Intervention Frame

Treatment Methodology for Task-Based Learning (TBL) and Metacognitive Strategies

This treatment methodology outlines the step-by-step process for implementing the primary intervention framework of Task-Based Learning (TBL) and metacognitive strategies. The goal is to create an engaging learning environment that enhances students' listening skills through meaningful tasks, while also fostering their metacognitive awareness and self-regulation.

1.Treatment Overview

- Objective: To improve listening comprehension skills, promote active participation, and enhance metacognitive awareness among EFL students through TBL and metacognitive strategies.
- Duration: 10 weeks (with 2 sessions per week, totaling 20 sessions).
- Participants: EFL students at the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers.

2. Treatment Components

A. Task-Based Learning (TBL)	**B. Metacognitive Strategies**
1. Pre-Task Preparation - Objective Setting: Clearly define the goals of each listening task (e.g., understanding key ideas, interpreting tone, identifying speakers' intentions). - Task Introduction: - Use contextual materials (videos, audio clips) related to the task topic. - Activate students' background knowledge through discussions or brainstorming activities. - Introduce and explain relevant vocabulary and phrases that will be encountered during the task. 2. During-Task Implementation - Engagement in Listening Tasks: - Assign students to small groups to complete tasks that involve listening to authentic materials (such as interviews, podcasts, or dialogues). - Encourage students to take notes while listening on key points, ideas, and vocabulary. - Students collaborate to discuss their interpretations and understanding of the material. - Role of the Instructor: - Facilitate group interactions and provide support as needed. - Circulate among groups to encourage engagement and answer questions. 3. Post-Task Reflection - Group Discussion: - Lead a discussion where students reflect on their listening experiences and the strategies they used. - Encourage students to share difficulties they encountered and how they overcame them. - Assessment: - Use rubrics for peer assessment and self-reflection on their performance during the task.	1. Metacognitive Awareness Training - Teaching Strategies: - Introduce specific metacognitive strategies such as: - Planning: Prior to listening, students will set clear objectives (e.g., "I want to identify the main argument of this podcast"). - Monitoring: During the task, students check their understanding (e.g., "Do I understand the main points?"). - Evaluating: After the task, students reflect on the effectiveness of their strategies (e.g., "What strategies helped me listen more effectively?"). - Modeling Strategies: - The instructor will model these strategies through think-aloud sessions during demonstrations and examples. 2. Reflection Journals - Maintaining Journals: - Require students to keep a reflection journal where they document their learning experiences, focusing on: - Tasks they completed. - Strategies they used and their effectiveness. - Personal reflections on their listening comprehension and progress over time. 3. Group Workshops - Metacognitive Workshops: - Conduct workshops focused on teaching additional metacognitive strategies, including self-questioning techniques and summarizing skills. - Engage students in collaborative discussions around their experiences, noting patterns in how they approached listening tasks. 3. Assessment and Evaluation 1. Pre-Test and Post-Test Assessment - Administer a listening comprehension test at the beginning (pre-test) and end (post-test) of the intervention to measure improvement.

	- Assess comprehension of spoken texts based on predefined criteria (e.g., main ideas, details, inference).

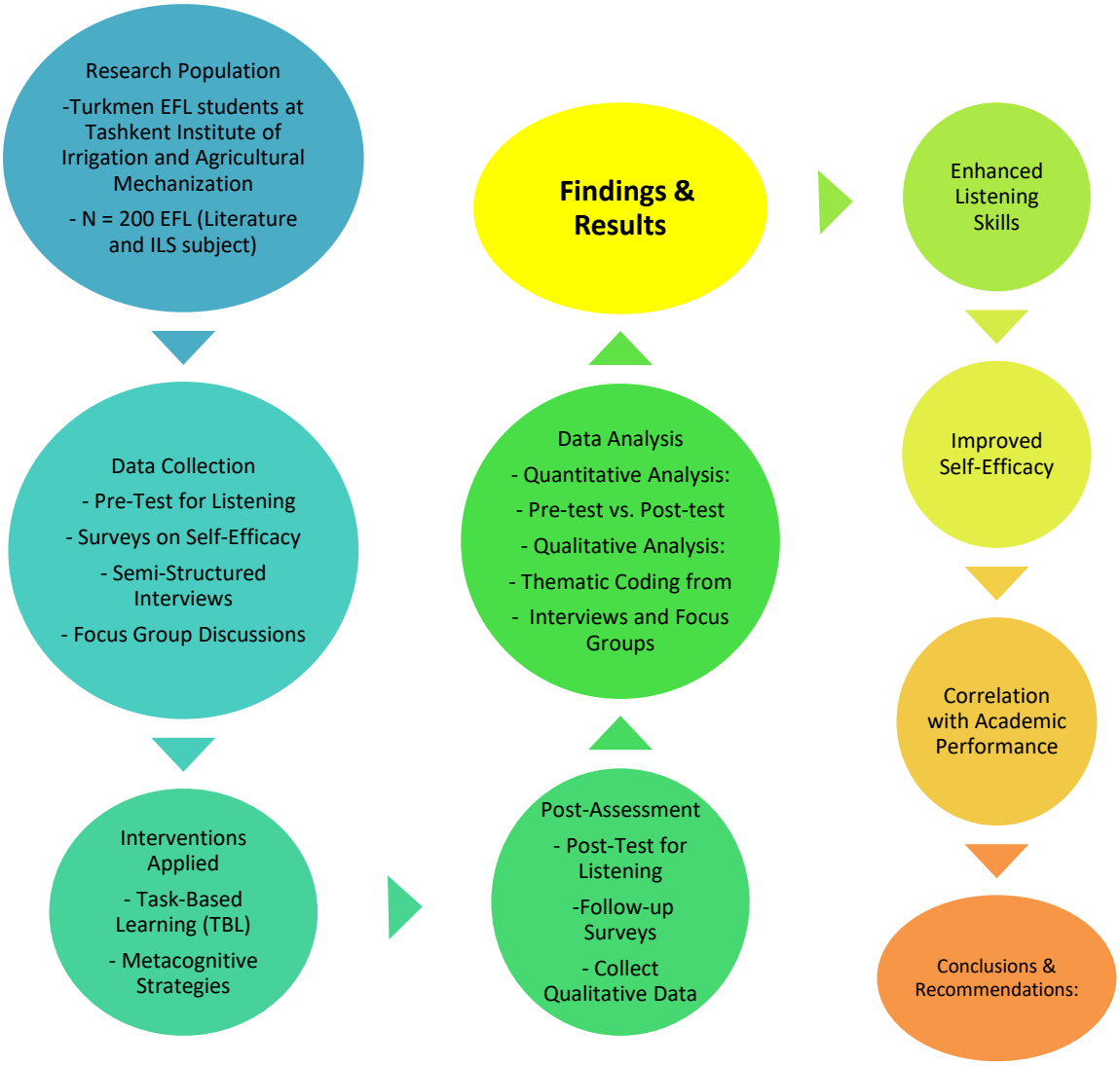

Figure 1 Schema for Methodology

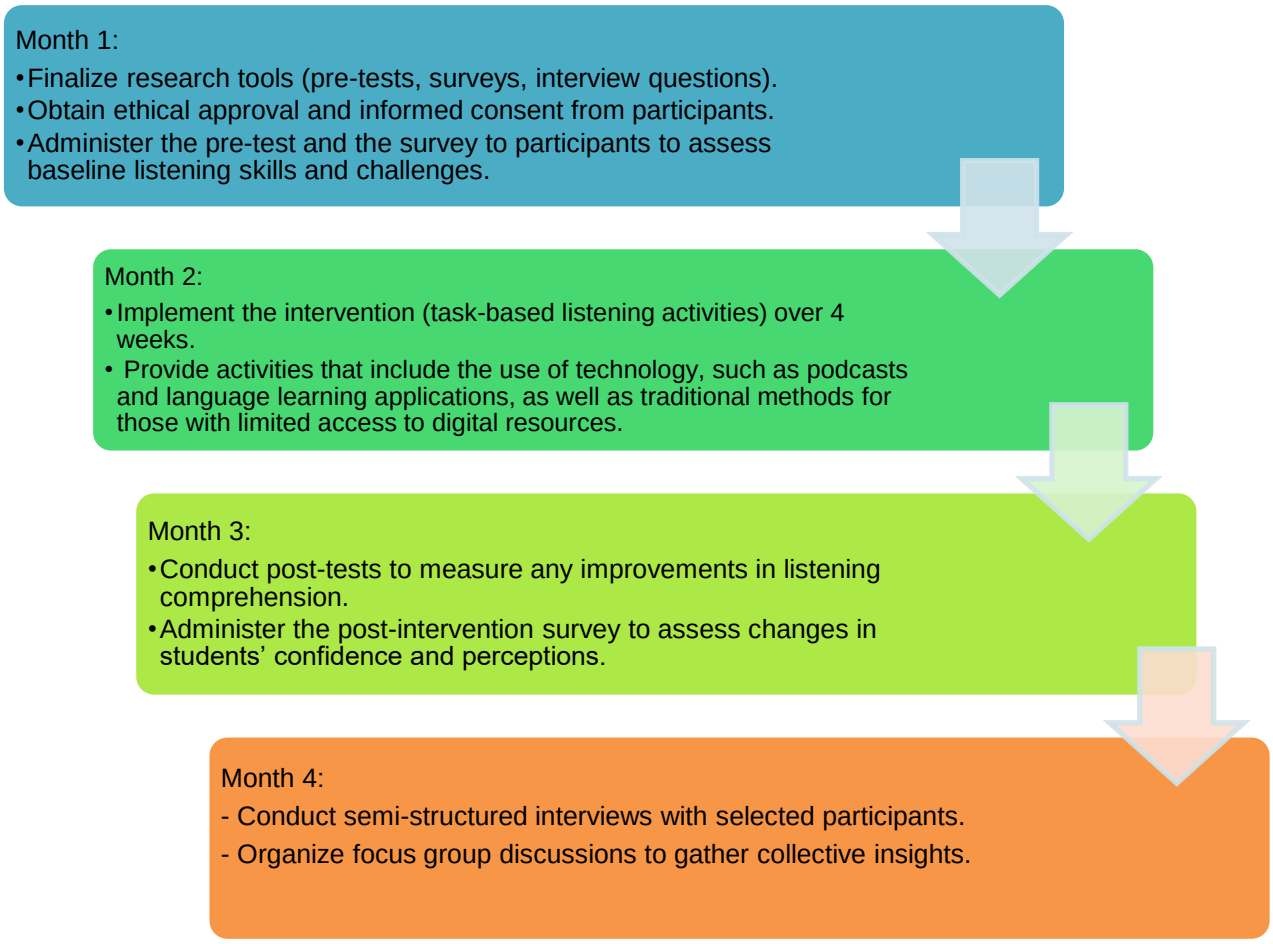

Figure 2 Data Collection Steps

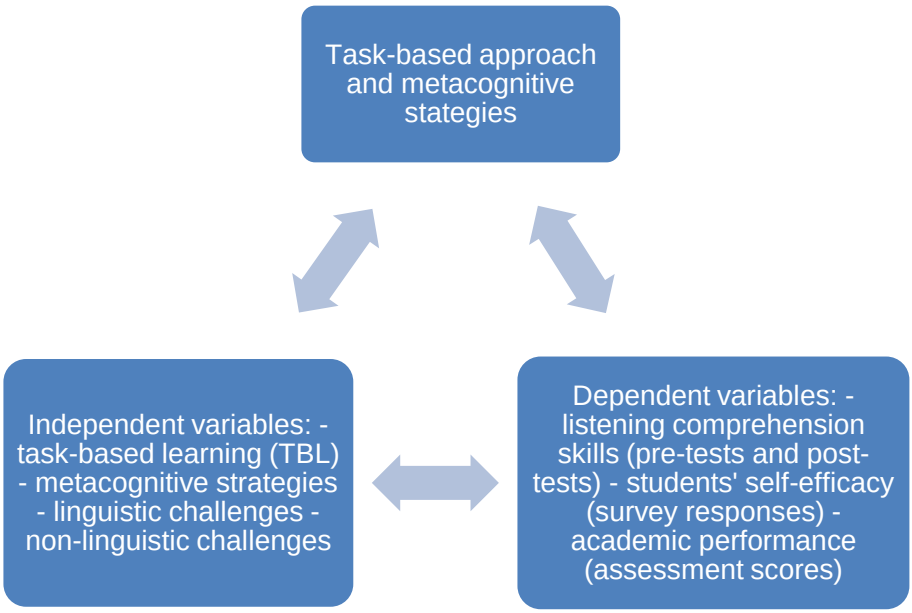

Figure 3 Intervention Model

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Pre-Test and Post-Test Analysis

The results from this study provide compelling evidence for the effectiveness of task-based learning (TBL) and metacognitive strategies in enhancing listening comprehension, academic performance, and self-efficacy among 200 Turkmen EFL students in two groups (control and treatment, each 100 participants respectively) Below, we will discuss these findings in detail, examining implications and potential applications (Tables 1).

1. Significant Improvements in the Treatment Group

The treatment group demonstrated remarkable enhancements in both subjects—English Literature and Integrated Language Skills—post-intervention, as illustrated by the considerable increases in mean scores. Specifically, the treatment group exhibited an increase of 16.5 points in English Literature and 16.7 points in Integrated Language Skills, in contrast to the negligible changes observed in the control group. These results highlight the efficacy of the pedagogical approaches employed, reinforcing the notion that task-based activities can engage students more meaningfully in the learning process. (Table 2)

2. Lack of Change in the Control Group

The control group, which continued with traditional teaching methods, showed minimal improvement in pre-test and post-test scores across both subjects. This further underscores the argument that conventional approaches may not effectively address the complexities of language learning, particularly for EFL students facing diverse linguistic and non-linguistic challenges. The insignificant score changes observed (MD of 0.5 for English Literature and 1.2 for Integrated Language Skills) indicate a need for innovative teaching frameworks that prioritize active student engagement and practical application of language skills. (Table 2)

3. Correlation Between Teaching Strategies and Student Outcomes

The strong positive correlations noted ($r = 0.87$ for English Literature and $r = 0.85$ for Integrated Language Skills) between the utilization of task-based approaches and metacognitive strategies with improvements in academic performance and self-efficacy are particularly noteworthy. This suggests that as students actively engaged in task-based learning and developed their metacognitive awareness, they became more confident in their abilities and more effective in their studies. Such strategies likely encouraged students to evaluate their learning processes, leading to enhanced retention and application of language skills. (Tables 3,4)

4. Increase in Self-Efficacy

The post-intervention assessments not only reflected improvements in academic performance but also indicated a notable increase in students' self-efficacy. Higher self-efficacy is crucial in educational settings, as it often correlates with greater student motivation and persistence in learning tasks. The application of TBL and metacognitive strategies could have empowered students to tackle difficult listening tasks with increased confidence, fostering a more positive attitude toward language learning. This aligns with existing literature, which emphasizes the role of self-efficacy in academic achievement (Bandura, 1997).

5. Educational Implications

These findings suggest important pedagogical implications for EFL instruction. The integration of task-based learning alongside metacognitive strategies can effectively address the complex needs of EFL learners, especially those facing linguistic barriers and cultural adjustments. Educators should consider incorporating these methods into their curricula to enhance student engagement and facilitate active learning.

Furthermore, the results advocate for the development of training programs for teachers that emphasize innovative instructional approaches that promote critical thinking and self-reflection among learners. Professional development can equip teachers with the necessary skills to implement TBL and metacognitive strategies effectively.

6. Conclusion

The experimental group revealed remarkable advancements in both areas, with impressive correlation coefficients demonstrating a robust connection between the task-oriented methodology and enhanced academic achievement and self-belief. The control group exhibited only slight variations.

7. Implications

These findings underscore the potency of task-based approach and metacognitive strategies, pointing towards favorable prospects for future curriculum innovations in EFL instruction. Additional studies might

explore the enduring impacts of these methods on language retention and learners' self-assurance..

Table 1 Overview of Participant Groups

Group	Population Size
Control Group	100
Treatment Group	100
Total	200

Table 2 Pre-Test and Post-Test Results by Subject

Subject	Group	Mean Pre-Test Score	Mean Post-Test Score	Standard Deviation (SD) Pre-Test	Standard Deviation (SD) Post-Test
English Literature	Control group	70.5	71.0	12.0	11.5
	Treatment	69.0	85.5	13.5	9.0
Integrated Language Skills	Control	68.3	69.5	10.5	10.0
	Treatment	67.5	84.2	12.0	8.8

Table 3 T-Test Results Summary

Subject	**Group**	**Mean Difference (MD)**	**t-Statistic**	**Degrees of Freedom (df)**	**p-Value**
English Literature	Control	0.5	0.40	99	$p > 0.05$ (ns)
	Treatment	16.5	9.83	99	$p < 0.001$
Integrated Language Skills	Control	1.2	0.93	99	$p > 0.05$ (ns)
	Treatment	16.7	10.09	99	$p < 0.001$

Table 4 Correlation Analysis Results

Subject	**Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)**	**p-Value**
English Literature	0.87	$p < 0.001$
Integrated Language Skills	0.85	$p < 0.001$

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While the findings are promising, this study has limitations that should be acknowledged. The sample size, while adequate, is relatively small, and the study is context-specific, focusing on Turkmen EFL students. Future research could benefit from larger, more diverse populations across different educational contexts to enhance the generalizability of the results. Additionally, longitudinal studies could further elucidate the long-term effects of TBL and metacognitive strategies on language retention and continued self-efficacy development. Although the results of the research investigating the influence of task-based learning (TBL) and metacognitive strategies on listening comprehension and academic success among Turkmen EFL students are encouraging, it is essential to recognize several constraints:

6. CONCLUSION

In summation, this exploration shines a spotlight on the remarkable promise of merging task-based learning (TBL) with metacognitive strategies to boost listening comprehension for Turkmen EFL learners. By presenting a meticulously crafted conceptual framework that intertwines these approaches with the distinct obstacles encountered in multicultural educational environments, this investigation offers invaluable perspectives on effective language instruction techniques. The focus on captivating learners through purposeful listening activities, alongside nurturing their self-regulatory abilities, aspires not only to elevate their current language skills but also to instill enduring learning habits that are crucial for sustained academic achievement. Furthermore, the assessment of educational outcomes will play a pivotal role in gauging the success of this initiative, furnishing educators with concrete indicators to evaluate student development and involvement. Acknowledging the inherent limitations within this study paves the way for future inquiries, prompting a more profound investigation into the intricacies of language acquisition and the vibrant interaction of diverse teaching methodologies. Ultimately, the revelations emphasize the imperative for educators to adopt inventive pedagogical strategies that address the varied needs of learners. By weaving task-based learning and metacognitive techniques into EFL programs, we can cultivate more stimulating and nurturing educational environments. This, in turn, holds the promise of not only enhancing language proficiency but also improving students' overall academic performance and self-confidence, paving the path for more triumphant outcomes in their language learning adventures.

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