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Comprehension and Processing Strategies: A Profile of Male and Female Graduate Learner's in Foreign Language Learning (FLL)

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Abstract

The following paper was designed to focus on how learners' process different communication inputs (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) and secondly, how gender differences play a significant role in this process. However, materials and instruction methods must also affect individual responses to given tasks. A study on these issues will necessitate the development of gender sensitive instructional materials with a special focus on improving individual comprehension strategies. First year graduate students with English as a compulsory subject of the two selected institutions were taken for our study. In this paper we have reported the differences between the male and female attitudes of the learners and their beliefs in acquiring LSRW skills for learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Survey questionnaires (through Google forms) and interview questions were designed. One sample T-test and paired sample test were taken whereas, interview question responses were analysed to validate the data. The findings revealed that average responses regarding the difficulty of listening skills are statistically significant and correlation between male students learning listening skills are better in the collaborative learning environment whereas the female students depict a positive and moderate correlation for the same. However, it is also found that there is no significant difference between the overall performance of female and male students and the implications have been discussed in the paper.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), comprehension strategies of LSRW, communication competence, first year graduate students, foreign language learning

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1. Introduction

Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is becoming a priority for other language-speaking students all over the world as English is considered a language of commonplace life in many countries. English language plays an essential role in social and national life too in countries like India and Japan where both American and British varieties are taught and spoken. Growing technological advancements also made learning EFL important, as 70% of the world's mails are in English. Hence English is becoming the first (FL) and second language (SL) in most of the countries and accepted as an official language in the national life of countries like India (Goh, 2018; Halat & Özbay, 2018; Sadiku, 2015). It is not just that but the largest number of best publications (MIT Press) and popular BBC television and many other social and national life demands are being met by the English language which made it unique.

This increasing recognition and the need to learn English for special and specific purposes made educators conscious in designing materials and courses to meet the requirements of students of various disciplines like STEM, Agriculture, Journalism, etc. Further, these specific language learners also evaluate their success in language learning based on how well they can speak English or have improved their spoken language ability in and outside of the classroom. However, a study conducted by Bacon (1992) highlighted that textbooks and teachers mainly use direct approaches that concentrate on different aspects of improving the oral language such as topic management and turn-taking. On the other hand, they also take indirect approaches which make the oral interaction of the students through task work, group work, and other strategies (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Abugohar et al., 2019; Derakhshan et al. 2023).

This implies that speaking and learning English are quite as important as foreign language learning. Despite the importance, speaking has been overlooked in some universities and schools due to unfavourable teacher-student proportion or major emphasis on grammar (Stepp-Greany, 2002; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). It has been critically evaluated by Alizadeh (2018), that foreign language learning and listening are of paramount importance to students as many language students encounter significant problems in learning and comprehending English. This is mainly due to the fact that schools pay attention to writing, structure, vocabulary, and reading which can be improved only by improved 'listening'. From the discussion presented here, it can be highlighted that teachers should focus on setting high standards for

English learning skills in the classroom. Also, it is required to work on creating the necessary conditions for the learners to reach the desired outcomes and learn the language effectively (Quyên & Dan, 2018; Alizadeh, 2018; Shakki, 2023). This mainly includes LSRW based on Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing skills and these should be integrated in an appropriate and effective manner for the learners. Learners' cultures also play an imperative role in developing their listening skills as the values taught to them over time contribute to augment their individual skills.

Furthermore, listening without any distraction makes it easier for the listener to understand what message the speaker wants to deliver both while speaking and writing (Goh, 2018). The main focus of improvising such skills should meet the standards that should have been set and developed for the communicative competencies. For this purpose, significant efforts have been carried out by the researchers to identify the first-year English-major students' perception regarding the roles of learning the English language, as learning strategies for any language are discovered appropriately while observing groups of students to identify the issues in comprehending the further usage of the language. Hence the present study identifies how learners comprehend, use strategies, their level of confidence, and affective responses; thus attempts to address some solutions to overcome those issues, and proposes a possible pathway for learning English as a foreign language (EFL).

1.1. Significance of Learning English as a Foreign Language

According to the study conducted by Ash (2015), English is the global language spoken across the globe, in around 53 countries. According to the British Council Survey, by 2020, there will be two billion people around the world who will learn English as it is a *Lingua franca*. Moreover, in order to succeed in various fields such as Medicine, Engineering and Sciences, English is a vital mode of learning. As per the study of the Gbollie and Gong (2013), English as a foreign language is significant in improving communication, which entails the process of better communication while both understanding and sharing. The study of Junor and Usher (2008) stated that the general language proficiency and restriction to a single language besides cultural shock resist individuals from studying in those countries and universities where English is the mode of communication. Moreover, studying English as a foreign language is a gateway to diverse opportunities as it is important to have English being studied as a foreign language if not as a mother tongue, creating more

chances to excel in the competitive business environment. Moreover, learning English as a foreign language even helps in understanding their own mother language in a better way and significantly impacts the development of individual intelligence in terms of contextual usage, awareness and ethics in communication (Kramersch, C. 2019). As per Gbollie and Gong (2013), the English language taught in different models like textual, exchange and multilingual (Kramersch, 2019; Hoa & Thi, 2020) helps a learner to develop a range of skills that would enhance making meaning that have arisen from situations beyond texts. In addition, learning English is vital in instilling confidence in a person to engage with users of the language and to gain a sense of universal belonging (Maley & Peachey, 2017; Goh, 2000; Graham & Santos, 2015; Lynch, 2009; Pichora-Fuller, 2016) as we need a common language to connect with people around the Globe.

1.2. LSRW Skills for Learning English as a Foreign Language

For learning English as a foreign language, the foundation lies in the learning of four components – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. As per the study conducted by Bozorgian (2012), more than three-quarters of the students in their classes learn through listening. This was seconded by the study of Gilbert (2005), which triangulated the prominent role of listening in learning English as a foreign language. The research found that between 65% - 90%, of learning is achieved through listening. (Dunkel, 1991; Rost, 2002; Richards, 2005; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

Moreover, listening skill has a significant effect on the other three, Reading, Writing, and Speaking (Goh, C. 2017). Secondly, reading skills along with Listening is the receptive skill that maintain the continuum in learning, while Speaking and Writing have always been integral elements in learning any language with English, which is enriched in grammar, vocabulary, and literature, being the foremost (Dunkel 1991; Rost, 2002). Reading skill not only enables the learner to access information from the written text but also contributes to self-realization and personal development (Bozorgian, 2012). Further, writing skills in language learning are part of the cognitive process, which requires mechanical attempts made by the students themselves, thus cognitively and physically being prepared to embrace this skill for learning the English language (O'Malley, & Chamot, 1990). Speaking is an integral skill of communication (Hong, 2018) and the first barrier to be broken while learning the language.

1.3. Gender Differences in English as a Foreign Language – Outcomes and Strategies

The gender difference theory states that boys are fundamentally different from girls in learning language and communication, (Politzer, 1983; Boyle, 1987; Bacon, & Finnemann, 1992; Clark, 1995; Kruse, 1992) and it has also been argued that gender represents two different cultures, making the difference in the learning outcomes and strategies. The previous researches by various scholars on gender-specific differences highlight sex as a significant predictor in educational, psychological and linguistic research (Oxford et al., 1988; Foster, 1999). Similarly, the Dominance Theory argues that men's dominance over societal matters, and women's status as subordinates drives variability in the characteristics and attributes of women in society (Bergvall, 1999). In contrast to stated theories and explanations; a study conducted by Główka (2014) in Poland found ample evidence that girls have outperformed their counterpart boys by achieving higher results. Regarding this finding, Ellis (2012) has supported that females are more open to the linguistics that enables them to have forms in the target language and also helps them to eradicate inter-language forms that could be deviating them from the target language. Bacon (1992) already observed in his study that this ability is readily found in women significantly more than their counterpart male students.

In addition to that, Główka (2014) in her empirical study in Poland concluded that the opinions of the teachers and student respondents reflected that there is no difference in the learning ability of the student; and both groups strongly stated that gender has no role in learning English. Furthermore, the implications of the study show consistently monitoring the performance of male students and introducing language practices and policies accordingly. Meanwhile, a similar study was conducted in Saudi Arabia, where the English Language Policy (ELP) was investigated and it was found that female staff had more strong beliefs than male employees at university. Therefore, it is evident that not only female students perform better but female language teachers hold stronger beliefs and attitudes towards constructing effective English language policies. Meanwhile, as per Ozdemir (2013) cognition, views and solving attitudes, thinking and learning ability are influenced by beliefs and Ricento (2013) also explained that these strong beliefs could lead to an ideology and the creation of a new framework in a particular context.

Similarly, Ali (2016) found that many factors shape the EFL classroom learning and the leading role is being played by gender. It has been one of the most sought

areas of language learning throughout the non-speaking nations and has been a matter of subject for pedagogical purposes. The study also found that gender differences are intact in using language and the most considerable elements are psychological condition, social background, and student's culture. Another considerable factor was that usage of language more frequently and effectively is associated with students' connection with native speakers. In addition, the material being taught also has a role in language usage; thus, another study by Kobayashi (2002) conducted in Japan also concluded that societies that marginalized women's status affect their ability to learn and change their attitude toward English-related programmes. Similar to this finding, Van Der Slik et al. (2015) found that female students from developing countries (Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) have been marginalized and scored less than male students in writing skills.

2. Literature Review

The rationale behind carrying out the study is based on the previous approaches found in the literature review. There are a lot of contrasting opinions, research-based perspectives regarding English language learning. What might lead to more effective L2 language development is not adequately explained in the studies. However, efforts have been made by the researchers like Mendelsohn (2001, 2006), Berne (2004), and LeLoup and Pontiero (2007) to identify the perceptions during the learning of listening skills among L2 learners, the male and female first year graduate students who have taken English as a compulsory subject with an emphasis to the problems that they face during their learning. Pandero et al. (2017) examined the effects of self-assessment interventions on student's learning strategies and its effects on self-efficacy through meta-analysis. Platsidou et al. (2017) identified (in Japanese learners) International Orientation to L2 students alongside motivational learning environments and mediated intended learning outcomes. Angouri et al. (2010) investigated multiple factors involved in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for second language students as intertwined with many complicated parameters.

In addition, research by Mendelsohn (2001, 2006), Berne (2004), LeLoup and Pontiero (2007) examine how learners process different genres of authentic input and secondly, whether the gender differences are reported adequately or not while designing the teaching materials is also the motivation behind carrying out this study. The idea regarding authentic input and comprehension strategies while learning

Listening for L2 learners is probably insufficient. Therefore, an understanding of such issues will aid in the development of the strategies and materials for improving English Learning. Based on previously explained problems and issues; Kramsch (1993) and Byram (1997, 2002) also look for the gender-based differences in the self-learning strategies and accomplishments in selected populations from different states within India and thus try to suggest possible pedagogical implications useful for effective teaching-learning of EFL. Further, there is a limited focus on gender-based material development in countries whose first language is not English (Kobayashi 2002). In addition, no specific study was found that could empirically address the gap between self-learning strategies and self-accomplishment in the case of India which falls under the scope of the study. On the other hand, the previous studies by Ali, (2016), Ozdemir (2013), Ricento (2013), Główka (2014), and Ellis (2012) have suggested that a minor or significant difference in the performance of female students and male students exists in developed countries where women have outperformed in EFL. However, another study by Van Der Slik et al. (2015), partially found that developing countries such as Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka have marginalized women which made their female students score less than male students. Therefore, this leaves the paper with the following hypothesis.

H₀: Gender-based difference in self-learning strategies and accomplishments.

H₁: Pedagogical strategies to tackle the differences and identify reasons behind the differences.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The socio-cultural theory which was passed by Vygotsky (1980), is the study of various forms of mental activities, attention, and memory under the umbrella of cognition. The principle of the sociocultural theory was primarily established to mediate the association from human mental activity that would eventually affect the behavior of the person. The same applies to students' dialect collaboration, according to Marsden et al. (2013) and Kung (2017) which mediates in learning a new language. Regarding social interaction, an important consideration is the learner's motives, which tends to play a significant role in the process of reaching the ultimate goal of learning the language. While learning Reading and Writing skills, initially learners have to verbalize their ideas before attempting the task. Further, learners have to say how they did the task (Makovskaya & Radjabzade 2022). This process gives rise to

many assumptions to the critics over learners' use of strategies; whether or not the learners are conscious of their strategies while processing the material inputs (Ericsson & Simon, 1987). Cohen (1987) opined that classrooms focus mainly on the production of language rather than the process. Hayes and Flower (1981) found many distinguished methods of collecting behavioral data in introspection and retrospection research. Moreover, the theory suggests that the learner's own cognition and the learning tools are vital in the process and the role of the interactive activities promote the learning of the language itself (Chamot & Lisa Kiipper, 1989); O'Malley et al., (1990) studied the think aloud method by monitoring the most effective learners on how they become successful while using their previous knowledge in performing given tasks successfully. Further, there is a significant difference between strategies adopted by males and females (Oxford et al., 1988; Nyikos, 1990) in learning and using language.

2.2. Research Questions

The main aim of the following study is focused towards assessing the strategies for using LSRW skills in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This has been achieved by conducting a survey and test for listening. Students are asked to fill out the survey questionnaire using Google Forms. The test for listening consisted of 25 questions followed by listening to the audio played to test the working memory and attention-based performance.

The focus of this research is on the following questions.

1. What is the self-comprehension level of students while learning EFL?
2. What are the important issues of participants while learning?
3. Will male and female differ in self-accomplishments?
4. What are the other key issues (like self-strategies, level of listening, and confidence) among students while learning EFL?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The first-year B. Tech course students of various Engineering streams beyond Arts and Sciences with EFL as one of the compulsory course to gain credits agreed to

participate in the study. For this, 239 have responded to the survey, where 2 values were missing that could not be included in the analysis. The majority of the respondents in the survey belonged to the age group 16 years to 20 years old with the portion of 225 (94.1%), and the remaining portion of the respondents was in the 21-30 were 10 (4.2%), and remaining age groups had participants 1 (0.4%). All the participants have been learning English very early from under graduation. Most of them are at (pre) intermediate level of language proficiency.

3.2. Methods

The quantitative method has been chosen as it is the most adequate technique for analysis in this research and a questionnaire has been used as the instrument to collect the required information. Through the use of this tool, the respondents were given the opportunity to select the most appropriate responses from the pre-determined answers. For this purpose, the researchers have formulated a questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale. On the other hand, the qualitative method has also been used by the researcher where semi-structured interview questions were formulated so that the interviews can be conducted for the students. For assessing Listening Skills, a questionnaire followed by audio listening was designed to evaluate the comprehension strategies used by boys and girls.

3.3. Research Design

Nearly 240 First-year Graduate students from two Higher Educational Institutes in India agreed to participate in this study. The students were informed about the objective of this research and the selected subjects were motivated learners though not highly proficient English speakers. This particular research data was collected by both surveys and personal interviews conducted with the selected subjects. The rationale behind this is to increase the efficiency of the research, as the researcher aims to study the individual comprehension strategies of learning Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing skills, both in numeric form, in EFL classrooms as well as aims to extract the opinions from the respondents. Meanwhile, for the purpose of the listening assessment, a questionnaire with 25 questions was used to assess the listening ability of the participants. In this assessment, around 60 Min. authentic

audio² was played in which people were talking in 8 different situations. Meanwhile, the participants had to listen to the audio and answer the questions that were designed to find out the aural input processing of the students.

Further, a questionnaire has been used as the instrument to allow the students to naturally comprehend in a non-research context³. Through the use of this tool, the respondents were allowed to select the responses from predetermined answers to choose the most appropriate one. For this purpose, the researcher has formulated a questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale. On the other hand, the qualitative method has also been used by the researcher where semi-structured interview questions were formulated so that the interviews can be conducted for the students. In the survey total of 239 participants took part, and responses were gathered electronically. Furthermore, for the interviews, a total of 25 students were selected who provided their insights regarding learning English as a foreign language (EFL) and their perceived importance of LSRW skills for learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

3.4. Data Analysis

For this paper, the data has been analysed with the help of statistical tests to assess the significance of LSRW skills for learning EFL. The data analysis for this research has been carried out in two different phases. In the first phase, the questionnaires were analysed with the help of one-sample T test and Paired Sample Test for the data which has been collected from the questionnaire. In addition to the quantitative analysis, a simple comparison between the performance of male and female students was also conducted through Mean, Median and results were discussed along with the literature. On the other hand, for the interviews, thematic analysis has been carried out in which the commonalities in the responses have been generated to evaluate the data.

² Authentic audio means designed for and by a native speaker.

³ For testing 'listening comprehension' four authentic audios were used in three intact classes. The idea units used by the students to write what is heard immediately were taken into account while measuring comprehension strategies.

4. Results

4.1. Gender-Based Differences Self-accomplishment⁴

In this assessment participants' listening strategies were assessed and 130 students participated and were provided with 25 questions; each question was equal to 1 mark. The highest possible marks were 25 questions and the lowest marks were 0; where over each correct question participant was given 1 mark and on each wrong 0 marks were awarded to students. Table 1 elucidates that the total number of participants was 130, where 73 participants were male students and 57 participants were female. In this test, the majority of the participants were male participants, and their mean scores and standard deviation are provided below.

Table 1
Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score	Male	73	11.2192	4.48530	.52497
	Female	57	12.3333	4.33150	.57372

Table 1 shows the average score of male participants was 11.21 [Standard deviation 4.485], this implies that on average each male participant scored around 11.21 on the questionnaire but this score could also deviate by standard deviation. Therefore, it implies that each participant scored 11.21/25 [44.84%] but this score is also subject to deviate by 17.94%. On the other hand, the average score of female participants was 12.33 with a standard deviation of 4.33 by which the mean score may deviate. Hence, it is evident that on average each female participant scored 12.33 out of 25 which is equal to 49.32% and this could also increase or decrease by 17.324%. Meanwhile, comparatively, the mean score of the female students is better than male students, and fluctuations in the female students' score are also less than male students. Female students have outperformed male students which is against the differences even though male students are prejudged as better performing than

⁴ A number of EFL studies have ignored the potential differences in gender and including it as a variable in their statistical models along with effects of: academic FL learning (Benson, M. J: 1989); note-taking (Dunkel, Patricia A: 1988; Shitala Mishra & David Berliner: 1989 & Lee, O. S. 2017); previous learning knowledge (Markham, Paul L: 1988 & Michael Latham: 1987); learning environments (Chaudron, Craig: 1985); reading (Favreau, Micheline & Norman S. Segalowitz: 1982 & Yeldham, M. 2018); listeners' perception (Dahl, D. A: 1981; Yurtbaşı, M. 2015).

female. (Markham, 1988). This finding is as per the numerical summary, but to compare it statistically, an independent sample's T-test is being used and results are interpreted as follows in Table 2.

Table 2
Independent Samples Tests

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				T-test for Equality of Means			95% Confidence interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig(2 tailed)	Mean Difference	St. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Score	Equal Variances assumed	.372	.543	-1.427	128	.156	-1.11416	.78102	-2.65955	.43124
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.433	122.331	.154	1.11416	.77765	-2.65356	.42525

For this test, the null hypothesis is formed as follows:

$H_0 = \text{Mean difference between the score of female students and male students is equal to } 0.$

$H_1 = \text{Mean difference between the score of female students and male students is not equal to } 0$

From Table 2, Levene's test for equality of variances has $f = 0.372$ [$p = 0.543$]. This infers to not reject the null hypothesis of Levene's test that the variance difference in the score of female students and male students is significantly different. Therefore, results of equal variances not assumed need to be interpreted as per Levene's test. Meanwhile, the T-value is -1.433 [$p = 0.154$] and this does not reject the null hypothesis that the mean difference between the scores of female students and male students is equal to 0. Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to state that there is a difference between the mean scores of the female students and male students, (Ho, 1987) but the difference is not statistically significant. It can be argued that the findings of this paper are not consistent with the findings of previous empirical studies such as Ali (2016), Ozdemir (2013), Ricento (2013), Głównka (2014), and Ellis (2012). These have indicated that female students have outperformed their counterparts' male students. Therefore, it can be claimed that findings are in contrast to the differences and potentially interesting gender

socialization in EFL that have not been reported by many researchers so far (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). Similar to Feyten (1991) it is found that FL learning has a significant relation with L1 learning. Though there is no statistical significance between males and females, both paid equal attention while performing the tasks. However, as per the summary statistics the difference exists that may increase over time and become significant since the sample size of the data is reasonably good. Meanwhile, this social justice is about to prevail and improve over time and could lead to a significant difference in performance.

The One Sample T- test was carried out to compare the means of one distinct group with another. In addition, the one sample T-test is regarded as the statistical procedure which is used for determining whether the sample of the observations can be generated by the process with the specific mean.

Table 3
One Sample T-test

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Test Value = 4	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
1. English – LSRW skills as a foreign language are easy to grasp.	-3.178	231	.002	-.233	-.38	-.09
4. Out of 4 skills listening is difficult for me.	-14.331	232	.000	-1.262	-1.44	-1.09
6. English as a Foreign language is not for me.	-20.679	230	.000	-1.714	-1.88	-1.55
7. I know some how to listen and hence learning formal/Active listening is easy	-2.861	227	.005	-.189	-.32	-.06
8. I can read faster, because of past experience in reading English	-.852	228	.395	-.061	-.20	.08
10. I have good phonological memory and therefore listening is rather easy for me	-8.437	227	.000	-.610	-.75	-.47

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Test Value = 4		
				Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower	Upper	
11I have difficulty in understanding pronunciation and how it can be comprehended and therefore I find listening difficult.	-12.880	228	.000	-1.092	-1.26	-.92
15. I prefer vocabulary tools for learning listening.	-2.632	225	.009	-.181	-.32	-.05
17. Collaborative learning environment helps me well in learning listening	-.983	224	.327	-.067	-.20	.07
19. When I am paired with another student, then I can grasp the contents of text well.	-4.210	226	.000	-.317	-.47	-.17

Table 3 presented above explains the one-sample t test for the questions which has been undertaken for the study. It can be observed that for the question as “*LSRW skills as a foreign language is easy to grasp*”, the p-value of the test is depicted as .002 which is lower than the significance level of 0.05 confidence intervals. Therefore, this indicates that the total percentage of the research participants is significantly different from the test value of 40. Moreover, the negative T scores explains that the sample proportion for the following question is less than 40% but the evidence which is based on the p-value is sufficient for concluding the percentage of students in the overall population.

In addition to the explanation of the results, it can also be asserted that for the following statement that “*Out of 4 skills listening is difficult for me*”⁵ the one sample t-test statistics is estimated at -14.331 where the p-value is evaluated at .000 which is less than the confidence interval of 0.005. This indicates that the average responses regarding the difficulty of listening skills are statistically significant. The 95% confidence interval estimate for the difference between the population mean skills

⁵ Listening, many a times is least considered while designing the curriculum and evaluation based on introspection and retrospection have still many controversies, researchers like Fujita, J. N: 1984; O Malley, Michael & Anna Uhl Chamot:1990 & Kurita, T. 2012 examined by combining both qualitative and quantitative methods in their longitudinal studies conducted for four years.

difficulty and sample mean is (-1.44, -1.09). Further to the interpretation of the table, one of the questions which was being asked from the respondents is “*I can read faster, because of past experience in reading English*”⁶, the one sample t-test statistics is estimated at -.852 where the p-value is evaluated at .359 which is more than the confidence interval of 0.05. (Ericsson & Simon: 1987). This designates that the average responses regarding the readability of English based on the past experience are not statistically significant. The 95% confidence interval estimate for the difference between the population mean focused on the readability of English and sample mean is (-.20, .08).

Table 4
Paired Sample Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	21. Male students learn English Listening skills better through visual environments & 26. Female students learn listening better through visual environments.	222	.345	.000
Pair 2	22. Male students lean listening skills better through collaborative learning environments & 27. Female students learn listening better through collaborative learning environments	224	.419	.000

From the Table 4 presented above, it can be assessed that the correlation between male students learning English listening skills better through visual environments. Female students learning through visual environments has positive and weak correlation as it is estimated at .345. Moreover, the p-value also shows significant results as the sig value is estimated at 0.000 which is below the confidence interval of 0.05. Moreover, the pair 2 which is focused on the correlation between male students learning listening skills better in the collaborative learning environment and female students depicts a positive and moderate correlation. (Benson, 1989; de Sousa, & Ivanova, 2019) The estimated value of the correlation between the variables is valued at .419. Moreover, the p-value also shows significant results as the sig value is estimated at 0.000 which is below the confidence interval of 0.05.

⁶ Previous knowledge on reading ability is an important variable in assessing LSRW in EFL learning, the observations in this research will be described in a paper in preparation.

Table 5
Paired Samples T-Test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Paired Differences Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	21. Male students learn English Listening skills better through visual environments 26. Female students learn listening skills better through visual environments.	-.068	1.443	.097	-.258	.123	-.698	221	.486
Pair 2	22. Male students learn listening skills better through collaborative learning environments 27. Female students learn listening better through collaborative learning environments	-.031	1.331	.089	-.206	.144	-.352	223	.726

As shown, Table: 5 explains the paired sample T-test which is also called as the dependent sample t-test which is a statistical process applied for assessing the mean difference between two sets of observations which is zero. Moreover, the subject to be studied is measured twice in pairs for calculating the observations. The table presented above depicts there was no average difference between the statements in Pair 1 as the estimated t value is -6.98 and where the sig value is greater than 0.05 which is estimated at .486 ($t_{221} = -6.98, p > 0.05$). Similarly, for the Pair 2 which is focused towards Male and Female students learn listening skills better through the collaborative learning environment explains that the t value is estimated at -3.52 and the sig value is much greater than the confidence interval levels 0.05 estimated at .726 ($t_{223} = -3.52, p > 0.05$).

4.2. Results from the Interviews

The answers derived from the interviews are grouped based on the commonalities in responses. Based on the interview findings, most of the students were aware of learning English as a foreign language and its importance. A common perspective

which was observed among most of the interview participants was that,

“Listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are equally important for the students to learn because it helps in developing other language skills”.

However, the participants were mainly focused on the skills which are essential for learning English as a foreign language. Student 4 highlighted that,

“The most difficult part of learning a language is the reading and listening skills as it is related to more of the comprehension skills which is difficult for the students to learn.”

In addition to the statement shared by the student 3, student 4 has provided the same opinion that,

“Listening without any distraction makes it easier for the listener to understand what message the speaker wants to deliver. The thinking of the listener focuses the interaction of the mental processes that makes the individuals enable to connect the dots with what the individual hears”

The above-mentioned responses highlighted the significance of learning English as the foreign language as it is necessary for the majority of students to learn for their academics (Benson, 1989). In addition, there has been a lot of significance to learning of English language as it is important for students in various disciplines, for teachers and universities. According to the study conducted by Alizadeh (2018), it was evaluated that the language learners sometimes evaluate their success based on their learning as how well they have improved their spoken abilities. In this regard, the textbooks and teachers are mainly confined to results, meeting syllabus deadlines rather than advancing themselves to be process oriented; and they are using direct approaches and introspect the short term and long-term memories in processing the information.

Furthermore, another student highlighted in the interview that,

“Listening and speaking are the core parts of interaction and they facilitate language acquirement. During listening, it is necessary to understand what the speaker senses at that moment which eventually contributes to better outcomes. When listening, the listeners must understand what the speaker is feeling about and how the speaker wants to discuss a specific plan.”

In this essence, student 5 highlighted in the interview that,

“I believe that top most problems associated with listening are the rapidity of the speaker while communicating as this may lower the competence of the listener to comprehend what is being verbally communicated.”

In addition, student 1 highlighted in the interview regarding the problem pertaining to learning English as the foreign language,

“I face a lot of difficulty when I talk to someone whose native language is English⁷. However, I also think that the speed and difficulty contribute towards problems in listening comprehension, where lower the reception and understanding is core to such problems. Or you can say that face to face communication may consist of lesser problems, the difficulties may be higher when external mediums are being used to communicate a message.”

Based on the responses gathered from the interviews, it can be highlighted that different individuals face difficulties in listening to any sort of message that is being delivered through varied mediums (Hamouda, 2013, Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). However, listening is regarded as the most important skill among the rest of the language learning skills because the learners bypass English and focus on the concepts of target language.

5. Discussion

The present study was focused towards assessing the LSRW skills in EFL context. It has been understood that learning language is imperative for students and it requires ample aspects to be taken into consideration. First, the study observed that LSRW skills learning in EFL context depends on various individual and group cognitive strategies. Both boys and girls participated in this study have adjusted their comprehension strategies according to the tasks without knowing the effectiveness of it. The students background, previous knowledge and individual focus also differentiates the levels of difficulty in order to be more flexible in proportionate to the use of strategies. Instruction is to be more explicit including many cognitive and meta-cognitive (pre, on-going and post) tasks for making students more exposed to low-difficult levels of learning. It has been understood that with less focus being

⁷ While conducting the ‘listening test’ the students were instructed about the procedure of test; 1. Audio will be played twice, 2. First time without stopping and second time by pausing wherever they wanted to, in order to discuss what and how they understood it and thinking that this would allow students to have control on what they were listening to.

given on the listening exercises, students in the under-graduation face difficulties in their listening comprehension. It is also observed that the individuals learning the language also face equal difficulties in grasping the new language. It has been identified that initially it is of immense concern and problem to the students to familiarise with native colloquial tongue. It is understood to (not to ignore) consider the aspect of foreign language anxiety (Young 1991; Al-Obaydi et al., 2023) as a major concern for individuals who are functioning in an environment where the native language is different from them.

Second, the findings of this paper suggest, though the statistical evidence is not significant in evaluating the gender differences whether perceived or real, it implies that despite the difference in the mean score, due to inconsiderable difference it can only be stated that the difference between the scores could have improved over the time. The current research supports the previous studies on gender research of Marsh et al., (1988) who have found that women have low self-esteem when compared with their counterparts in Mathematics. Van Der Slik et al., (2015) and Quyen and Dan (2018) found that male/boys dominate the female/girls students in English learning. It has been identified that many students face difficulties and concerns in listening comprehension and one of the major reasons behind this has been identified to be lesser focus being given on listening as a language learning component. Traditionally, most of the institutes have been putting more attention and focus on aspects such as reading, vocabulary, structure and has not given due importance to the factor of listening.

As stated by Peelle (2018) in order to implement listening exercises as the main tool and technique for teaching language, the teacher need to be given adequate training first. With a higher inclination towards listening development skills, institutes have been involved with different methods and approaches that could all lead to deduce better results on the whole. Individuals have been identified to be petrified by the language barrier and unable to communicate with others. In this regard, it has also been identified that there are various variables and factors that augment such anxiety in individuals and makes the situation even worse for them. The tutors and teachers have been regarded as imperative stakeholders who play a vital role in the overall process of learning.

6. Conclusion

Among the different components of learning, listening has been regarded as the most critical and essential aspect. Through effective listening, an individual may be given ample opportunity through which he/she can understand the new language and depict improvement in the overall learning procedure. For non-native language learners listening and speaking skills enable to analyse sounds that match with their own sounds and interpret what is heard. There is a need for empirical research to find these learners issues in EFL to understand the colloquial tongue of a native speaker while listening for meaning and language. Furthermore, listening skills also helps individuals to grasp the pronunciation of words and phrases and is able to create links.

The above findings have also revealed that listening, reading and writing skills are important for the individuals to learn new languages because when a new language is learned by a person, he/she tries to listen, read and write it so that he/she becomes more fluent in it. Also, the results of thematic analysis have revealed that listening should be done without any distraction so that the individual can concentrate more on the phrases and words. Listening is given a paramount importance in any cultural context. But the materials and methods that equip graduate students are very meagre and it is very important to address them.

Finally, this is on a group of motivated EFL learners based in India and further research on other students would clear issues involved in perceiving and interpretation of flexible use of strategies and responses of EFL learners.

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