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Research Article

Cultural Awareness, Listening Comprehension, Listening Motivation, and Attitude among EFL Learners: A Gender-Based Mixed Method Study

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The current research investigated the effects of cultural awareness on listening comprehension and listening motivation of EFL learners. Also, this research investigated the perspectives of EFL students towards having English cultural awareness. Seventy-five EFL learners from three English intact classes were chosen as the subjects of this study. After that, a listening motivation test and a listening comprehension test were given to the three classes. Then, five audio files containing the English cultural-based issues were taught in one class and five audio files containing the Persian cultural contents were instructed to the other experimental class. The third class or the control class was instructed five audio files that did not include any specific cultural-based materials. After teaching all audio files, a listening motivation posttest and a listening comprehension posttest were given to the three groups and an attitude questionnaire was given to the experimental classes to determine their attitudes toward using the effectiveness of cultural awareness on their language learning development. The results of one-sample t-test, one-way ANOVA, and the post hoc Sceffe test showed that the experimental classes outflanked the control class in the posttest of listening motivation and listening comprehension. The results indicated that the subjects showed a positive attitude toward having cultural awareness in their English learning process. The outcomes of the study provide some implications for teachers to increase the students' cultural awareness and to enhance their positive attitudes about the integration of culturally based resources into language education.

1. Introduction

Motivation significantly affects language learning in general and listening skill in particular since motivation persuades and inspires learners during the learning process of a foreign language. In addition, motivation can give students a specific guideline and keep them going [1]. It is the key to the learning process. Having not sufficient motivation can be the main hindrance encountered by teachers, parents, school administrators, and counselors [2, 3]. Instructors, parents, school administrators, counselors, professors of universities, and all stakeholders in education need to cooperate and

work together to increase the motivation of the students. Only, in this way, the students can achieve complete successes in the classes. Dornyei [4] states that the learners' eagerness, persistence, and commitment are the main determinants for successes or failures. Instructors and lecturers should know or understand the learners' motivation and interest to make them successful in their lessons [5, 6].

Based on Eggen and Kauchak [7], motivation in psychological force makes and guides behaviors towards an objective. The same as a force that moves the objects, motivation can move students. More visualized, if people are machines, motivation is as the engine which can power and direct their behaviors. In contexts of learning a foreign language and relevant to listening in particular, Goh and Yusnita [8] verify the positive and direct impacts of listening techniques on listening performances. According to Yang [9], teaching listeners about the roles of metacognitive activities in listening comprehension aids them to conduct listening tasks more successfully.

Listening is regarded as one of the chief skills in teaching the English language. It is overlooked compared to the other skills including speaking, reading, and writing [10]. Listening has vital roles in both communication and learning processes. Previous researches have verified that listening is the most highly applied language skill in everyday interactions [11–13]. Besides being the first ability learned by all language speakers, listening is also the main agent to learning an L2 or FL rapidly and effectively. Certainly, speakers cannot establish communication successfully if they do not receive information properly. Thus, concentrating on listening as a passive or receptive skill is the first construct upon which instructors and students ought to concentrate within language learning. In addition, listening can be developed more quickly than the other three skills of language [14, 15].

English listening skill is a complicated process and vital in the improvement of foreign language performance; yet, the significance of listening comprehension in learning a language has only been identified lately [16, 17]. Because the role of listening skill in language learning is either neglected or underestimated, it received not much heed in the past. But now, some scholars have allotted much time to listening and say that it is a vital skill in learning and teaching. For example, Nunan [18] states that listening is the main skill in learning any language. Without it, students cannot learn to communicate successfully. Indeed, over "fifty percent of the time that learners devote to foreign language learning will be allotted to listening" (p. 1).

Mastering over listening skill has been the principal objective of both EFL learners and their instructors who intend to teach English in the real contexts, particularly for communication goals. When EFL learners begin learning English, what comes to their minds after listening to the native speakers' speeches is to understand all the speeches that are heard. More particularly, language transfers cultural values and knowledge and it shows the thoughts and customs of that people. Therefore, culture is inserted in even the most rudimentary acts of a language [19–22]; it is an entangled part of the ways in which people live their lives and the ways they apply the language. Kramsch [21] asserts that when we speak, we conduct cultural acts. As a result, cultural knowledge has received much attention in language teaching and learning. Therefore, cultural knowledge is viewed as an important agent for learning the English language. So, if learners' pronunciations, grammar, vocabularies, and cultural knowledge are to boost, they need to be shaped in a sound knowledge of the community where the language is used.

Cook [23] asserts that the effective interpretations of a language (written or spoken) in contexts rely upon the degree to which the students transfer convention and procedure, such as those relevant to paralanguage. Such convention and procedure, together with the beliefs and values behind them, are components of cultural background knowledge.

Based on Çakir [24], there are some reasons to make students familiar with the cultural elements:

(i) Developing the communicative competencies

(ii) Understanding the patterns of language and behavior of both the target and the local cultures at more conscious levels

(iii) Developing cross-cultural and international comprehension

(iv) Adopting wider perspectives in the perceptions of the facts

(v) Making sessions of teaching more pleasant and attractive to enhance a cognizance of the probable errors that may occur in comprehensions, interpretations, translations, and communications

Familiarity with English cultural elements can help EFL learners learn the English language better. Also, it can assist them to develop their listening skill since having cultural knowledge about different topics paves the way for learning those topics better. Consequently, this study aimed at investigating the effects of cultural awareness on enhancing EFL learners' listening comprehension and listening motivation. Moreover, this study tried to inspect the perspectives of EFL learners about the effects of having English cultural awareness on their English learning development.

This study can be significant since it includes four main variables such as attitude, cultural awareness, listening comprehension, and listening motivation. In addition, this research is significant because it includes both genders. The findings of this research can encourage English teachers to incorporate more culturally based materials in their teaching.

2. Literature Review

Motivation is highly crucial to be successful in learning a language. Dörnyei [25] mentioned that motivation can play a more significant role in the process of learning an L2. Without adequate motivation, even students with the most considerable capabilities are not able to achieve long-term objectives, and neither are proper syllabuses and good

teaching sufficient on their own to ascertain students' achievements. On the other side, sufficient motivation can compensate for remarkable weaknesses both in one's language aptitudes and learning situations. Lambert and Gardner [26] emphasized that though language aptitude accounts for a remarkable proportion of individual variabilities in language learning achievements, motivational agents can dominate the aptitude effects. Nevertheless, there are two different kinds of motivation concerning language learning; instrumental motivation and integrative motivation [27, 28].

Motivation can develop the learners' listening skill. Listening is the basis of communication in learning a foreign language. Especially, learning listening skill is presumed a more significant task in learning and teaching foreign languages and is likely one of the most challenging activities of language students. Motivation is a vital component that significantly affects the students' achievements. Ryan and Deci [29] held that motivation is a vital force that specifies whether the listeners embark on tasks at all. In listening, the learning processes need motivation which can advocate and develop their skills. Sufficient motivation is necessary to become successful listeners.

Gardner and Smythe [30] mentioned that motivation generally has historically been regarded as a mediator to learning a language. Gardner [31] examined that the notion of people who try to participate in a language society can display high motivation for learning the language and hence can reach a high level of proficiencies. In fact, a meta-analysis of Gardner's motivation study indicated a significant positive relationship between the students' motivation and their language learning [32–34].

Based on Byrne [35], occasionally the extent of time students needs for listening, without taking part, can make memory difficulties or even fatigues so that in the end they simply no longer listen with comprehending. Scholars have explained motivation in different ways over the last several years. For example, Keller [36] explained motivation as the way to select from the community what positivity they obtain from them. Motivation is what individuals make as to what experiences or objectives they will reach or evade, and the degree of attempt they will make an effort in this regard. Brown [37] stated that motivation is generally thought of as the inner voices, urges, stimuli, emotions, or desires that move or compel a student towards a certain act or task.

Motivation can improve listening skills. Listening skill has been ignored by instructors and scholars. Nunan [38] argued that listening skill is regarded as a secondary skill and as a tool to an objective, rather than an objective in itself. Based on Graham [39], listening in a foreign language is a complicated but undervalued skill. Listening skill and motivation can be influenced by our cultural backgrounds. People across the universe have different cultures and speak diverse languages. While language and culture may appear different, there is an inseparable bilateral correlation between them. Language is a defining feature of the culture and has a crucial role in its production. When an outsider interacts with a language, in fact, he interacts with its cul-

ture. Comprehending the culture of a community without its language knowledge is impossible. Language is not only a product of culture; it is also a significant sign. Culture and language enhance mutually, with traditions, cognitions, and other cultural patterns being obviously inserted into the language [40, 41].

The incapability to comprehend social behaviors and cultural contexts of a language can lead to breakdown, error, misunderstanding, and misinterpretation during communications. Language is not only to receive or to send information, it also keeps a proper social behavior in culture. Communications and culture are two very related to each other. Cultural differences including speaker and listener can probably make communicative blocks. These differences include differences in vocabularies, accents, confusion regarding roles, and assumptions concerning shared information. So, successful communicators can understand cultural differences [42].

Lustig and Koester [40] said that culture has a certain communication pattern that restricts successful listening if learners are unconscious of proper language patterns. Understanding culture appropriately helps understand all words with accurate contexts and meanings. Sociocultural knowledge of a language causes it simpler to learn novel expressions, words, and speaking strategies. In addition, comprehending the roles of culture is vital for effective communications with natives. It boosts engagement levels and develops thinking in foreign language learning. Comprehending the lifestyle of native speakers can personalize the language and make it simpler to learn a language [43, 44].

Knowing our counterparts' cultures helps us speak more fluently. Instead of translating words used in one's local language, we can speak, think, and apply suitable vocabularies within the correct situation in the foreign language. For example, particular constructs only can be understood in English when they are used and translated according to the English culture. But by comprehending a language and its sociocultural contexts, we may enhance alternative words to express them. Comprehending the cultural backgrounds of a language, involving lifestyles, literature, arts, and other factors can make us professional in it. Without considering culture, just confused machine translations will be used and individuals are forced to apply the language in a mechanical way [45].

The theory behind the present study is the cultural schema which is defined as an extension of content schema that is culture-specific. Cultural schema is the cultural connection that is necessary to completely comprehend the meanings intended by the writers and speakers [46]. The cultural schema includes cultural familiarity that can help readers to recreate the texts by referring to more culturally related scripts [47]. This is possibly because diverse constructs may have diverse referents in diverse cultures and may thus produce different expectations on the readers' part. Therefore, the cultural schema is more than a mere literal understanding of the text content [48].

Belli [49] empirically examined the attitude of students in Turkey toward culture and its incorporation into language teaching and their cultural awareness and to show if

birthplaces, genders, experiences abroad, and the high school graduates had any impacts on their attitude. The information was gathered from 96 respondents by giving a questionnaire. One-way ANOVA and post hoc tests were utilized for doing statistics analyses. The findings indicated the positive attitude of the participants toward culture and its incorporation into language teaching.

Mashudi et al. [50] inspected the impact of English cultural knowledge on the developing grammatical knowledge of Indonesian EFL students. To do so, 40 advanced subjects were selected based on their performances in OQPT. After that, they were randomly divided into two groups of 20; one control and one experimental. A grammar pretest was given to measure their grammar knowledge before performing the treatment. After administering the pretest, the researcher instructed the grammar points to the experimental participants by utilizing English cultural texts. On the other hand, the control participants received noncultural-based grammar instruction. Finally, the grammar posttest was given to the participants of both groups to determine the impact of the treatment on their grammar knowledge. The findings depicted that the experimental participants had better performances than the control participants after the instruction.

Menacho-Vargas et al. [51] examined the effect of culturally based conversations on enhancing the Iranian EFL students' speaking performance. For reaching this objective, the researchers administered the OQPT to 158 EFL learners to assess their levels of English proficiency. Then, the researcher selected 100 upper-intermediate learners and assigned them randomly to two groups; experimental group (EG) ($n = 50$) and control group (CG) ($n = 50$). Then, the groups were administered a speaking pretest. After pretesting, the EG received the treatment by using culturally oriented conversations, i.e., conversations that were relevant to the American and the English cultures. On the other hand, the CG group was taught conventionally, i.e., they received not any particular culturally oriented conversations. Eventually, a speaking test was administered as the posttest. The findings of data analyses indicated that the experimental participants outflanked the control participants in the speaking posttest.

Hernandez et al. [52] tried to examine the Iranian teachers' and learners' attitudes toward the effects of English cultural background on improving English language learning. To reach this goal, 90 Iranian teachers and 90 students were selected, and then, they were administered two attitude questionnaires to examine their attitude toward having target cultural knowledge. The findings of one-sample t-test showed that both Iranian instructors and learners presented positive opinions about having English cultural backgrounds for English language learning.

The reviewed literature indicates that having cultural awareness has a positive effect on developing English language learning. Also, this review shows that there is not a study on the effectiveness of having cultural knowledge on listening comprehension and listening motivation of EFL learners. In addition, the attitudes of students towards the effectiveness of having cultural knowledge on language

learning were overlooked in most studies. Therefore, this study intended to cover this gap by formulating the following questions:

RQ1. Does cultural awareness affect listening comprehension and listening motivation of EFL learners positively?

RQ2. Do EFL learners present positive attitudes towards having English cultural awareness?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants. To conduct this research, 75 intermediate EFL students from three English intact classes were chosen as the respondents of this research. Indeed, three intact classes were chosen; two as the experimental groups (English culture and Persian culture) and one as the control group. There were 25 students in each class. Both genders were included since the classes were mixed.

3.2. Instruments. The first tool in this research was a researcher-made listening motivation questionnaire. This questionnaire had 17 Likert-type items measuring the listening motivation of the participants. Each item had 5 options including strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. The validity of the instrument was verified by three English professors and its reliability was assessed via applying Cronbach's alpha ($r = .83$). This questionnaire was utilized as the pre and posttests of the study.

The other means for collecting the necessary data was a researcher-made listening pretest which was created according to the participants' coursebook. It was a listening comprehension test of 40 objective questions. It encompassed true or false, multiple-choice, and fill-in-the-blank items. The validity and the reliability of the mentioned tool were calculated. After making the test, it was validated by four English specialists and its reliability was computed by the KR-21 ($r = 0.89$).

The third tool that was utilized in this study was a researcher-made listening posttest—the modified version of the pretest. It was given to the respondents to assess the impacts of instruction on their listening comprehension ability. All structures of the posttest were similar to those of the pretest in terms of time and the number of questions. The only difference was that the orders of questions and options were altered to evade the probable recall of pretest answers. The reliability of the listening posttest was measured by using the KR-21 ($r = 0.86$). In addition, the validity of the posttest was verified by four English specialists.

The last instrument was an attitude questionnaire made by the researcher to determine the attitude of EFL students towards using cultural-based resources and the effectiveness of cultural awareness in the EFL context. This questionnaire had 18 Likert scale items with five options of "strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree." The reliability of this instrument was computed by utilizing Cronbach's alpha ($r = .79$) and its validity was certified by three English instructors.

3.3. Procedures and Analyses. After selecting three intact classes, a listening motivation test and a listening comprehension

test were given to them. Then, five audio files containing the English cultural-based issues were taught in one class and five audio files containing the Persian cultural contents were instructed to the other experimental class. The students in the third class or the control class were taught five audio files which did not include any specific cultural-based materials, neither English nor Persian. After teaching all audio files that lasted five sessions, a listening motivation posttest and a listening comprehension posttest were given to the three groups to measure the effects of the treatment on their listening enhancement. Finally, an attitude questionnaire was given to the experimental classes to assess their opinions about using cultural-based resources and the effectiveness of cultural awareness in the EFL context. The gathered data received an exact analysis by applying one-sample t-test, one-way ANOVA, and post hoc Scheffe test.

4. Results

The collected data were analysed in the following tables:

Table 1 shows the inferential statistics of the three groups in the listening pretest. Because Sig .66 is higher than .50, the differences between the groups are not significantly noticeable. In fact, they had similar listening performances in the pretest of listening.

Table 2 indicates the inferential statistics of the participants in three groups in the listening posttest. As Sig .00 is less than .50, the differences between the three groups are significantly remarkable at ($p < 0.05$). It can be stated that the experimental groups outperformed the control group in the posttests of listening.

In the above table (Table 3), a post hoc Scheffe test is used for comparing the scores of all groups in the listening posttest. Based on the above outcomes, there are significant differences between the posttest scores of the control group and the posttest of both the experimental groups ($p < 0.05$), while there are no considerable differences between the listening posttests of the experimental groups ($p < 0.05$).

Table 4 shows the mean squares and Sig value of the three groups in the listening motivation pretest. As Sig .83 is higher than .50, the differences between the three groups are not remarkable in the listening motivation pretest.

Table 5 shows the mean squares and Sig value of the experimental and control groups. As Sig .00 is less than .50, the difference between the three groups is remarkable at $p < 0.05$. In order to ensure which groups outperformed the other, the researchers conducted a post hoc Scheffe test.

The findings of the post hoc Scheffe test in the above table (Table 6) depict that the differences between the performances of the control group and both experimental groups are significant in the posttest but the differences between the posttest scores of the experimental groups are not remarkable.

As shown in Table 7, Sig 00 is less than 0.05; therefore, the Persian EFL learners presented a positive tendency and attitude towards using cultural-based resources and the effectiveness of cultural awareness on their language learning development.

Table 1: One-way ANOVA (pretest of listening skill).

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Between group	4.66	2	2.3	.34	.66
Within groups	462.00	72	6.41		
Total	466.66	74			

Table 2: One-way ANOVA (posttest of listening skill).

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Between group	135.17	2	67.53	16.48	.00
Within groups	295.44	72	4.13		
Total	430.58	74			

Table 3: Post hoc Scheffe test and multiple comparisons (posttest of listening skill).

(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
Control	English	-2.96*	.57	.00	-4.39	-1.59
	Persian	-2.72*	.57	.00	-4.15	-1.29
English	Control	2.96*	.57	.00	1.52	4.31
	Persian	.24	.57	.91	-1.19	1.61
Persian	Control	2.72*	.57	.00	1.28	4.11
	English	-.24	.57	.91	-1.67	1.11

Table 4: One-way ANOVA (pretest of listening motivation).

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Between group	3.46	2	1.12	.20	.83
Within groups	384.39	72	5.63		
Total	387.85	74			

Table 5: One-way ANOVA (posttest of listening motivation).

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Between group	38.28	2	12.79	3.48	.00
Within groups	251.67	72	3.71		
Total	289.94	74			

5. Discussion

The findings gained by conducting data analyses indicated that those groups who received the instruction by using culturally based materials conducted very better than those whose instruction did not have any culturally based listening materials. Based on the gained results, we can contribute to

TABLE 6: Post hoc Scheffe test and multiple comparisons (posttest of listening motivation).

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean differences (I-J)	Std. errors	Sig.	95% Confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
Control	English	-3.46*	.66	.00	-6.17	-3.34
	Persian	-3.61*	.66	.00	-6.54	-3.39
English	Control	3.89*	.66	.00	2.87	5.15
	Persian	1.20	.66	.53	-2.39	3.38
Persian	Control	3.19*	.66	.00	2.45	5.14
	English	1.20	.66	.53	-2.33	3.61

TABLE 7: One-sample test of the Cultural Attitude Questionnaire.

			Test value = 0		
T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean differences	95% confidence interval of the differences	
				Lower	Upper
84.11	17	.00	6.39	4.09	4.79

the betterment of the experimental groups to the culturally based listening materials.

The previous researchers proved the positive influences of using culturally based materials on developing EFL students' English language learning. For example, Belli [49] indicated that the participants in his study developed their cultural awareness and maintained better communications with other people by using culturally based materials. In addition, our research is supported by Mashudi et al. [50] who inspected the effects of English cultural knowledge on grammatical knowledge of Indonesian EFL learners. Their research revealed that the experimental participants had better grammar performances than the control participants after the treatment.

Furthermore, the outcomes of the present investigation are in accordance with Menacho-Vargas et al. [51] who studied the influences of culturally based conversations on improving the speaking skills of the upper-intermediate EFL students. They came to the conclusion that the experimental participants outflanked the control participants in the speaking posttest. The results of the present investigation are the same as the findings of Rasooli and Ahangari [53] who indicated that cultural familiarity had a considerable impact on students' listening comprehension.

Also, the outcomes of this research are in congruent with the outcomes of Hidayati et al. [54] who confirmed that learning target-language cultural patterns enhanced EFL students' reading comprehension and speaking skill. Moreover, our results are supported by Mekheimer [55] who examined the effect of teaching target culture on foreign language learning in Saudi Arabia and showed that the learners who were exposed to the target culture gained better scores in

the posttests. The results of our study are supported by Tavakoli et al. [56], Al-khresheh [57], and Oanh and Minh [58] who confirmed the positive effects of cultural knowledge on language learning development.

Our study depicted that the EFL students showed favorable opinions and attitudes about having English cultural awareness. These results are in agreement with the study of Hernandez et al. [52] who examined the Iranian teachers' and learners' attitudes toward the influences of having English cultural knowledge on learning the English language. Their study revealed that both the instructors and students had a desirable attitude toward having English cultural knowledge in developing learning the English language. Additionally, our research is advocated by Kahraman [59] who confirmed the positive attitudes of teachers and learners towards culture and culture learning in a Turkish setting.

The reason for the results of this study can refer to the students' activation of cultural background knowledge, before teaching each audio file, the researcher activated the students' background knowledge by providing them with related information. This activation can be the reason why the experimental group gained better results after the treatment. Based on Bilokcuoglu [60], the activation of background knowledge can help students to learn a language successfully. Our results are supported by the cultural schemata theory based on which students connect their new knowledge with the previous knowledge and this connection helps in learning the English language. According to the cultural schemata theory, comprehension occurs when students use their world knowledge in reading and listening.

6. Conclusions

The findings gained in this research indicated that having cultural awareness could develop the EFL students' listening skills and listening motivation. Also, the outcomes depicted that the EFL learners believed that having English cultural awareness can enhance their English language learning. Accordingly, we can conclude that incorporating culturally based contents and materials in EFL English textbooks can contribute EFL learners to learn the English language easier. Therefore, English teachers are highly recommended to use more culturally based books in their teaching.

This research can have some desirable implications for the EFL instructors and students. Teachers can expose their learners to culturally based materials more than before. They also can use more culturally based books and materials in their classes. In addition, the findings of this study can encourage EFL teachers to activate their students' cultural schema before teaching each lesson. The implications of this research can inspire EFL students to read more English cultural-based passages, novels, and newspapers to develop their English language on their own. Moreover, the findings of this study can help writers of English textbooks to design the books in a way to present various cultural-based drills and exercises.

There are limitations in the present study, for instance, the subjects of this research were restricted to 75 EFL students which can reduce the generalizability of the results.

Therefore, future researches are offered to add more participants in their studies. The time allotted to the treatment was limited to a few sessions; next researches are suggested to explore the effect of culturally based materials and cultural awareness by expanding the time of administration and the number of the treatment sessions. This research was done on intermediate learners; students from higher or lower levels can also be involved with the goal of having more insights into the effects of cultural awareness on listening comprehension and motivation. Besides, some qualitative research methods can be used (e.g., open-ended questionnaire items and interviews) in order to obtain insights into what learners and instructors think about culturally based materials and cultural awareness.

Data Availability

The data underlying the results presented in the study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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