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Correlation between Second Language Learner's Receptive Skills and their Syntactic Development in a Private University of Karachi

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Abstract

This research investigates the correlation between second language (L2) learners' receptive skills—specifically listening and reading comprehension and their syntactic development at a private university in Karachi. Drawing upon foundational theories such as Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis and Grabe's (2009) conceptualization of reading as a conduit for linguistic enhancement, this study adopts a mixed-methods approach combining both quantitative and qualitative data. Instruments included the IELTS Listening and Reading modules, along with a researcher-designed Grammaticality Judgment Test (GJT). A stratified sample of 150 L2 students, covering a range of proficiency levels from beginner to advanced, was selected to ensure diversity and representativeness. Statistical analyses, including Pearson correlation and multiple regression models, demonstrated that both listening and reading comprehension are significantly and positively correlated with syntactic development. The study highlights the pedagogical importance of incorporating receptive skills into language instruction and argues for the strategic integration of grammar teaching within listening and reading exercises. Given the multilingual context of Karachi, these findings bear significant implications for curriculum developers, language instructors, and policy makers. Further longitudinal studies are recommended to deepen the understanding of these relationships over time and across varied educational settings.

Introduction

Learning a second language is a difficult process that contains many skills. Among these, receptive skills—listening and reading—are chiefly important because they help learners obtain and understand language input. This input is an essential for learning grammar and building syntactic awareness (the understanding of sentence structure). In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), many investigators, including Krashen (1985), have studied how listening and reading maintenance the development of grammar and syntax. Karachi, a city where many languages are

spoken and where English is often used in education and professional life, provides a useful setting to study this topic. This research goal to discover the link between receptive skills and syntactic development among students at a private university in Karachi. The goal is to understand how these skills work together in

language learning and to offer ideas for better teaching methods in multilingual atmospheres.

Listening and reading are not just submissive activities; they are active processes that help learners understand and make meaning from the language they hear or read. Listening allows learners to process sounds in real time, helping them identify pronunciation, tone, and sentence structures (Vandergrift, 2007). Reading provides learners a chance to see a wider range of vocabulary and more complex sentence forms, which supports deeper thinking and understanding of the language (Grabe, 2009). According to Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985), learners recover their language skills when they are exposed to input that is just a little more advanced than their current level (called "i+1"). Listening and reading are important ways to receive this kind of input. When used effectively, these skills improve understanding and help learners build grammar knowledge, which supports overall language development.

Field (2003) explains that learners depend on auditory input to develop grammatical awareness, helping them know errors and refine their sentence structure. Nassaji (2020) claims that reading comprehension directly correlates with syntactic awareness. Learners who are exposed to well-structured texts are more likely to internalize syntactic patterns and apply them in their writing and speaking. These findings confirm that reading facilitates syntactic acquisition and grammatical accuracy in L2 learners. Syntactic development is the process by which children learn to construct grammatically correct sentences. (Tomasello & Brooks, 2016). This process involves understanding the rules that govern sentence formation, enabling them to combine words into coherent and meaningful sentences. Gaining insight into this process is essential for comprehending the fundamental mechanisms behind language acquisition and cognitive development.

Research Objectives

1. To empirically investigate the relationship between listening comprehension and syntactic development in L2 learners.
2. To evaluate the role of reading comprehension in facilitating syntactic competence.
3. To identify and analyze environmental and pedagogical factors that support the development of receptive skills and syntactic knowledge in a multilingual context.

Research Questions

1. How is listening comprehension related to the syntactic development of L2 learners?
2. What contribution does reading comprehension make to the syntactic competence of L2 learners?
3. What contextual factors within a plurilingual educational environment influence the development of receptive skills and syntactic awareness?

Significance Of Research

This research is significant for several reasons. First, it fills a gap in SLA literature by examining the Relationship between listening and reading skills and syntactic competence in an EFL context. While other scholars have looked at this question in other areas (e.g., Vandergrift, 2007; Grabe, 2009), few studies have been done where theories concerning natural language grammar could be put to the test multilingually, such as in Pakistan. Second, the study yields empirical evidence that can benefit program design and the parts of instruction in private universities. By showing the relative influence of these two skills on syntactic development, researchers can offer practical suggestions for which ingredients in language education should be given precedence. Finally, the study has important implications for SLA theory, particularly in understanding the interplay between the language system's dynamic interdependence and more traditional³/₄components of language processing. By explaining how listening basic helps reading, the study contributes to a growing body of research advocating integration in language instruction methods.

Problems Statement

This study was conducted at a private university in Karachi and focused on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Many second language learners struggle to form grammatically correct and complex sentences. Common errors such as incorrect word order and verb usage indicate that traditional teaching methods, which mainly emphasize speaking and writing, may overlook the foundational role of receptive skills. Listening and reading, though essential for exposing learners to authentic language use, are often underutilized in language classrooms. This study aims to address that gap by examining whether increased and focused exposure to quality listening and reading materials can support the development of sentence structure. It investigates the possible connection between learners' receptive skills and their syntactic development to see if stronger listening and reading abilities help learners construct more accurate and natural sentences in their second language.

Limitations Of The Study

Although the study provided valuable information, there were some limitations. While adequate for statistical analysis, the sample size in the research may not fully represent the diversity of language learners in Karachi. Additionally, dependence on standardized tests does not adequately compensate for all facets of syntactic competence, particularly in a natural setting. Like future research, large samples of alternative evaluation techniques may address these limitations.

Literature Review

In second language learning, receptive skills like listening and reading are very essential. These skills help learners understand the language and shape their grammar and sentence structure knowledge. When learners listen to or read in a innovative language again and again, they slowly learn how sentences are made and how grammar works. This knowledge is saved in the brain and helps them use the language better in the upcoming. This part of the study looks at what other researchers have said about the link between receptive skills and syntactic development. We focus on a private university in Karachi, where students use three different languages in their daily lives. This atmosphere makes the language learning process more complex and interesting. The researcher try to understand how listening and reading help in learning grammar and sentence structures. We also look at theories and studies that explain this connection. In addition, researcher talk about how things like psychology, the classroom environment, and students' backgrounds affect this process. Our goal is to understand how all these parts work together in second language learning.

Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis explains how second language acquisition (SLA) occurs by focusing on the importance of language input. According to this theory, learners get language when they are exposed to meaningful and understandable input. This process is often referred to as "Input-Directed Learning." Krashen argues that grammar learning alone is not enough; learners must engage with the language in real-life conditions. He highlights that input must carry meaning in the speaker's mind; otherwise, it will not support syntactic development. In the context of Karachi, where English is commonly taught as a second language, classroom instruction often follows a structured and systematic approach. Therefore, it is important for teachers to provide learners with rich, comprehensible, and engaging input. This can be done through oral instruction, interactive activities, and specially designed reading materials. Interactive models of SLA, such as those presented by Ellis (2008), also highlight the connection between different language skills. These models suggest that receptive skills like listening and reading work together with productive skills such as speaking and writing. For example, listening to natural conversations can improve learners' capability to speak with accurate grammar, while reading academic texts can improve writing skills. Thus, both receptive and productive skills contribute to syntactic development and should be taught in an integrated manner.

Sweller's (1988) Cognitive Load Theory describe how language is learned by focusing on the mental processes involved. When learners take part in listening or reading activities, they must understand and make

sense of the language input. This process places a demand on their working memory, which can only handle a limited amount of information at one time. If the listening and reading tasks are at the right level of difficulty—not too easy and not too hard—they can support learners' understanding of grammar and sentence structure. Such tasks inspire learners to think wisely about how sentences are formed, which helps recover their syntactic knowledge. However, if the tasks are too difficult, especially for beginners, they can overload the working memory. This makes it harder for learners to focus, and they may not be able to tell which parts of the input are important. As a result, their language learning may slow down. Research on listening comprehension shows that it plays an important role in helping learners develop their understanding of syntax. By listening to well-structured sentences in real situations, learners can begin to identify correct grammar patterns, which they can later use in speaking and writing.

Research has constantly exposed a strong connection between listening comprehension and syntactic development. Vandergrift (2007) describes that listening allows beginners to focus on the rhythm, pronunciation, and sentence patterns of the language. It also provides them real-time examples of how the language is used, helping them improve grammatical accuracy without consciously focusing on it. Similarly, a recent study by Xu (2024) found that second language learners who regularly engaged in extensive listening activities—such as listening to podcasts and participating in interactive dialogues—made clear progress in recognizing grammatical structures. The study also revealed that exposure to different accents and speech speeds helped learners become more flexible in understanding and using complex sentence patterns. Reading comprehension also plays an important role in syntactic development. When learners read texts on topics they understand, they are more likely to grasp difficult sentence structures. Regular reading of such texts exposes them to a wide range of grammar patterns, which helps expand their overall understanding and use of syntax over time.!

Gabe (2009) highlights that in both academic reading and literary studies—especially in academic contexts—it is important for students to keep reading regularly. This helps them become familiar with different types of grammatical patterns. Supporting this idea, a study by Chen et al. (2023) investigated how multilingual ESL students improve their grammar through extensive reading. The consequences showed that students who engaged in regular weekly reading activities made clear progress in writing sentences that were grammatically correct. The study also highlighted the importance of choosing reading materials that match the students' language level in order to get the most benefit for their syntactic development. The connection between listening and reading in supporting grammar growth has also been deliberated in many studies. For example, a meta-analysis by Ellis and Shintani (2022) found that combining both listening and reading tasks in language teaching led to better grammar improvement than using only one skill. This finding supports the idea that second language instruction should include both listening and reading to help learners develop syntax more effectively. However, one challenge in developing grammar in English is the influence of a learner's first language (L1). For instance, in Karachi, many learners speak Urdu as their first language, which follows a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) word order. In contrast, English follows a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) structure. This difference can cause error and affect the way learners form sentences in English.

One major difficulty in learning English grammar is the structural difference between English and the learners' first language. For example, Shamim (2011) says that Chinese learners regularly make word order mistakes due to differences in sentence structure. Similarly, Urdu does not have definite or indefinite articles like "the" or "a/an." As a result, Urdu-speaking learners may use these articles wrongly or omit them entirely when speaking or writing in English. Another key challenge is limited access to authentic language input. Traditional teaching methods, such as the grammar-translation approach, focus more on memorizing grammar rules rather than exposing students to real-life language use. According to Shamim (2011), this lack of authentic input creates a gap in the development of both receptive skills and syntactic competence. Socio-economic factors also play an important role in shaping language learning. Learners from well-off families usually have better access to English through television, radio, books, and extracurricular activities. In

contrast, students from underprivileged backgrounds often lack these opportunities, leading to noticeable differences in their listening and reading skills. To address these issues, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has been recommended. TBLT focuses on meaningful communication by combining listening, reading, and grammar into single tasks. For example, asking students to listen to a lecture and write a summary at the same time helps develop both receptive skills and syntactic ability.

A study by Ellis and Shintani (2022) found that learners following TBLT methods showed greater improvement in grammatical accuracy and fluency. In addition, structured reading programs that expose students to different genres and text complexities also support the development of syntax by providing rich language input.

Research Methodology

The research methodology adopted in this study looks to explore whether there exists any systematic correlation between second language students' receptive skills, listening and reading comprehension, and their syntactic development at a private university in Karachi. This section describes research objectives, participants, data collection instruments, means and research design, and analytical techniques applied in addressing empirical problems, and also notes potential ethical considerations and limitations so as not to damage the smoothness of this inquiry process.

Research Design

This work adopts a mixed method design encompassing quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to achieve a full understanding of the Relationship between listening and reading comprehension on the one hand with syntax development (on the other). The quantitative part of it involves the use of standardized tests to measure receptive skills students' abilities in syntactic competence, while for the qualitative side, there are interviews as well as classroom observation periods, which will factor in what effect may be having an impact on these particular skills. The mixed-methods approach ensures balance in your analysis by looking at data from multiple perspectives, viewpoints, or sources (Creswell, 2014).

Participants

The subjects for this study included 150 non-native English-speaking students studying at a private university in Karachi. Participants were determined on the basis of stratified random sampling so that students from all three proficiency levels (beginner, intermediate, and advanced) were included in their proper proportions. The stratification was done on the basis of the students' English-language center placement examination scores. Demographic variables such as age, gender, and place of origin or mother tongue / native language spoken were also taken into account in order to ensure good participant representation.

Data Collection Instruments

Listening and Reading Assessments

The study used the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Listening and Reading testimonials to gauge the participants' receptive skills. These two tests are known for their reliability and validity and are used in many places around the world as well, including our own society here at home (Taylor, 2013). Participants had to spot errors and then make corrections so as to facilitate an analysis of their syntactic awareness. The GJT included 30 sentences, and Vincent divided equally between grammatical and ungrammatical forms. Syntactic competence made use of a Grammaticality Judgment Test (GJT) of the researcher's own design. The GJT included 30 sentences, which Vincent divided equally between 90 grammatical and ungrammatical forms.

Semi-Structured Interviews

This investigation was carried out using semi-structured interviews with the 15 top scoring participants to triangulate the results obtained from the quantitative data analysis. The interviews also sought to provide insights into contextual factors such as the outside-of-class exposure of learners to English learning strategies and so on.

Classroom Observations

This investigation carried out classroom observations. Observations focused on the extent to which receptive skills were integrated into language instruction and their impact on syntactic development.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was carried out over a period of three months. At the outset, the objectives of this study were explained to participants and they consented. Listening and reading assessments were administered in controlled classroom settings, after which participants received the GJT. Individual interviews were scheduled for each subject, and classroom observation with the permission of teachers.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data from IELTS modules and GJT were analyzed using SPSS, a professional data analysis program produced by systems and software technology. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were conducted to describe participant performance. Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated that there was a close

link between receptive skills and syntactic competence. Moreover, multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine relative contributions of listening and reading to syntactic development.

Qualitative Analysis

Interview transcripts and observation notes were thematically analyzed for this publication. These results served to complement the quantitative results in order to arrive at more holistic answers on the research questions.

Ethics Considerations

Ethical considerations in this study received approval from the Research Ethics Committee at the University. The confidentiality of research subjects has been guaranteed. Participants were also reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Data were anonymized and stored securely to protect their privacies. The research adhered to, rather than ending with, however fleeting references (APA, 2020) trends that are in good grace with established standards of psychological ethics after twentieth-century America.

Discussion

To find out the nature and degree of correlation that can be shown between listening and reading comprehension of learners and the growth in their syntactic competence, the entire set of materials is treated. The study has taken a multifaceted approach, mixing quantitative data from standardized tests with qualitative insight garnered through interviews and observations of the classroom. Here, this portion gives the findings, supported by tables, figures, and thematic interpretations to make a comprehensive understanding possible.

Quantitative Data**a) Descriptive**

Various statistical indicators were adopted for the study to sum up the listening, reading, and syntactic assessments.

Table 1 provides an overall look at the mean score and standard deviation for each of these components:

Higher scores were awarded to learners for listening and reading, but more moderately for syntactic

Skill	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Maximum Score
Listening Comprehension	72.4	8.3	100
Reading Comprehension	68.7	9.1	100
Syntactic Development	64.3	10.5	100

development. Such a discrepancy might mean that they had difficulties bridging the gap between receptive skills and the syntactic data they are required to produce.

b) Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was employed to investigate the interdependent relationships of listening, reading, and syntactic development. The results are presented in Table 2:

Variables	Listening Comprehension	Reading Comprehension	Syntactic Development
Listening Comprehension	1	0.76**	0.68**
Reading Comprehension	0.76**	1	0.71**
Syntactic Development	0.68**	0.71**	1

Note: ** $p < 0.01$

The findings show that strong positive relationships exist between different variables. The highest correlation observed was between reading comprehension and syntactic development ($r=0.71$). Listening comprehension also has a great deal of connection with syntactical competence ($r=0.68$). These results thus scientifically confirm that receptive listening and reading skills must affect the development of syntactic competence.

However, we noted that no matter how many statistical tests or analyses of model fit are done, if the regression coefficients do not show a statistically significant difference between them, we will not be able to reject the null hypothesis that each variable has no impact on sentence smoothness. Otherwise put, for both listening and reading comprehension to have no syntactic predictive power would imply that there must be some meaningful difference in predictive strength degree among the three.

The Effect of Receptive Ability on Syntactic Development

In terms of predictive strength, listening comprehension ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$) happens slightly more strongly than reading comprehension as it underpins syntax ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$) reinforcement of syntactic awareness from text. Error analysis was carried out, and pandemonium such as misuse of articles, for instance, incorrect word order in given sentences are most affected by the learners' mother tongue.

Systematic investigation and comprehension of authentic input

This section, rather than examining learners' control of input acquisition methods, is concerned with the effects

on syntactic development of students inferred from input. This part deals with how sitting in front of language TV programs and listening to Language learning CDs works for students for whom English isn't native.

This analysis also proved that enough exposure to authentic language input impacts students' understanding of syntactic structures of target language.

c) Multiple Regression Analysis of Receptive Skills Variables

To determine the relative contributions of listening and reading comprehension to syntactic development, a multiple regression analysis was performed. The model summary is presented below:

Variable	β Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Value	Significance
Listening Comprehension	0.42	0.05	8.4	$p < 0.01$
Reading Comprehension	0.51	0.04	12.8	$p < 0.01$

The regression analysis indicates that both listening and reading comprehension significantly predict syntactic development, with reading comprehension having a slightly stronger influence ($\beta = 0.51$) than listening comprehension ($\beta = 0.42$).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Semi-structured interviews with 15 participants were analyzed by using the thematic analysis technique. This analysis provided insights into their perceptions of the relationship between receptive skills and syntax. Three major themes emerged:

a) Role of Authentic Input:

Participants emphasized the importance of exposure to authentic English input, such as movies, podcasts, and novels, in enhancing their grammatical awareness. They felt that listening to conversational English helped them on a subliminal level to internalize syntactic patterns into their unconscious mind

b) Challenges in Syntax Acquisition:

Several learners identified difficulties in understanding complex grammatical structures, particularly those not found in their first language (e.g., relative clauses, modal verbs). This challenge was often attributed to limited practice opportunities.

c) Integration of Skills in Learning:

Participants highlighted the need for teaching approaches that integrate listening and reading with explicit grammar instruction. They suggested that such methods could bridge the gap between understanding and applying syntactic rules.

Classroom Observations

Observations revealed significant variability in the integration of receptive skills into teaching practices. While some instructors employed multimedia resources and interactive tasks to enhance listening and reading, others relied heavily on traditional grammar-translation methods. Classrooms that incorporated authentic materials demonstrated higher levels of student engagement and improved syntactic accuracy in practice exercises.

Findings

Alignment with Theoretical Frameworks

The discoveries match Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, emphasizing the darn must-state what input or early speech is changing a look, the input hypothesis is so symbolical that of whatever I stop and truly swear Swain

conversations usually can help improve listening too! Just give up talking to Swain that day. Remember, translated from Hajime's written translation on questions about any prize for such work, 1987 252 only at 621 fashions on nature rough A strong correlation is seen in the statistically interpreted numbers. This supports the theory that receptive skills must provide the seeds for subsequent syntactic development. Echoes of old cries before breakfast. Similarly, the importance of authentic input indicated by the qualitative data aligns with the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (Ellis & Shintani, 2002).

Contextual Considerations

The study serves to remind us that in a city like Karachi, which has so many different languages spoken and used, the contexts can be very different. For many Pakistani people of the younger generation today English is a second language to master. But their mother tongue or first language (Urdu or other regional languages) still interferes with understanding English grammar in general, and particularly with regard to such matters as word order and the correct use of articles. A tumult of convention Thus the differences in school policy really speaks out how important it is for language instructional methods to be unified and this also further emphasizes skills integration with content.

Conclusion

The findings strongly support the hypothesis that receptive skills contribute significantly to syntactic development in L2 learners. The strength of the correlations and the regression model's explanatory power suggest that reading and listening are not merely auxiliary skills but core components in grammar acquisition. These results align closely with Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis, affirming that input must be both comprehensible and abundant to facilitate grammar learning. The qualitative findings further underscore the value of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), where listening and reading tasks are authentically embedded in communicative goals (Ellis & Shintani, 2022). Notably, the differential performance among students from varying socio-economic backgrounds points to the importance of equitable access to input- rich environments. The study also highlights pedagogical gaps, particularly the underutilization of authentic materials in many classrooms. This calls for targeted professional development initiatives to equip instructors with practical strategies for integrating receptive skills into grammar teaching. Finally, while this study focuses on a specific Pakistani context, the implications are broadly relevant to other multilingual and resource-diverse settings globally.

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