

## **The Function of Discourse Analysis in Improving Medicine Students' Listening Comprehension: Cognitive Psychology Perspective in ESP Field**

**Hani, E. Alamri**

University of Tabuk, Saudi Arabia

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper is an attempt to investigate the function of discourse analysis in improving medicine students' listening comprehension by a group of students doing their Bachelor of Science in Medicine at Tabuk University in Saudi Arabia. It investigates the function of discourse as a way of comprehending difficult skills to learn and practice effective listening. The result of the research provided some helpful recommendations for ESP teachers by discussing the theoretical and practical bases of Discourse Analysis (DA) in teaching listening comprehension. The sample of the study included 80 Saudis in their 1<sup>st</sup> Year. The research recommends that educationists and decision-makers be concerned with developing and designing listening materials relevant to the function of Discourse Analysis in teaching listening comprehension for medicine or ESP students.*

**KEYWORDS:** discourse analysis, medicine, ESP, listening comprehension

### **INTRODUCTION**

In English, listening comprehension is taken as a receptive skill in the oral mode. It is the ability to figure out and comprehend what others are expressing (Janusik, 2018). Listening is central for obtaining comprehensible input that is essential for language development (Namaziandost et al., 2019). The basic objective of this skill is to listen and understand what is being uttered. In our first language, speakers possess the necessary knowledge that he/she requires for comprehending what they hear, hence it is very certain that they are not even aware of how multifaceted a skill it is (Yeldham, 2017). Generally, this skill involves two kinds of listening situations in which a learner finds himself in an interactive or non-interactive situation.

An active comprehension skill process contains real interaction where listening and speaking processes are involved, and in which a learner has the opportunity to

clarify and repeat slower speech from their conversation peers (Al Khotaba, 2022; Brown, 1990). But in other listening situations such as watching films and listening to the radio may not have the chance to seek clarification about slower speech and repeated utterances (Huma et al., 2021). So, listening, likable is supposing more and more burden in second or foreign language classroom settings than ever before. It is an essential skill highly needed for classroom language as it offers an appropriate input for the student (Åste Mjelve et al., 2021).

Listening is a skill and process is classified into three different phases that include; before the listening stage, while listening stage, and after the listening stage. Subsequently, a close connection is found between these different listening comprehension's stages in which SL or FL students should be purposeful (Chen et al., 2021). They should rather be trained to comprehend what is being communicated to enable them to avoid redundancy, repetition, hesitation, and issues of ungrammaticality. This may be related to teaching listening techniques and materials used by SL or FL teachers within classroom settings as one of the main problems in teaching listening comprehension (Min et al., 2019). SL or FL teacher should provide their students with a clear lead about what they should listen to, ask questions to obtain clarifications as well as teach them how to use environmental clues and surroundings for eliciting information for interactive communication.

In listening activities, language learners listen for a purpose. They attempt to make an immediate reaction to what they hear. This brings them to the thought that, while planning exercises, listening materials, tasks, and visual materials should be taken into consideration (Nushi et al., 2020). Language teachers should generate an appropriate discourse while using recordings. A stipulated rationale, ongoing learner reaction, motivation, success, simplicity, and feedback should be the things considered while preparing the listening task. Audiovisual methods are constructive materials for contextualization of the listening process (Yi, 2017). In the researcher's opinion, comprehending the listening process is a challenging skill for learners to construct and acquire, especially in the ESP context where listening communication is taught to medical students. Students, learning listening in ESP encounter difficulties in many structural issues especially when it comes to discourse function (Csomay & Cortes, 2009).

Essentially, they face difficulties in developing functional language skills including the correct implementation of linguistic elements in connection with the different social genres in a successful manner. These complexities of functional language implementation are growing to be worse due to the general stress of ESP teachers on the teaching of grammar without any relevance to listening comprehension within the text as a whole unit (Mousavi et al., 2019).

ESP teachers view their students as unreceptive when conducting a listening comprehension class. However, these difficulties are likely to obstruct students from expanding their classroom communication and hinder them from structuring supplementary vigorous learning in listening. Because of this gap between students' wants and teachers' instructional methods, teachers are not certain how to help the students develop their listening comprehension appropriately, and be more autonomous listeners of academic and workplace listening texts (Nawaz, 2019).

The problem is how ESP teachers can help their students improve their listening comprehension as varied social functions. Thus, there is an essential need for listening comprehension classes to assist ESP students to expand their skills and knowledge by experiencing a whole listening comprehension process and the knowledge of the context in which the listening process occurs (Venkateswara et al., 2021). In this connection, the current research shed light on the listening comprehension skill of ESP (Medicine Introductory Year Students) and the point of view of their listening comprehension skill from as perspective of cognitive psychology.

## **RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW**

Discourse Analysis refers is a branch of linguistics concerned with investigating the relationship between language and social context. It developed out of the exertion of varied disciplines during the 1960s and early 1970s. This included fields such as linguistics, psychology, anthropology, and sociology (Ferril, 2017). According to Bhatia (2005), Harris developed a paper in which he was concerned with the allocation of linguistic components throughout the whole text as one unit, and the connection between the text and its social situation at a point other scholars were concerned with investigating language at the sentence level. Discourse analysis has been influenced by work within ethno-methodological practices, which focuses on the research method of close observation of groups of people communicating in real-life situations in specific social contexts. It deals with forms of speech events such as storytelling, greeting rituals, and verbal duels in varied cultural and social situations (Yasser, 2017).

In what is frequently known as conversational analysis, the focus is not shed on constructing structural models but on the relevant observation of the participant's behavior in talk and on the patterns which persist over an extensive variety of natural data. Discourse analysis has developed into a wide-ranging and heterogeneous discipline that finds its unity in the description of language beyond text within a specific social context (Wang et al., 2021).

Knowledge of Listening comprehension in English for a specific purpose is often

significant for those who are concerned with personal and professional development. Listening in a field that is not the learner's area, nonetheless, is a basis of substantial difficulties for ESP learners. Scholars such as Thompson and Rubin (1996) and Underwood (1989) demonstrate that listening difficulties may be related either to listening or linguistic issues, based on the listeners' listening and linguistic abilities.

That is, beginning ESP learners should deal with many problems and difficulties since listening is entirely a receptive language skill that depends mainly on the learners' skills and abilities. However, listening as a receptive process is taken and demonstrated by most of the specialists in the area as active practice in which the listener chooses and converts knowledge that is received by him/her through visual or auditory processes so that he/ she can interpret the message a sender is intending to communicate (Thompson and Rubin, 1996). This may involve different listening comprehension issues such as speech speed control, repeating things, limitedness of vocabulary, recognition of sign language, interpretation, lack of concentration, and real learning habits (Underwood, 1989).

Such difficulties may be associated with ESP learners' differences and backgrounds, such as educational system and qualifications. That is ESP learners whose educational background involves a steady oral interaction are better at listening comprehension and communication compared to those who are doing cultural and educational reading activities (Erika, 2021). In addition, ESP learners whose mother tongue show focus on intonation as that conducted by EFL learners most likely face less trouble compared to those ESP learners whose first language is related to varied measures including tones and rhythm (Wang et al., 2021).

Within these proposals, ESP learners in the present research, of Saudi background that is featured by the language of various standards, appear to function within the minimum optimal English as a foreign language educational settings and therefore encounter many problems in listening comprehension skills.

In a research conducted by Goh (2000) to examine the listening comprehension of college students. The data were elicited from EFL students' records, interviews, and direct retrospective articulation. The research results indicated that learners face ten listening comprehension difficulties associated with three different cognitive processing stages. This included perceptions, parsing, and exploitation (Wang et al., 2021). Initially, in the observation phase, EFL students recorded most problems like their inability to distinguish words they know, overlook chunks of utterances, neglecting the commencement of texts, and focus too hard, or the lack of ability to focus well.

Also, Goh (2000) pointed out that in the parsing stage listeners showed some difficulties when listening to that include forgetting what they hear; the lack of

ability to establish a mental depiction of the words heard; the difficulty of understanding succeeding parts of words heard due to previous difficulties. In addition, listeners in the utilization stage demonstrated that they comprehend words but not the received message and felt a kind of confusion about the main ideas in the message. These discussed problems to some extent replicate Underwood's (1989) proposals on second and foreign language listening difficulties. However, as listeners attempt to include specific techniques into listening comprehension processes, they are possibly to encounter varied difficulties.

Rubin (1994) pointed out that learners face five difficulties when listening. This involves a process, interlocutor, task, and text characteristics. In addition, relevant studies examined the contribution of sequential aspects that facilitate a successful listening process. Theoretical clarification of listening comprehension offers some explanations that relate to listening comprehension difficulties that learners encounter when they attempt to listen to a delivered text.

Listening comprehension whether in EFL or ESL is a very complicated process when comparing it with relevant language skills, particularly for fresh language learners. Learners of the English language will still encounter difficulties when learning listening comprehension. These difficulties may be related to language problems and some background knowledge in the area (Coskun, 2010).

Farrokhi and Modarres (2012) demonstrate that listening comprehension skills may be viewed as a complicated process in terms of the syntactic constructs for EFL, ESP, or even ESL learners. It is very obvious for learners whose target language contains different syntactic and lexical features that are in a certain way closely related to grammatical and sound systems of foreign languages. Thus, if fresh learners cannot comprehend the mechanism of words segmentation into different sounds, how syntactic constructs are stressed in specific manners to provide meaning, then he/ she will face difficulties comprehending the meaning of the message.

According to Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) learners comprehend the meaning of a message either in terms of isolated segments within the sound, phrase, sentence, clause, or discourses. That is, language learners, activate at the same time in one or two of these fields depending on many aspects, and language proficiency level is one of them. Generally, fresh learners operate on both listening comprehension levels that include isolated segments and words and arranging them into phrases and simple sentences. But they hardly can activate on the advanced listening comprehension level which is the discourse level.

Past research on listening comprehension as a distinct element of language

learning stressed categorizing and scaling listening comprehension tasks in terms of complexities (Coskun, 2010). The aspect of complexities normally lies in the problems of the teaching materials adopted by language teachers as the listening comprehension content is taken from the readability standards for written tasks. Other standards of listening comprehension complexities depended on some uncertain intrinsic qualities of the written text. Thus, listening comprehension components should be customized according to the teaching of listening purposes, and the complexities levels' determination was frequently subjective and arbitrary (Samraj, 2008).

To conclude, past literature functions as a core in understanding the listening comprehension process, and the difficulties that EFL learners face. Scholars in the field of teaching listening comprehension have examined varied categories of ESL learners about the problems that they may face in listening comprehension (Venkateswara et al., 2021).

The researchers in the area of listening comprehension have not yet methodically examined Saudi students, specifically first-year Medicine majors, who acquire listening skills in the English language to examine what difficulties they encounter in listening comprehension. Moreover, their past research does not provide attention to the listening factors associated with Saudi educational and cultural background in a certain set of learning and teaching spoken English in Saudi setting. It is, therefore, very significant for the present research to fill in the gap by examining the difficulties that first-year Saudi medicine students at Tabuk University face in listening comprehension so that appropriate teaching treatments can be adapted and adopted to help them overcome these problems to develop proficient listening skill and become effective listeners.

In ESP classrooms where genuine and quasi-authentic materials are used, students are often encountered with a possibly confusing variety of listening texts. This can be acceptable for the pedagogical objective of providing abundant experiences to many linguistic instances used in a real context. It can be argued that such exposure will assist ESP students to expand their listening comprehension and production skills to surely make success in their educational and professional practices. The pedagogical approach suggested is concerned with the conception of language as social semiotics, that is, a resource implemented to convey necessary patterns of a culture comprehended in the listening texts generated by the members of that culture (Saleem et al., 2021). The task for ESP teachers should be to develop in ESP students an attitude that endorses the investigation and discovery of the basic text types, the structure of the values linguistically encoded, and their social function.

In light of this, texts used for developing listening comprehension skills should be

considered as laboratories for investigation, with the eventual objective to advance ESP students' overall performance. Focus is given to learner-based theory (Bani Younes et al., 2016). It stresses social interaction, critical thinking skills, language awareness, and psychological autonomy. It also focuses on getting an approach that supports reading-listening relation and the teaching of reading and listening skills together, promoting their steady communication, since they are considered to be parallel acts of production and reaction.

The discourse Analysis approach should be broadly considered so that on the accomplishment of their course of studies at the university level, ESP students as new language professionals whether in form of teachers, material designers, etc. can decide on the suitability of the listening materials available for the classroom setting and professional use. They should also know how to include insights and practices from applied DA to be able to choose and introduce ESP listening comprehension materials associated with their real natural learning situations (Maryna et al., 2019). Particularly within teaching listening comprehension in ESP situations, the discourse analysis approach may be of use when evaluating the content of a publication for classroom settings or when selecting representative listening comprehension texts to present and practice one particular linguistic area (Vovk, 2018).

As discourse analysis covers and associates in a descriptive mode an immense domain of knowledge within linguistics, it may be implemented to develop the future language theoretical and practical insights by facilitating them to shed light on how language is applied to attain certain communicative goals (Robin, 2007).

Discourse analysis as an approach has developed to be the main field in the area of linguistics, applying a noteworthy influence on language teaching. Knowledge of the discourse analysis approach can positively be very helpful for students, ESP trainees, and practicing teachers (Anthony, 2018). Discourse analysts examine regularities in patterns and features that take place within the actual use of language, both in the written and spoken forms of language to originate extensive classifications related to both the prescribed and the practical concepts of any given understood or comprehended chunk of language. Linguistically, the types of questions that discourse analysts pose to a rationalist provide a cross-examination of a text (Csomay & Cortes, 2009). The aptitude to conduct this type of investigation can and should be expanded to language professionals such as teacher trainers, teachers, and translators.

### **Statement of the Problem**

English is an international language. It is taught in Saudi as EFL whereby students of different majors where English is the medium of instruction are predicted to possess an appropriate mastery over all the four language skills (Mahboob, 2017).

English language teachers in Saudi state that introductory year medicine students face difficulties when listening to texts in the English language. They complain because of their passive and ineffective listening comprehension skill. Listening comprehension is one of the main skills of language learning that has been the focal point of current research studies (Al-Khresheh, 2020).

For Saudi ESP learners, approaching ESP listening based on verbal, non-reduced contributions can be devastating. Not only should they manage with linguistic contribution beyond their authentic level of proficiency, but also the accessible instance is frequently limited to provide attention for this type of contribution. Boundaries in ESP learners 'working memory and instance do not always allow them to access natural listening comprehension. In inactive listening where ESP listeners do not possess power over the stream of listening comprehension they experience. It has been observed that listeners face some listening comprehension difficulties mostly relevant to the cognitive psychology process. But how ESP students will be trained to achieve appropriate listening comprehension is still a contentious issue that requires further investigation (Saleem, 2021).

Most studies conducted on listening comprehension in foreign contexts discuss listening comprehension as a general aspect of EFL but seldom dealt with it from ESP aspects (Bani Younes et al., 2016). Also, seldom has anyone examined the issue of how to develop listening comprehension through the discourse analysis approach (Saleem et al., 2021). There is also a lack of research on this issue in a Saudi ESP context. Therefore, the main objective that has prompted the development of this research is the question of using the discourse analysis approach to overcome the difficulties of listening comprehension. In this connection, this paper addresses the following research questions:

- i. Are ESP teachers and students aware of the presence of discourse analysis in listening comprehension skills?
- ii. To what extent does the discourse-based approach affect ESP students' listening comprehension skills?

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study was conducted at the University of Tabuk in Saudi Arabia. ESP listening freshman comprehension course is mandatory for all medical students at this university. All medicine students must undergo a listening comprehension course. The study consisted of 80 students who were requested to fill in a multiple-choice questionnaire on the function of the DA approach and ESP students' listening comprehension skills. All the undergraduate students (males) were doing their Bachelor's degrees in Medicine at the University of Tabuk in Saudi Arabia. They were homogenous in terms of socio-cultural background,



native language-Arabic, educational system, race, and nationality (Saudi). The data were elicited from the participants through a questionnaire survey.

The questionnaires included 25 items to explore the difficulties and writing habits that ESP/ Medicine students face through the process of listening comprehension and help the teacher to find out the present situation in the ESP classroom and their level of awareness concerning DA function in their students' listening comprehension from a cognitive psychology perspective. The researcher provided examples of the kinds of the questions asked in discourse analysis and the coherent inquiry concerning the listening comprehension text and DA such as the way listeners comprehend a speaker usually speaks when listening between the lines; the extent to which teachers and listeners understand their implication appropriately when uttered by a certain audience? 4). What are the right features and statements from the point of view of the writer and listener? For example, a written piece concluded from an ESP setting such as a medical article or report of the same environment in a classroom with a large audience?

The researcher selected an appropriate listening comprehension text for intermediate level ESP students based on their language proficiency as the basic criteria for conducting the study and a preliminary application of the DA approach in teaching listening comprehension comprising a gist of activities to elicit information from the participants to conclude the subject matter of the study (De Beaugrande, 1980).

The researcher conducted this to provide participants with the necessary awareness about the vocabulary used throughout the listening comprehension text taking into consideration the selection of the lexicons, register, use of metaphor, and other stylistic devices. To be more specific, the researcher attempted to embark on the analysis of the listening text in a way that meets the participants' interest in terms of lexical and discursal processes that include collocation and word reiteration. The researcher analyzed the listening comprehension text in a manner that helped in creating a set of words and focusing on both the target content of the vocabulary and achieving the cohesion and coherence to comprehend the listening text (Schiffrin, 1987). Afterward, the researcher conducted an instructive analysis to revolve some distinctive syntactic models in the listening comprehension awareness according to the needed proficiency level. Also, he attempted to involve some questions such as: Are the listening comprehension sentences and structures very complicated? Where does the listening comprehension perplexity recline; text or discursal level? Has the genuine listening comprehension text been designed for the ESP listening comprehension task?. The researcher formulated this to bring about a combination of the diverse linguistic and listening comprehension patterns since this offers theoretical connections to view both structural and lexical repetition (Hoey, 2005).

The researcher designed the set of questionnaires in a way that offers ESP learners and teachers a scaffold to investigate listening comprehension skills and understand the organization of the listening text to formulate thoughts and ideas about who it was spoken or uttered for and why it was spoken. Also, this felt necessary to formulate judgments about whether or not the selection of expressions and listening text meets the interests of the listener. Thus, the researcher assumes that this discourse analysis apparatus can provide freshman medicine students with ESP training as a facilitator for the methodical exploration of language used to generate specific certain objectives. At this level, the focus is on the nature of the practical characteristics of listening comprehension in an ESP context.

As the investigations proceed, consequently, the researcher attempted to amplify the cognitive construction of the participants and improve their insights toward their listening comprehension processes as they listen to discourses of interest. The ESP students were set into two groups. The first was known as the experiment group. It was given the name GROUP1. This group contained 18 ESP students (Medicine). The second group was known as the control group. It was given the name GROUP 2. It consisted of 18 ESP students (Medicine). Throughout the research, all the ESP students were prepared for a listening comprehension test. The researcher selected 6 listening comprehension passages from different resource materials related to DA. This is justified by the reality that the listening comprehension proficiency test (IELTS) which relates to freshmen medicine students' syllabus is to assesses the fundamental English proficiency of fresh students. So it has been confirmed credit of high reliability and validity by the Ministry of Education in Saudi and other parts of the world as an international test, which can assure the reliability and validity of this research. The researcher divided listening comprehension passages into two parts. This made two listening comprehension tests paper. The 6 passages are all from the IELTS test questions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section of the study provides a discussion on the findings of the results of the research as indicated in Table 1 below. This study comprised two groups in which the sample of the research contained 80 students / 40 students in each group designated to listen to two different listening comprehension texts. One of the texts was taught using the conventional listening method and the other text was taught using a discourse-based approach as displayed in Figure (1) in the next section.

**Table 1.** The Findings of the Analysis of the Study Groups (A, B)

Group	Number of Students	Excellent Students	Excellent Students	Passing Students	Passing Students
		Rate in Listening Text (1)	Rate in Listening Text (2)	Rate in Listening Text (1)	Rate in Listening Text (2)
Group (A)	40	22.19%	34.23%	72.16%	89.90%
Group (B)	40	19.14%	42.73%	65.51%	78.12%

Table (1) states that listeners in Group (A) have achieved a greater amount of comprehension in listening after being trained on how to do listening with the help of a discourse-based approach following the discourse analysis framework. Whilst, listeners in Group (B) who used the conventional method of teaching listening showed a little progress in their listening comprehension. On the contrary, the achievement of listeners using the discourse-based method is more effective in the teaching of listening for ESP students. Also, it can be realized that the passing rate in the listening text (1) revealed a severe improvement compared to Group (B) where the excellent listeners' rate has improved simultaneously, and Group (A) achieved a greater and more advanced level of listening comprehension compared to Group (B). Figure (1) in the next section states the frequencies and the rate of listening in four different texts.

**Figure (1):** The Analysis of the Study Groups (A, B)

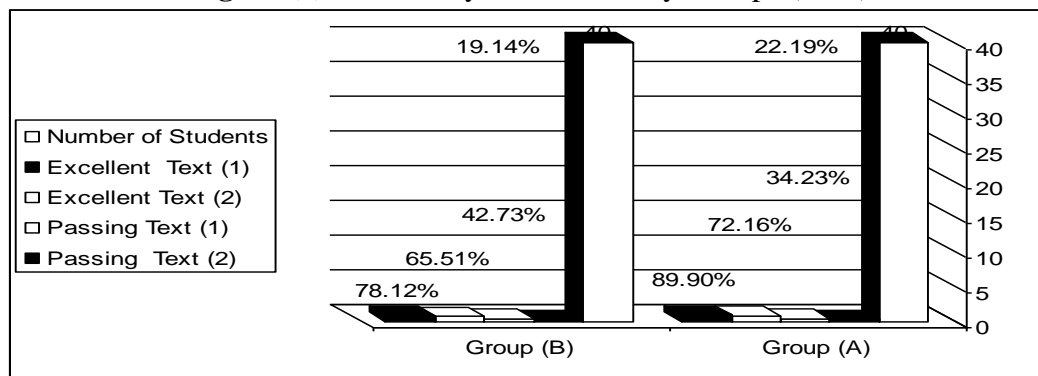


Figure (1) in the previous section demonstrates that listeners in Group (A) have obtained a greater amount of comprehension in listening after being trained on

how to do listening with the help of a discourse-based approach following the discourse analysis framework recording a frequency of 22.19% in the text (1) and 34.23% in the text (2) for excellent students' respectively and 72.16% in the text (1) and 89.90% for passing students as well. Whilst, listeners in Group (B) who used the conventional method of teaching listening showed a little progress in their listening comprehension reported 19.14% in the text (1) and 42.73% in the text (2) for excellent students and 65.51% in the text (1) and 78.12% in the text (2) for passing students. In conclusion, passing students have shown great improvement in their listening comprehension when using the discourse approach.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, medicine students were very satisfied with using discourse analysis in listening classes to develop their comprehension skills, they revealed their deep interest in listening, and in their free time, they efficiently started to listen to English news channels, English listening materials, and watching documentary films in which they wrote related reports about their progress. The findings indicated that learners stated that discourse analysis based-approaches progressed and achieved great advancement in their learning and listening comprehension.

Also, the findings pointed out that discourse analysis helped language learners learn from each other using the following simple methods that encourage them to comprehend the topic of discourse quickly. In the meantime, it encouraged learners to develop their English language listening skills actively and resulted in a sense of competition amongst learners revealing their ability to learn faster than each other. In addition, the findings of the research concluded that DA based-approach may help ESP students appropriately improve their listening comprehension skills when comparing the results of both the experimental and control groups in this study. As spelled out in this study, discourse analysis based-approaches have an interesting and effective contribution to the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners' listening comprehension. It resulted in a great difference in the progress and advancement of the listening comprehension skill of the learners as shown in the experiments and the analysis of the findings.

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