

## **A Study of Iranian EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Practices Regarding Listening Instruction**

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### **Abstract**

Research on teacher cognition in the area of listening instruction has not been sufficiently touched upon. This case study aimed to investigate Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' stated practices, perceptions, and their actual classroom practices in terms of the key activities and techniques of four common listening instructional approaches namely, text-oriented, communication-oriented, learner-oriented, and metacognitive approach. Additionally, this study sought to explore to what extent the teachers' stated practices and perceptions corresponded to their actual classroom practices. To this end, a mixed methods design was utilized. Five experienced EFL teachers were required to be observed and to fill the three instruments namely, the questionnaire, the lesson plan analysis task, and the belief inventory. The findings of the study from both the stated practices and lesson plan analysis task revealed that communication-oriented listening instruction was the dominant approach to listening instruction. Similarly, the findings from classroom observation proved this dominance. It was also found that text-oriented instruction was the second most dominant approach. In addition, more convergence between stated practices, perceptions, and beliefs with actual classroom practices was observed in terms of the product-oriented approaches than in terms of the process-oriented ones. Finally, pedagogical implications for EFL teachers, teacher trainers and material developers regarding the role of teachers in how best to teach listening were discussed.

**Keywords:** Communication-Oriented, Learner-Oriented, Metacognitive, Perceptions, Process-Oriented, Product-Oriented, Teacher Cognition, Text-Oriented

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## 1. Introduction

Listening instruction has undergone substantial changes from the first time when it gradually appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century until now when process-oriented approaches are brought to the spotlight. According to Vandergrift (2004), listening instruction has expanded from a focus on the product of listening (listening to learn) to include a focus on the process (learning to listen). In product-oriented listening instruction learners are very often directed to simply listening to a recording and answering comprehension questions. In process-oriented listening instruction teachers explicitly teach 'how to listen' by enhancing learners' strategy knowledge and strategy use. In other words, learners are supported on building up their expertise and realizing their strategic capabilities which helps them achieve an overall listening development.

In view of this, examining teachers' decision making while teaching listening becomes an important issue because it reflects the degree of emphasis that teachers put upon product or process approaches. This calls for directing research priorities to investigations on the extent to which product-oriented and process-oriented approaches are followed in English as a Foreign Language classes. In aiming to discover more about this issue, one line of research that has proved to be helpful is investigating teachers' perceptions and practices. In a broad sense, studies related to teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and practices can be categorized within teacher cognition research. Teacher cognition research is based on the assumption that "teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (Borg, 2003, p. 81).

During the past decade, within teacher cognition research, teachers' perceptions and practices have been extensively studied in different areas of second language acquisition such as grammar instruction (e.g., Borg, 1998,

1999, 2001; Burgess & Etherington 2002; Farrell, 1999; Graus & Copen, 2015), reading instruction (e.g., Collie Graden, 1996; Davis, Konopak & Keadence, 1993; Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 2001; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lloyd, 1991), and pronunciation instruction (e.g., Buss, 2015). With respect to listening instruction, however, very few studies have investigated what teachers know and believe about listening and what they actually do in their classrooms.

For example, Siegel (2013) in a descriptive study of listening pedagogy, examined approaches, activities, and verbal output of 10 EFL university teachers in Japan through observation. It was concluded that, although each technique has its benefits and problems, using a variety of listening activities and techniques develops a holistic listening ability. More recently, Graham, Santos, and Francis-Brophy (2014) in a more comprehensive investigation used a questionnaire to report the stated beliefs and stated practices of 115 foreign language teachers in England regarding listening pedagogy. The findings suggested that teachers did seem to share the view of the research literature about listening but they infrequently reported using approaches and activities that the literature suggests will lead to effective listening skill development. In another study, Sebina and Arua (2014) investigated the contributions of teachers' knowledge and positive perception of listening in junior secondary schools in Botswana through classroom observation and an interview with teachers after the observation. The main finding of the study is that knowledge of listening does not translate into good classroom practice. For example, teachers did not employ sufficient prelistening activities though they teachers perceived it as an essential stage in the teaching of listening. In another study, Liao and Yeldham (2015) investigated 36 Taiwanese EFL teachers' perceptions of their listening instruction using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. It was suggested from the results that, the main approach taken by the teachers was comprehension based.

Concerning the paucity of previous research about teachers' perceptions and practices of listening instruction and the changes that listening instruction has undergone over the last decades, it is timely to investigate language teachers' current perceptions and practices of listening instruction. Therefore, the study specifically explores Iranian EFL teachers' stated practices, their perceptions of how effective those practices are, and their perceptions of how listening should be learned and/or taught. Additionally, in this study teachers' actual classroom practices are explored and then compared and contrasted with their stated practices and perceptions. Investigating the correspondence between teacher perceptions and practices has become an important way of understanding how teachers' perceptions shape the way they understand teaching and the priorities they accord to different dimensions of their work (Richards, 1998). The three research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. What are the EFL teachers' stated practices and perceptions regarding listening instruction?
2. What are the EFL teachers' classroom practices regarding listening instruction?
3. To what extent do EFL teachers' stated practices and perceptions concerning listening instruction correspond to their classroom practices?

It needs to be mentioned that, in this study four methodological divisions of text-oriented, communication-oriented, learner-oriented, and metacognitive instruction for teaching listening as suggested by Vandergrift and Goh (2012) are used to characterize teachers' perceptions and practices.

## **2. Review of the Related Literature**

In this section, first the four listening instructional approaches that were used to characterize teachers' perceptions and practices in this study are explained. Then, the key features including key activities and techniques of these four

listening instructional approaches are classified to be used as categories of analysis.

## **2.1 Text-oriented Listening Instruction**

The first time that listening instruction received considerable attention was in the 1960s when the instruction was heavily influenced by reading and writing pedagogy (Brown, 1987). Text-oriented approaches that feature dominant theoretical paradigms of that period, put a heavy emphasis on the outcome of listening which is the correct answer to comprehension questions. This kind of instruction often involves the following cycle: students listen to a text and they are asked to chorally or individually repeat the details they have heard. Alternatively, they may discriminate sounds in the text, memorize or imitate some parts of the listening text or write down what they heard as a way of reinforcing the input (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Then, they answer questions based on the text and the teacher shares the correct answers. Listening to a text and answering comprehension questions right after it either in the form of multiple choice exercises, true false exercises or putting a list of key words or phrases into the appropriate order is a crudely common scenario in text-oriented instruction (Chambers, 1996).

In this manner, learners are tested on the accuracy of their repetition or comprehension. This is according to Morley (2001) called a “quiz-show” format of teaching which does not require learners to use the information for any real communicative purposes. Although testing learners on the accuracy of their repetition or comprehension of listening might sometimes have positive effects on learning, according to Chambers (1996), this should not, however, justify its prominence in modern languages classrooms. Thus, it is important to remove the idea of 'testing' from listening activities and to take advantage of newer approaches to listening instruction (Underwood, 1989).

Text-oriented listening instruction comes close to what is known as 'Comprehension Approach' (Field, 2008, p. 26) in which the teacher typically plays a passage to the class and assesses their understanding of it through a series of comprehension question.

The traditional text-oriented listening instruction and the comprehension approach seemed less appropriate in the landscape of English language teaching when communicative approaches emerged.

## **2.2 Communication-oriented Listening Instruction**

The second phase of teaching listening commenced with the emergence of communicative language teaching (CLT) in the 1970s and early 1980s based on the premise that what we do in the classroom should have some real-life communicative value.

By the emergence of CLT, listening was no longer perceived as a less important skill than reading or writing but as a complex communicative skill that involves a number of sub skills. Subskills are generally defined as, a set of abilities that enable a listener to understand the listening (Field, 2008).

Apart from being a complex communicative skill, listening was also shown to be an active process requiring listener full participation in selecting the stimuli and constructing meaning (Richards, 1983). Consequently, listening activities that were introduced, emphasized the importance of listening comprehension as active meaning construction which is motivated by a communicative purpose in mind. According to Littlewood (1981), this purpose determines to a large extent what meanings the listeners must construct out of the listening input; whether they should listen for the general gist or the specific pieces of information throughout the listening. He noted, a most familiar technique for providing a purpose for listening is by means of questions that prompt learners to listen for specific facts or to make inferences from what they hear. By presetting questions, we ensure that

learners know from the start about the purpose of the listening exercise, and will not have to rely heavily on memory. In fact, the learners are encouraged to develop expectations as to what will be heard in the text, then to check them against what is actually said (Field, 1998). This is in contrast to text-oriented listening instruction where the purpose of listening was not clearly stated and there was not a prompt at the onset of the listening to remind the students what they were supposed to listen for. That is, learners had to rely on their memory to remember all or most of the information.

A typical communication-oriented listening lesson involves three stages of prelistening, while-listening and postlistening. This format has proved useful in shifting the focus from text-based instructions to communication-based (Field, 2002).

Still within communication-oriented listening instruction, it was found that learners had difficulties in understanding authentic listening. To address such difficulties that students faced, the findings of research which has come to be known as 'good language learner research' broadly recommends the explicit teaching of listening strategies which will be the focus of the next section.

### **2.3 Learner-oriented Listening Instruction**

The third phase of listening instruction began almost concurrently with the second phase as a result of research conducted on exploring characteristics of good language learners (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1975; Rubin, 1987; Stern, 1980). The findings of these researchers gave a fresh impetus to listening instruction research because they allowed the development and classification of learning strategies. Literature offers several different classifications of learning strategies. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) validated a body of language learning strategies grounded in cognitive theory, and classified them into three main groups as metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective.

By teaching listening strategies, especially cognitive strategies, learner-oriented listening instruction adapts communication-oriented instruction with a view to raise awareness of strategy use in order to facilitate listening comprehension. In this approach learners are taught to find out which listening strategies work for them and in which situations (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). In this way, learner-oriented instruction is often referred to as Strategy-Based Instruction (SBI). The term SBI was coined by Mendelsohn (1994), with a proposal for a listening course in which the instruction takes as its basis the direct teaching of listening strategies. The fact that in learner-oriented listening instruction learners are taught how to facilitate listening comprehension by employing a range of strategies is what makes learner-oriented classes to be more process-oriented than traditional listening classes. The premise that the SBI is conducive to helping learners become more efficient, effective and autonomous listeners is evident in recent literature on L2 listening pedagogy (e.g., Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Lynch & Mendelsohn, 2002; Rost, 2002; Vandergrift, 2004).

Learner-oriented listening instruction, which focuses mainly on the use of cognitive strategies, may often come short in providing a range of strategies with metacognitive rationale. Additionally, in learner-oriented instruction, less time or attention might be allocated to a variety of structural support, since strategy instruction is the main focus (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). To mitigate these shortcomings, Vandergrift (2004, 2007) and Goh (1997, 2008) expanded learner-oriented approach, by proposing a metacognitive approach to teach listening in a holistic manner.

#### **2.4 Metacognitive Listening Instruction**

Metacognitive listening instruction is associated in particular with the work of Vandergrift (2004, 2007) and Goh (1997, 2008). At the heart of this approach, lies the concept of metacognition which is defined as "one's



knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes and products or anything related to them. It embraces one's awareness of active planning, monitoring, evaluation, and orchestration of these processes" (Flavell, 1976, p. 232).

Although the metacognitive and learner-oriented listening instruction have certain commonalities and both follow a process-oriented approach to teach listening, they tend to emphasize different things. In order to draw attention to the distinction between these two approaches, Cross and Vandergrift (2014, p. 2) explain that:

Metacognitive instruction involves a range of activities designed to enable listeners to experience, develop knowledge of, and reflect on the social-cognitive processes of listening comprehension. It does not encompass interventions solely involving the explicit teaching of strategies, be they metacognitive or other. The explicit teaching of strategies refers to strategy instruction [learner-oriented listening instruction], a strand of listening theory and research that has a narrower focus.

Vandergrift and Goh (2012) have proposed a metacognitive framework for listening instruction that serves two important functions namely self-appraisal and self-management. In simpler terms, within the context of listening instruction the former is referred to as metacognitive knowledge and the latter as strategy use. Metacognitive listening instruction addresses different aspects and functions of the metacognitive framework through a metacognitive pedagogical sequence which increases learner awareness about the listening process. Vandergrift and Goh (2012, p. 127) defined metacognitive pedagogical sequence as:

a sequence of learning activities that integrate metacognitive awareness raising with listening input and comprehension activities that offer a structure to help learners improve their understanding of the content of the text and at the same time become more familiar with the metacognitive processes involved. These include planning, predicting, monitoring, evaluation, directed attention, selective attention, and problem-solving.

Vandergrift's (2004) metacognitive cycle represents stages in the metacognitive pedagogical sequence in five stages of instruction. They include, prelistening (planning/predicting stage), first verification stage, second verification stage, final verification stage and reflection/goal-Setting stage. Research studies have extensively investigated the success of metacognitive listening instruction (e.g., Cross, 2009; Goh & Taib, 2006; Latifi, Tavakoli & Dabaghi, 2014; Rahimi & Katal, 2013; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010).

To meet the goals and objectives of metacognitive instruction, Goh (2008) described two types of activities. The first type is called 'integrated experiential listening tasks' that are mainly carried out with course books or materials that their teachers have prepared, and typically focus on extraction of information and construction of meaning. The second type of activity is 'guided reflections on listening'. As the name suggests, learners are guided to attend mindfully to teacher-led reflection activities that aim to draw out learners' implicit knowledge about L2 listening and at the same time encourage them to construct new knowledge as they make sense of their own listening experiences.

## **2.5 Categories of Analysis**

Categories of analysis consisted of key features including key activities and techniques of the four broad approaches to teaching listening. Two points need to be raised about these categories of analysis. First, this set of categories was not meant to be comprehensive; rather, it was to provide a description of each approach at a broad level. Second, the key activities and techniques mentioned for each listening instructional approach are not necessarily mutually exclusive. It means, for example, using drills that is a key feature of a text-oriented approach might occur in a communication-oriented approach or any other approach too. However, the ordering or priority given to it certainly differs from classroom to classroom and from approach to approach. Therefore, it is in an overview of classroom practices that the ordering, priority and the emphasis given to each of the key activities and techniques becomes visible and contribute to the interpretation of the data. Having made this clear, the categories of analysis are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Categories of Analysis*

Instructional Approach	Features
Text-oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Asking a variety of comprehension questions right after the listening. e.g. True/false, multiple choice</li> <li>•Asking display questions</li> <li>•Drill</li> <li>•Repetition</li> <li>•Memorization</li> <li>•Listening and writing down what one hears</li> </ul>
Communication-oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Group discussion as prelistening</li> <li>•Asking referential questions</li> <li>•Practicing core listening skills: Listening selectively, Listening for main ideas, Listening for details, Listening for global understanding</li> <li>•Conducting discussion to assess comprehension</li> <li>•Using prelistening to activate students background</li> </ul>

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	knowledge
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Doing role-plays in pairs</li> <li>•Focusing on speaking in oral communication activities in post listening</li> </ul>
Learner-oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Listening strategy instruction: Elaboration, Cooperation, Self-talk, Organization, Summarizing, Transfer, Inferencing, Deducing, Imagery, Predicting</li> </ul>
Metacognitive Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Using metacognitive pedagogical sequence: Planning, Monitoring, Problem solving, Evaluating</li> <li>•Integrated experiential listening tasks: Self-directed listening, Post listening perception,</li> <li>•Guided reflections for listening: Listening diaries, Anxiety and motivation charts, Process-based discussions, Self-report checklist</li> </ul>

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### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study was a case study with a mixed-methods descriptive design. The 'case' in this study constitutes an EFL teacher teaching English to upper intermediate or advanced students. A mixed methodology offers a "potentially more comprehensive means of legitimizing findings than do either qualitative or quantitative methods alone" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 62). Particularly for designing and conducting L2 listening studies, Cross and Vandergrift (2014) state that, a mixed-methods approach can generate research that is more robust than that which relies on a single data collection technique. Thus, in this study both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The quantitative data consists of frequencies and percentages that mostly come from responses to close-ended questions in the questionnaires and qualitative data come from classroom observation.

#### 3.2 Participants

The participants in this study were five Iranian EFL teachers (1 female & 4 males) in a private language institute, in Tehran, Iran where during one semester the classes meet twice a week for eight weeks and last 100 minutes. The instructional material used by the teachers were *American English File* course books which emphasize a balance of skills. The teachers range in age from 25 to 40. All possessed a Bachelor's degree or a Master's degree in English fields. The criterion for the selection of the participants in this study was that teachers should be experienced in teaching English to upper intermediate or advanced level students. Five years of experience which seems to be a commonly accepted criterion in the selection of experienced teachers (Tsui, 2003) was set as the minimum acceptable experience for the selection of the teachers. Characteristics of the participants are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Characteristics of the Participants*

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Gender	Age	Teaching Experience (Years)	Academic degree	Named as
Male	29	10	B.A. in English Translation	Teacher 1
Female	25	6	M.A. in English Translation	Teacher 2
Male	30	12	B.A. in Teaching English	Teacher 3
Male	40	15	M.A. in Teaching English	Teacher 4
Male	35	14	M.A. in Teaching English	Teacher 5

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### 3.3 Instruments

Three instruments were developed from extensive reading of the literature on listening instruction for the purposes of this study. These three instruments were used after classroom observation phase of the study.

#### 3.3.1 Listening Instruction Questionnaire

The questionnaire was a self-report questionnaire that was developed by the researcher to gather information about teachers' stated practices by asking them 'how often' they perform an activity as well as to explore their perceptions about 'how effective' those practices are. To design this questionnaire, key features of each four approaches to listening instruction (i.e., text-oriented, communication-oriented, learner-oriented, & metacognitive listening instruction) including key activities and techniques were selected from the literature to form initial questionnaire items. The items were validated by two university professors, expert in listening research, to be a true representative of each approach. Their comments were incorporated into an improved version of the questionnaire which was piloted with 61 teachers. The Cronbach alpha reliability statistic was then calculated for both the 'how often' and the 'how effective' section of the questionnaire. The Cronbach reliability coefficient for the former section was 0.91 and for the latter 0.88. As a result of the received feedback and item analysis, nine items that seemed not to work properly and challenged the reliability were deleted. The final version of the questionnaire to be used for the participants of this study consisted of forty items (ten for each approach). For the 'how often' section questions a 5-point Likert scale (e.g., Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, & Always) and for the 'how effective' section a 4-point Likert scale (e.g., Very ineffective, Ineffective, Effective, Very Effective) was used (The questionnaire is included in Appendix A). The targeted approach of the forty items of the questionnaire is listed in Table 3.

Table 3  
*Questionnaire Items and Their Targeted Approach*

Approach	Number of Items	Items No.
Text-oriented items	10	1, 5, 9, 16, 18, 23, 27, 31, 36, 38
Communication-oriented items	10	2, 10, 17, 21, 22, 25, 30,

Learner-oriented items	10	33, 34, 37 3, 4, 7, 12, 14, 15, 19, 28, 32, 39
Metacognitive instruction items	10	6, 8, 11, 13, 20, 24, 26, 29, 35, 40

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### 3.3.2 Lesson Plan Analysis Task

This task presented teachers with four separate instructional lesson plans taken from the literature, each reflecting one of the four approaches to listening instruction (i.e., text-oriented, communication-oriented, learner-oriented & metacognitive listening instruction). The teachers were asked to read each lesson plan carefully and select one which best reflects their own perceptions of listening instruction. Based on the type of lesson plan that the teachers selected, they were assigned either a text-oriented, a communication oriented, a learner-oriented, or a metacognitive instruction code. The four lesson plans for this task were validated as reflecting one of the four methodological approaches by the same two experts (The lesson plan analysis task is included in Appendix B).

### 3.3.3 Listening Instruction Belief Inventory

The third instrument is a belief inventory which contained 16 statements, four of which represented each of the approaches to listening instruction (i.e., text-oriented, communication-oriented, learner-oriented & metacognitive listening instruction). The teachers were asked to read all 16 statements and select four statements which most closely reflected their beliefs about how listening is learned and/or how it should be taught. The teachers were assigned a percentage score based on the number of text-oriented, communication-oriented, learner-oriented, or metacognitive instruction statements that they selected. Items of the inventory that referred to text-oriented beliefs are 1, 5, 7, and 13. Items related to communication-oriented beliefs are 6, 8, 11 and

15. Items related to learner-oriented beliefs are 2, 4, 9 and 14. Items related to Metacognitive Instruction beliefs are 3, 10, 12 and 16.

This instrument initially included 20 statements but in order to make it less time consuming for the teachers to read, one statement from each approach that was less selected in the piloting was deleted. Each statement on the inventory was validated by the same two experts (The belief inventory is included in Appendix C).

### **3.4 Data Collection**

Data collection for this study comprised two stages. In the first stage, the listening portion of teachers' instruction was observed and audio-recorded by the researcher during one semester which took eight weeks. Afterwards, the recordings were transcribed and the transcripts were given to the teachers for verification. According to Dörnyei (2007) these verifications are useful and can also enhance the generalizability. The total amount of recorded listening instruction from the five teachers in 26 lessons was approximately 11 hours. In the second stage, the teachers' stated practices and their perceptions of listening instruction were probed by means of the listening instruction questionnaire, the lesson plan analysis task, and the belief inventory that were designed for this study.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

To analyze the classroom data, first the transcripts of the recordings of listening instruction were read several times to get a general overview of the structure of each teacher's listening lessons. Then, the transcripts were entered into MAXQDA 11 for the facilitation of coding and categorizing. The transcripts were coded according to the categories of analysis by the researchers. The coding of the transcripts was then reviewed by a colleague who was an EFL professional. There weren't considerable variations between the researchers' coding and the reviewer's coding because the additional



contextual background from the lesson transcripts helped to resolve those minor variations through discussion. Finally, the frequency of coded instances related to each approach to listening instruction was calculated and then converted to percentages.

To analyze the questionnaire responses, the frequencies of teachers' responses to close-ended items of the questionnaires as well as percentages of responses were calculated. Moreover, in order to facilitate comparison of these results across other instruments and across results obtained from the classroom observation the Likert scale responses were also coded to provide a single measure.

#### **4. Findings**

The results are organized according to the three research questions in three sections.

##### **4.1 Responding to the First Research Question**

The first research question was,

*What are the EFL teachers' stated practices and perceptions regarding listening instruction?*

To answer this question, the results obtained from the questionnaire, the lesson plan analysis task and the belief inventory are presented. It should be noted that the total frequencies of response in each particular approach (each row in the table 4 and 5) is 50. This is because the questionnaire consisted of 10 items for each approach. Multiplying 10 by the number of teachers (that is 5) results in 50. Having made this clear, the results of the first part of the questionnaire, in which the teachers' stated practices were probed by 'how often' questions are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

*Listening Instruction Questionnaire Results (Part 1)*

<b>How often</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Always</b>
<b>Text-oriented</b>	6% (3)*	18% (9)	22% (11)	32% (16)	22% (11)
<b>Communication-oriented</b>	2% (1)	20% (10)	28% (14)	24% (12)	26% (13)
<b>Learner-oriented</b>	20% (10)	10% (5)	26% (13)	32% (16)	12% (6)
<b>Metacognitive Instruction</b>	36% (18)	24% (12)	10% (5)	22% (11)	8% (4)

\*The number in parentheses show the frequency of response.

As shown in Table 4, teachers' stated text-oriented and communication-oriented practices are very frequent. These two approaches are also less frequently abandoned as only 6% of text-oriented and 2% of communication-oriented practices were reported 'never' been practiced. With regard to techniques from more process-oriented approaches namely learner-oriented and metacognitive instruction, the numbers indicate that teachers moderately encourage their students to use listening strategies. Moreover, metacognitive instructional techniques seem to be practiced less than those of learner-oriented. Finally, the overall pattern in Table 4 shows that teachers' stated practices are more product-oriented than process-oriented, though techniques from process-oriented approaches are often practiced.

In the second part of the questionnaire, the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the techniques for each listening instruction approach were probed by 'how effective' questions. The results of the second part of the questionnaire are shown in Table 5.

Table 5  
*Listening Instruction Questionnaire Results (Part 2)*

<b>How effective</b>	<b>Very Ineffective</b>	<b>Ineffective</b>	<b>Effective</b>	<b>Very Effective</b>
<b>Text-oriented</b>	0% (0)*	6% (3)	58% (29)	36% (18)
<b>Communication-oriented</b>	0% (0)	10% (5)	52% (26)	38% (19)
<b>Learner-oriented</b>	0% (0)	22% (11)	48% (24)	30% (15)
<b>Metacognitive Instruction</b>	4% (2)	16% (8)	58% (29)	22% (11)

\*The number in parentheses show the frequency of response.

As shown in Table 5, almost 80% of responses indicate that the techniques across all four approaches were perceived to be 'effective' and 'very effective'. Among metacognitive items of the questionnaire, the ones most frequently perceived as 'very effective' referred to planning, process-based discussions, keeping listening diaries, encouraging self-directed listening, postlistening perception and problem solving. Among learner-oriented items, the most frequently perceived as 'very effective' was item 19 which referred to encouraging students to use 'inferencing strategy', that is, teaching students to use information in text to guess the meaning of the new words, or find answers to their questions. Among communication-oriented items, the most frequently perceived as 'very effective' was item 33 which referred to asking students to listen for global understanding, that is, the general idea in the listening. Among text-oriented items, the ones most frequently perceived as 'very effective' referred to asking a variety of questions from each individual and asking comprehension questions exactly after listening (Items 18 & 23 in the questionnaire). Finally, the overall pattern in Table 5 shows that although techniques from all four approaches

were perceived as more or less effective, text-oriented techniques seem to be perceived slightly more effective than those of other approaches.

In order to get a deeper insight into teachers' stated practices and perceptions up to this point, the results of the second instrument, the lesson plan analysis task, are presented in Table 6. This task required the teachers to select only one lesson plan (out of four) which best reflected their own instruction of listening.

Table 6  
*Lesson Plan Analysis Task Results*

	<b>Lesson Plan Analysis Task</b>
<b>Text-oriented</b>	20% (1 teacher)
<b>Communication-oriented</b>	80% (4 teachers)
<b>Learner-oriented</b>	0%
<b>Metacognitive Instruction</b>	0%

As can be seen, the communication-oriented lesson plan was favored by 4 teachers but none of the process-oriented lesson plans (i.e., learner-oriented and metacognitive) were selected. In fact, the teachers' lesson plans reflected product-oriented approaches to listening instruction with the domination of communication-oriented. This domination was also to some extent evident in Table 4.

In order to tap into teachers' perceptions of how listening is learned and/or how it should be taught, the results from the belief inventory are presented in Table 7.

Table 7  
*Belief Inventory Results*

	<b>Belief Inventory</b>
Text-oriented	5%
Communication-oriented	40%
Learner-oriented	25%
Metacognitive Instruction	30%

As can be seen in Table 7, the dominance of communication-oriented beliefs is evident. Nevertheless, the beliefs extended toward process-oriented

approaches not less than product-oriented ones. Put it another way, concerning how listening is learned and/or how it should be taught, teachers believed in communication-oriented, metacognitive, learner-oriented, and a little text-oriented instruction, respectively.

#### **4.2 Responding to the Second Research Question**

The second research question was,

*What are the EFL teachers' classroom practices regarding listening instruction?*

To answer this question, the results obtained from the classroom observations are described both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Table 8 presents the frequency of instances of activities or techniques from each particular approach across individual teachers. As can be seen, a majority of instances were communication-oriented ones. In other words, the dominant approach taken by all teachers except Teacher 5 was communication-oriented. Surprisingly, the only one teacher (Teacher 5) whose approach is more text-oriented is the one teacher who selected a text-oriented lesson plan (Table 6). The overall pattern is that the listening portion of each teacher's classes consisted of a combination of communication-oriented and text-oriented practices. Importantly, what was conspicuously absent in actual classroom practices was process-oriented techniques. Very few traces of the process-oriented activities/techniques were observed only in the practices of Teacher 2, 3, 4, and 5, but even so, these process-oriented instances seemed to be put forward by the teachers for communication purposes rather than to teach learners how to listen. For instance, take the segment below extracted from the transcripts of Teacher 4.

Teacher 4:

See when you don't understand a word or an idea in the listening don't freeze. Look for a paraphrase, a synonym or an antonym near it. Do you know the meaning of

paraphrase? It means use other words to say what you mean and keep going. It's good for speaking too. Isn't it? So what is paraphrase again? [...]

As can be seen, although Teacher 4 mentioned this strategy to help learners deal with their difficulties understanding a word or an idea in the listening, he further expanded this strategy to be used for speaking.

Table 8

*Individual Teachers' Classroom Practices*

<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Instructional Approach</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Frequency of instances</b>
<b>Teacher 1</b>	Text-oriented	17.7%	17
	Communication-oriented	82.3%	79
	Learner-oriented	0%	0
	Metacognitive Instruction	0%	0
<b>Teacher 2</b>	Text-oriented	34.8%	33
	Communication-oriented	64.2%	61
	Learner-oriented	0%	0
	Metacognitive Instruction	1%	1
<b>Teacher 3</b>	Text-oriented	30.3%	10
	Communication-oriented	66.7%	22
	Learner-oriented	0%	0
	Metacognitive Instruction	3%	1
<b>Teacher 4</b>	Text-oriented	19%	16
	Communication-oriented	72.6%	61
	Learner-oriented	1.2%	1
	Metacognitive Instruction	7.2%	6
<b>Teacher 5</b>	Text-oriented	56%	28
	Communication-oriented	42%	21
	Learner-oriented	2%	1
	Metacognitive Instruction	0%	0

Among communication-oriented instances, three of them were most frequently observed in teachers' classes. The first one was, informing students of the purpose of the listening through pair work speaking or discussions or pre-teaching new vocabularies. For instance, in the segment below, Teacher 4

inform students of the purpose of the listening by conducting a classroom discussion.

Teacher 4:

T: Have you ever been to a psychic? What about a fortune teller? Do you believe in them?

S: Not me but one of my friends yes.

T: Can you tell us about it? So that we can discuss this issue together.

The second most frequently observed instance was, teaching students the skill 'listening for details' in which students were supposed to listen for specific information in the listening for example, keywords, numbers, names etc. For example, Teacher 2 directed students' attention to listen for numbers in order to facilitate their comprehension.

Teacher 2:

These are called statistics. Statistics are the numbers that show you how much or how many things are different. Try to listen for them.

Third, engaging students in oral communication activities or discussions after listening about the topic of the listening or some related topics. For instance, in the segment below, Teacher 1, as a postlistening activity conducts discussions related to the topic of the listening.

Teacher 1:

And a question to discuss. In your family members, relatives, or friends is there a person that you don't know whether he is dead or he is alive. He is in the middle of nowhere like the people who were in the war. Some people were killed in the war and they just brought their bodies back and said ok your son is the martyr. And you know there are another groups of people that we don't know whether they're killed I don't know they're captive, they're alive or they're dead. Any one in your relatives?

Let me tell you first I've got a neighbor whose son [...]

Furthermore, overall teachers' classroom practices are presented in Table 9. As can be seen the dominant approach to teaching listening is communication-oriented. Text-oriented instances were observed to be the second most common ones. As text-oriented and communication-oriented instances (product-oriented instances) cover almost 97% of the teachers'

practices, it can be argued that the need for process-orientated instruction is more than necessary.

Table 9

*Overall Teachers' Classroom Practices*

Text-oriented	29%
Communication-oriented	68.2%
Learner-oriented	0.5%
Metacognitive Instruction	2.3%

### 4.3 Responding to the Third Research Question

The third research question was, *To what extent do EFL teachers' stated practices and perceptions concerning listening instruction correspond to their classroom practices?*

To account for this question, in this section the data from the three instruments as well as the data obtained from the classroom observation are amalgamated in a single table to give us an overall picture. Specifically, for this section, the questionnaire data also were coded to give a single measure enabling the comparison across other data.

Table 10 shows an amalgamation of the data obtained from the five teachers. Comparing the actual classroom practices with the teachers' stated practices and their perceptions, it can be seen that, in some points the teachers' stated practices and perceptions matched their actual practices, but in some other points they did not. In terms of the matches, for example, as the teachers' stated practices and their lesson plans pertained to the dominance of communicative orientation, likewise, in their actual practices they focused on a communicative orientation. However, the focus on a communicative orientation in actual classroom was more than two times than it was stated. Moreover, the second most frequently employed approach in the classrooms was observed to be text-oriented as it was stated by the teachers. In terms of the mismatches, it can be said that the amount of actual learner-oriented and



metacognitive orientation observed in the teachers' classrooms significantly differed from their stated practices and perceptions. Therefore, there is evidence of an apparent mismatch between teachers' stated and actual practices in the amount of process-oriented techniques they used. Additionally, concerning teachers' beliefs as stated in their belief inventory it can be seen in Table 10 that 45% of the beliefs are related to text-oriented and communication-oriented instruction, whereas, 55% of them are related to learner-oriented and metacognitive instruction. This shows another apparent mismatch between teachers' beliefs and their actual classroom practices. Although teachers believe that almost half of the instruction should be process-based, in practice this process-based half becomes product-based.

To sum up and account for the extent to which the teachers' stated practices and perceptions correspond to their classroom practices, we can say that more convergence is observed in terms of the product-oriented approaches but less convergence in terms of the process-oriented ones though there are a few exceptions that were discussed earlier.

Table 10  
*Comparing Teachers' Stated Practices and Perceptions with their Classroom Practices*

Stated Practices and Perceptions		Lesson Plan Analysis Task	Belief Inventory	Classroom Practices
Listening Instruction Questionnaire				
How often?	How effective?			

Text-oriented	29%	26%	20%	5%	29%
Communication-oriented	30%	30%	80%	40%	68.2%
Learner-oriented	24%	23%	0%	25%	0.5%
Metacognitive Instruction	17%	21%	0%	30%	2.3%

What has been said up to here in this section is graphically summarized in Figure 1. This Figure illustrates the findings that were mentioned in Table 10.

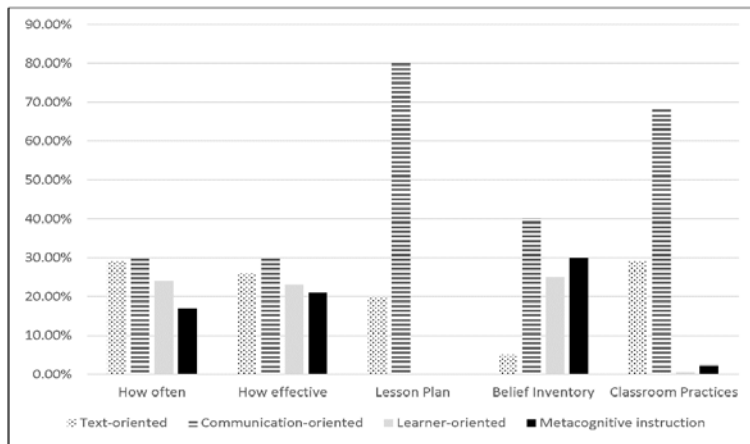


Figure 1. An illustration of teachers' stated practices and perceptions along with their classroom practices

Figure 1, clearly illustrates the points that were made in this chapter. The dominance of communication-oriented instruction is most noticeable in this figure. The fact that product-oriented approaches (text-oriented and communication-oriented) were stated to be practiced more often than process-oriented approaches (learner-oriented and metacognitive instruction) can be seen in this figure. By this figure also, the matches and mismatches that were mentioned earlier stand out. For instance, it is apparent in this figure that, process-oriented approaches were stated to be practiced more or less, they were perceived to be effective to some extent, and they were believed to be even better approaches than the text-oriented approach to teach

listening. However, when it comes into practice, negligible use of them was found.

## **5. Discussion**

The results were presented with regard to four listening instructional approaches namely, text-oriented, communication-oriented, learner-oriented and metacognitive instruction. The findings of the study from both the stated practices and lesson plan analysis task reveal that communication-oriented listening instruction was the dominant approach to listening instruction. Similarly, the findings from classroom observation prove this dominance. Moreover, the findings show text-oriented instruction to be the second most dominant approach. Taken together, these findings show that a product-oriented approach dominates listening classrooms. This issue was reiterated very recently by Graham (2017) arguing that learners should not be just tested on their listening, rather, they should be taught 'how' to listen through process-oriented listening approaches.

Several previous research studies have also mentioned that a product-oriented approach dominates listening classrooms. For example, Graham, Santos and Francis-Brophy (2014) reported teachers' frequent use of prelistening activities for product-oriented purposes rather than in terms of predicting content. For another, Siegel (2013) reported teachers' heavy reliance on comprehension questions and further claimed that currently the evaluation of listening ability happens more frequently than listening instruction. Likewise, Liao and Yeldham (2015) reported the dominance of a comprehension-based, test-oriented approach among the Taiwan high school teachers. The same thing can be said of the study by Sebina and Arua (2014) who reported that the most common postlistening activity that junior secondary school teachers used in Botswana was answering questions based on the listening text which is a completely product-based approach. In a

similar vein, Goh (2010) states that in many language courses little time is allocated to teaching about the process of listening and how to listen.

The findings are also indicative of fact that teachers' stated practices and perceptions with regard to product-oriented (text-oriented and communication-oriented) approaches, correspond to a quite large extent to their actual classroom practices. However, with regard to the process-oriented approaches (learner-oriented and metacognitive instruction), there was not any correspondence because the amount of process-oriented practices that actually occurred in classrooms was far less than the amount that was stated by the teachers. This finding highlights an important mismatch between teachers' stated practices or perceptions and their actual classroom practices in terms of the amount of process-oriented instruction. This lower amount of process-oriented instruction in actual classroom practices was also evident in the study by Graham, Santos and Francis-Brophy (2014) that reported the teachers rarely taught learners how to listen more effectively. This mismatch between teachers' stated practices or perceptions and their actual classroom practices can be explained, however, if one considers that for the teachers in this study, not practicing what was stated or perceived to be effective greatly depended on a number of factors. For instance, the mismatch might depend on teachers' personal experiences of teaching listening (Richardson, 1996), or might depend on factors such as students' backgrounds, administrative support, the institutional curriculum and atmosphere of the school (Fang, 1996). It might also depend on a complex nexus of interacting factors (Barnard & Burns, 2012). An important implication of this mismatch is that, the four approaches to teaching listening, especially the process-oriented ones, as perceived by the teachers, have the potential to serve as effective or even very effective means for overall listening development depending on how, how often, and with how much support they are implemented. Thus,

reducing the effect of factors that cause this mismatch would enable the teachers to use more process-oriented techniques. According to Nunan (2002), language classrooms should have a dual focus, that is, teachers should teach not only the language content, but also they should teach how to learn those content. It seems therefore necessary to reduce the barriers that may prevent teachers from implementing process-oriented activities in teaching listening. We do not have any evidence whether teachers are aware of this mismatch or not. It seems, if teachers are informed of this mismatch between their perceptions and their actual practices, they might make an attempt to bridge it.

### **5.1 Pedagogical Implications**

The findings, have important pedagogical implications. First, it became clear to some extent, how much teachers are successful in prioritizing what they perceive as effective in actual teaching of listening. Thus, it seems important that teachers assess themselves regularly to see whether they could achieve what they planned as to be effective for their students.

Second, by a moment of thought, it can be understood at least partially whether teachers' accumulated perceptions from different sources of knowledge have borne fruit in teachers' classroom practices. It is this accumulated knowledge that according to Brown (2002), enables teachers to diagnose the needs of students, to treat students with successful pedagogical techniques and to assess the outcome of those treatments.

Additionally, it should be noted that because teachers' role in EFL contexts is very significant, gaining a better understanding of how to efficiently teach listening, that is, how to promote 'learning to listen' rather than 'listening to learn' is more than necessary to EFL teachers. In much the same way this implication is of utmost importance for teacher trainers and material developers. Teacher trainers and material developers can benefit

from the research findings related to 'learning to listen' paradigm to improve the quality of education and listening materials. This study, hopefully, can provide both a springboard for exploring what actually happens during listening instruction in EFL classrooms and an impetus for teachers' critical self-inquiry on how to teach listening.

### **5.2 Limitations of the Study**

This study investigated Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding listening instruction through a small-scale case study using a small number of teachers from one location. For this reason, the results of the study cannot be generalized. Second, although the questionnaire was pilot tested and revised by two experts who verified its content validity, its validity was not tested by rigorous statistical methods.

### **5.3 Suggestions for Future Research**

It can be understood from the findings of this research that there is still room for much further progress in this area. For instance, further research is needed to probe the underlying reasons for teachers' specific listening instructional practices. This can be done by extending the methodology to a more rigorous one such as by means of interviews, diaries, and other means of data collection so as to shed light on the incongruity between teachers' stated practices or perceptions and their classroom practices. Since a case-study approach was taken in this study, future research would also do well to conduct a large-scale study building on the findings in the current study. Moreover, further research seems to be necessary to discover situational factors, learner factors and teacher factors that seem to impinge on teachers' less use of process-oriented listening approaches. Another promising line of research is to analyze EFL textbooks to see how much they teach listening with a product emphasis and how much with a process emphasis. Last, but not least, future research is necessary to explore teachers' perceptions and practices of listening instruction along with those of the learners.

## 5.4 Conclusion

The main goal of the study was to explore Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of listening instruction. The case study results obtained from this study yield some important insights about EFL teachers' listening instruction, namely, it was found that teachers apply more product-oriented techniques and less process-oriented techniques in their actual classroom practices than they stated they do. By this finding some matches and mismatches between teachers' stated practices or perceptions and their classroom practices were foreshadowed.

The conclusion to be drawn is that, new process-oriented listening instruction practices, despite being richly developed in articles and books, have not been well applied in language classrooms. Even if teachers have developed these new process-oriented approaches in themselves and perceive them to be effective, still at the level of implementation listening instruction does not meet the objectives and expectations of process-oriented approaches. The gaps between listening research, listening pedagogical practices, listening instructional perceptions and beliefs are more likely to disappear if new process-oriented approaches, that is, the 'how' of listening are widely publicized especially in teacher training courses.

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**Appendix B: Lesson Plan Analysis Task**

There are four lesson plans. Please read each lesson plan carefully and select the box next to one (only one) lesson plan which best reflects your own instruction of listening.

<b>Lesson Plan 1</b>	<p><b>1. Preparation</b> Teacher asks students to think of how they approach a listening task (in group work). Then, each group reports the strategies students already use in listening. Teacher points out the variety of strategies available for listening (e.g., predicting, directed attention, anxiety reduction, etc.)</p> <p><b>2. Presentation</b> Before listening, “predicting” strategies are reminded and discussed. Students listen to the first part of the listening and infer the main idea. Students may take note while listening.</p> <p><b>3. Practice</b> Students engage in hands-on activities to practice the new information presented in the listening. The teacher acts as facilitator in helping students assimilate the new information (e.g., summarizing). Students may work together in small groups to clarify their understanding of the listening.</p> <p><b>4. Evaluation</b> After listening, students identify areas they need to review (e.g., any words that they did not understand). They discuss their problem in pairs and evaluate their comprehension.</p> <p><b>3. Expansion Activities</b> Students are given a variety of opportunities to think about the new concepts and skills they have learned from the listening, discuss the benefits of each strategy they used for future listening tasks, and integrate them into their existing knowledge.</p>
<b>Lesson Plan 2</b>	<p><b>1. Prelistening</b> A. Pre-teaching of all important new vocabulary in the listening. B. Teacher informs students of the topic and students discuss in groups a point about the topic.</p> <p><b>2. Listening</b> A. On first listening, students are supposed to answer simple general questions. After listening they discuss their answers. B. On second listening students are supposed to answer more detailed comprehension questions.</p> <p><b>3. Post listening</b> A. Analysis of the language in the text (e.g., what does this expression in the conversation mean?) B. Listen and repeat: Teacher pauses the tape/CD, students repeat words/sentences.</p>

<b>Lesson Plan 3</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher plays a recording, or reads a passage aloud. Students repeat chorally, in groups, and/or individually. Students may memorize some parts if the teacher requires or they may be encouraged to write down what they hear.</li> <li>2. The students answer comprehension questions based on the text that they heard.</li> <li>3. Certain key structures are selected from the dialog and will be used in practice drills (chorally/individually)</li> <li>4. Brief explanation of grammar or pronunciation will be given by the teacher.</li> </ol>
<b>Lesson Plan 4</b>	<p><b>1. <i>Prelistening—Planning/predicting stage</i></b> After learners have been informed of the topic and text type, they predict the types of information and possible words they may hear.</p> <p><b>2. <i>First listen—First verification stage</i></b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Learners verify their initial hypotheses, correct as required, and note additional information understood.</li> <li>B. Learners compare what they have understood/written with a partner, modify as required, establish what still needs resolution, and decide on the important details that still require special attention.</li> </ol> </p> <p><b>3. <i>Second listen—Second verification stage</i></b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Learners verify points of earlier disagreement, make corrections, and write down additional details understood.</li> <li>B. Class discussion in which all class members contribute to the reconstruction of the text's main points and most pertinent details, learners arrived at the meaning of certain words or parts of the text.</li> </ol> </p> <p><b>4. <i>Third listen—Final verification stage</i></b> Learners listen specifically for the information revealed in the class discussion which they were not able to make out earlier. This listen may also be accompanied by the transcript of all or part of the text.</p> <p><b>5. <i>Reflection and goal-setting stage</i></b> Based on the earlier discussion of strategies used to compensate for what was not understood, learners write goals for the next listening activity.</p>

**Appendix C: Beliefs Inventory**

Please read all 16 statements below. Then, select 4 (Only 4) statements that most closely reflect your beliefs about how listening is learned and/or how it should be taught. There is no correct answer for this list.

1	Learners should take dictation of written passages/listening transcripts to improve their listening.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	It is important to teach learners how to handle the demands of the listening.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Teachers should enhance learners' knowledge of themselves, knowledge of listening tasks and knowledge of listening strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	A good listener should use listening strategies effectively (e.g., cognitive, affective and metacognitive strategies).	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Learners should imitate and memorize sounds, key words and grammar patterns in the listening to comprehend it better.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Learners should develop/practice core listening skills (e.g. listening for gist, listening for details, etc.) for achievement of successful comprehension.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	For the listening section of the class individual work is better than group work or pair work.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Learners should listen for communicative purposes of the listening and respond to the listening activity by doing, choosing, extending, taking notes, identifying details, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Learners should be encouraged to develop skills in self-monitoring and self-assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Listening instruction should guide learners through (1) planning for the activity; (2) monitoring comprehension; (3) solving comprehension problems; and (4) evaluating the approach and outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Prelistening, listening, and post-listening that include communicative activities are three necessary stages of teaching listening.	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Teachers listening instruction should include listening strategies that focus not only on listening comprehension but also on overall listening development.	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Teachers can read aloud a passage as listening input for students and ask them comprehension questions at the end.	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	It is important to use pre-communication activities as a way of raising learners' awareness about how to listen.	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	Listening activities that focus on teaching speaking and vocabulary are very useful.	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	Learners should learn how to listen and transfer this learning to future listening tasks.	<input type="checkbox"/>