ISELT 53
Interdisciplinary Studies in English Language Teaching

Pages 53 to 67

# The Effect of Prosody Shadowing through Task-based Embedded Instruction on the Listening Comprehension of Iranian EFL Learners

Saeid Najafi Sarem [1]*, Yasaman Seif [1], Amir Hossein Lotfi [2]
[1] Islamic Azad University, Hamedan, Iran
[2] Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamedan, Iran

10.22080/iselt.2026.30044.1122

**Received**
September 13, 2025
**Accepted**
December 2, 2025
**Available online**
December 9, 2025

**Keywords:**
Task-Based Instruction, Listening Comprehension, EFL Learners, Prosody Shadowing, Second Language Acquisition.

**Abstract**

This quasi-experimental study examined the effect of prosody shadowing embedded within a task-based instructional framework on the listening comprehension of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Sixty female learners were individually randomized into experimental and control groups following proficiency screening. The experimental group received prosody shadowing integrated into a three-stage task cycle -task input, pedagogical task work, and target task performance - while the control group received traditional listening instruction. Listening comprehension was assessed using two parallel, content-validated tests with satisfactory reliability (α = .76–.80). ANCOVA results revealed a statistically significant treatment effect after controlling for pre-test scores, $F(1,57) = 341.89$, $p < .001$, with a substantial effect size (partial $\eta^2 = .857$). Adjusted post-test means indicated a mean difference of 3.30 points (95% CI [2.95, 3.66]) in favor of the experimental group. These findings suggest that embedding prosodic shadowing within task-based instruction can enhance bottom-up processing, prosodic awareness, and overall listening comprehension. Pedagogically, the study supports integrating suprasegmental training into communicative task cycles to strengthen learners' strategic engagement and comprehension in EFL contexts.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Listening is widely regarded as a crucial component of oral proficiency, and many researchers have emphasized its complexity, particularly in second-language (L2) acquisition. Vandergrift (2007) highlights listening as a challenging skill to acquire, even in one's native language, and considerably more difficult to acquire in a foreign or second language. Rost (2009) characterizes listening as the activity of decoding spoken language, building up sets of lexical units, and attributing meaning to the units. This cognitive function plays a pivotal role in communication and language acquisition.

* **Corresponding Author:** Saeid Najafi Sarem, Assistant Professor, Department of English Language, Ha.C., Islamic Azad University, Hamedan, Iran, **Email**: saeidnajafi@iau.ac.ir

According to Jafari and Hashim (2015) listening encompasses a range of subskills, including auditory discrimination, aural grammar, selecting relevant information, memory retention, and the connection between sound and meaning. They further stress the function of listening as a medium for comprehensible input, pointing out that the listening time is more than 50% of the total time spent in the foreign language acquisition. For example, Hamouda (2013) considers listening comprehension an interactive process in which the listener translates the heard text by participating in the production of the spoken text.

In L2 instruction, shadowing has gained increasing attention as an effective technique for improving listening comprehension. Traditionally used in interpreter training, shadowing involves tracking auditory input and repeating it in real time. Lambert (1992) characterizes shadowing as "an auditory tracking task performed in a paced manner, resembling a parrot's imitation, and is executed while wearing headphones." (p. 4). Shadowing is not a passive activity; instead, it engages multiple language areas in the brain (Kadota, 2007). Despite its potential benefits, prosody shadowing, which requires learners to mimic the rhythm and intonation of speech without a script, remains underexplored (Kadota & Tamai, 2005).

Tasks play a crucial role in improving listening comprehension because they motivate learners and involve them in the learning process (Rakhimova, 2024; Sarem et al., 2024). In the field of English language teaching and learning, tasks are widely recognized as effective tools for encouraging learners to produce language, participate in interaction, and clarify meanings. This, in turn, is believed to promote language acquisition, as supported by research (Nunan, 2004).

Task-based embedded instruction, which integrates tasks into the learning process, supports learners' use of real language through communicative activities (Yao et al., 2024). Research indicates that task-based instruction aligns with learner-centered educational philosophies (Bhandari, 2024; Maftuna & Sohib, 2024), involves clear goals, procedures, and outcomes (Murphy, 2003; Skehan, 1998), and emphasizes meaningful content over linguistic forms (Keo et al., 2024; Littlewood, 2004).

Task-based instruction (TBI) has been widely advocated instead of conventional language teaching methods due to its focus on functional communicative language use (Alwahibee & Al-Mutairi, 2024; Badr, 2022). Ellis (2009) argues that TBI can provide both input and prompt output, engaging learners in language comprehension and production. Similarly, Nunan (1989) emphasizes that tasks involve learners in comprehending, producing, and manipulating language with a focus on meaning rather than form. In this study, task-based embedded instruction was carried out through three key stages: task input, pedagogical task work, and target task performance, as explained in detail before.

Despite the growing number of studies on task-based instruction and listening comprehension, only a handful have examined how task-based embedded instruction and prosody shadowing interact to facilitate L2 learners' listening comprehension. Also, it is not clear how these instructional practices work in the context of Iran, as EFL learners often struggle with authentic input and prosodic listening comprehension. The present study aims to fill these important gaps in the literature by investigating the effects of task-based embedded instruction that includes the pedagogical intervention of prosody shadowing on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension. By addressing this research gap, the study will contribute theoretically to task-based listening pedagogy in education and provide a practical guide for EFL teachers and curriculum designers on how to enhance learners' listening performance in an EFL context.

## Research Question

According to the purpose of this study, the following research question was proposed:

RQ: Does prosody shadowing through task-based embedded instruction have any statistically significant effect on the listening comprehension ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

### Research Hypothesis

Based on the proposed question, the following null hypothesis was formulated:

H0: Prosody shadowing through task-based embedded instruction does not have any statistically significant effect on the listening comprehension ability of Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Background

Listening comprehension is widely acknowledged as a foundational component of communicative competence in second language (L2) acquisition, essential for effective communication in both everyday interactions and academic settings. According to Vandergrift (2007), achieving proficiency in listening comprehension is particularly demanding in foreign language learning, as it involves multiple cognitive processes, including decoding phonetic input, recognizing words, and constructing meaning in real time. Rost (2009) further defines listening as a dynamic process of decoding auditory stimuli, organizing them into recognizable lexical elements, and assigning meaning based on context and prior knowledge. This process not only involves understanding words and phrases but also requires integrating prosodic features, such as intonation and stress, which play a crucial role in conveying meaning.

In second-language pedagogy, listening is often considered the most neglected skill despite its importance. Research has shown that L2 learners typically spend more than 50% of their classroom time engaged in listening activities (Jafari & Hashim, 2015). Listening serves as a primary channel for comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985), which is crucial for language acquisition. However, many traditional methods of listening instruction focus on assessing learners' comprehension rather than on teaching effective listening strategies (Field, 2008). Thus, there is a need for innovative instructional approaches that not only assess but also actively develop learners' listening skills.

The present study will be conceptually grounded in the cognitive and psycholinguistic possibilities of second-language listening, namely Vandergrift (2007) metacognitive framework, which posits that L2 listening inherently involves an active, goal-directed process. Secondly, from Schmidt (1990) the Noticing Hypothesis is implemented as a concept to investigate how awareness of the prosodic features may contribute to more successful listening comprehension. Finally, from a perspective of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Ellis (2003) and Willis and Willis (2007), shadowing tasks can be classified as a specific type of focus on form to promote both speech perception and production. Together, these concepts provide the rationale behind the pedagogical orientation of the present study.

One such approach is Task-Based Instruction (TBI), which has gained considerable attention in recent years for its focus on meaning-centered communication. TBI involves authentic, real-world tasks that encourage learners to use language purposefully to achieve communicative goals (Ellis, 2003). Unlike traditional methods that focus on form, TBI emphasizes the use of language as an instrument for communication. Nunan (2004) claims that tasks motivate the learners to interact meaningfully, enabling the processing of both comprehension and production. By engaging in task-oriented exercises, language learners are naturally introduced to a diverse

array of linguistic functions, vocabulary, and grammatical structures, thereby enhancing their language learning experience.

Task-based instruction is particularly effective in developing listening comprehension as it exposes learners to natural language input and provides opportunities for negotiation of meaning. According to Willis (1996), TBI promotes active engagement with language through stages such as task preparation, task performance, and feedback. This cyclical process allows learners to process input, test their comprehension, and receive feedback, all of which contribute to improved listening skills.

In addition to task-based instruction, shadowing has emerged as a promising technique for enhancing listening comprehension. Initially developed for interpreter training, shadowing requires learners to repeat spoken language in real time, thereby developing auditory processing and phonological skills (Lambert, 1992). According to Kadota (2007), shadowing is not merely a receptive task but a dynamic mental process that simultaneously engages multiple brain regions involved in linguistic processing. Shadowing helps learners enhance their phonological awareness, processing speed, and overall fluency, making it an effective tool for improving listening comprehension.

Prosody shadowing, a specific type of shadowing, focuses on mimicking the rhythm, stress, and intonation of speech. In prosody shadowing, learners replicate not only the words they hear but also the prosodic features of the spoken input, which are crucial for understanding the speaker's intent and emotion (Kadota & Tamai, 2005). Prosodic features like intonation patterns and stress are often difficult for L2 learners to master, yet they are critical for effective communication. Research suggests that prosody shadowing helps learners internalize these features and apply them in real-life communication (Hamada, 2014).

Both task-based instruction and shadowing share a common goal: to enhance learners' exposure to meaningful input and foster active engagement with language. While task-based instruction focuses on creating communicative opportunities for language use, shadowing, particularly prosody shadowing, emphasizes the phonological and prosodic aspects of listening. Together, these approaches can complement each other in improving listening comprehension. Task-based embedded instruction, which integrates shadowing as part of the task cycle, offers a comprehensive approach to teaching listening, allowing learners to focus on both the semantic and prosodic features of language.

Taking the above points into account, integrating task-based instruction with prosody shadowing in listening instruction addresses the multifaceted nature of listening comprehension. These approaches promote active engagement with language, provide exposure to authentic input, and help learners develop both linguistic and phonological skills, which are essential for effective listening in an L2 context. This study explores the potential of combining these methods to enhance listening comprehension among Iranian EFL learners, focusing on how prosody shadowing can be embedded in task-based instruction to provide a more holistic approach to teaching listening.

To conclude, this study is based upon these three theoretical constructs that intersect. The task-based embedded instruction cycle (TBLT) establishes a meaningful context that demands comprehension and negotiation of meaning. Within this task-based cycle, prosody shadowing operationalizes Schmidt (1990) Noticing Hypothesis by focusing learners' attention on the suprasegmentals of the input that they might otherwise miss. We believe that awareness of prosody as it is being shadowed will benefit learners' bottom-up processing, reduce awareness of segmentations, and accelerate auditory word recognition. Furthermore, the staged task cycle includes planning, performance, and reflection; thus, it endorses the metacognitive processes identified by (Vandergrift, 2007). Learners plan the procedures they will follow for effective

listening and shadowing practice, monitor their understanding and production during the task, and assess their experience based on the task outcome. Overall, this integrated intervention aims to establish a virtuous cycle through task engagement leading to noticing, with the metacognitive management supporting the two processes.

## Previous Studies

In recent years, a significant body of research has emerged, examining the impact of different instructional techniques on the listening comprehension of second-language learners. Shadowing, task-based instruction, and their integration have been particularly prominent in studies focused on enhancing listening and speaking skills. This section reviews relevant studies that have investigated the impacts of shadowing and task-based instruction on listening comprehension in EFL contexts, highlighting their potential and limitations.

According to Hamada (2021), prosody shadowing has been shown to enhance learners' understanding of rhythm and intonation patterns, resulting in improved comprehension accuracy. In a related study, (Yavari & Shafiee, 2019) stated that task-based shadowing tasks led to greater attentional focus and fluency in intermediate EFL learners. Lastly, El Moussaoui (2025) highlighted how embedding shadowing activities within meaning-focused tasks can be beneficial for both auditory processing and pronunciation accuracy. Collectively, these studies provide sound empirical evidence for the use of prosody shadowing in instruction that is designed around tasks.

Shadowing, especially prosody shadowing, has been explored in several studies as an effective technique for improving listening skills. Tamai (1997) conducted a comparative study of shadowing and dictation techniques in Japanese EFL classrooms. The findings revealed that learners who practiced shadowing showed significantly better improvement in listening proficiency than those who followed traditional dictation exercises. Tamai suggested that shadowing provides learners with faster, more immediate feedback on their phonological processing, thereby increasing fluency in recognizing and responding to auditory input.

Building on these findings, Hamada (2014) explored the use of shadowing for Japanese learners of English, with a focus on pre-shadowing and post-shadowing tasks. The results indicated that both pre- and post-shadowing techniques significantly enhanced learners' listening comprehension, with notable improvements in the accuracy and speed of their auditory processing. Hamada concluded that shadowing not only improves phonological awareness but also helps learners internalize prosodic features such as stress and intonation, which are essential for understanding natural speech.

Similarly, (Zakeri, 2014) examined the connection between shadowing and listening comprehension among Iranian EFL learners. The study found a positive correlation between shadowing practice and listening comprehension skills, with students who engaged in shadowing tasks outperforming those in control groups. Additionally, Zakeri noted that shadowing also had a positive effect on learners' oral fluency, as it improved their ability to imitate native speakers' prosody and rhythm.

Task-Based Instruction (TBI) has been widely researched for its impact on language learning, particularly in enhancing listening comprehension. Ghahari and Ameri-Golestan (2014) investigated the effects of TBI on the writing and listening skills of Iranian EFL learners. The study revealed that learners who participated in task-based learning activities outperformed those taught using traditional methods, especially in listening tasks that required interaction and negotiation of meaning. The researchers concluded that task-based activities provided learners with more opportunities to engage in meaningful language use, which improved both their comprehension and production skills.

In another study, Jeon and Hahn (2000) focused on the application of task-based learning in Korean EFL classrooms. Their findings indicated that task-based activities not only enhanced listening comprehension but also fostered greater learner autonomy. By engaging in tasks that mimicked real-life communication scenarios, learners became more confident in their ability to comprehend and respond to spoken language, which in turn facilitated more effective listening comprehension.

While there is extensive research on both shadowing and task-based instruction individually, studies investigating their combination remain relatively scarce. One notable exception is Amoli and Ghanbari (2013), who explored the integration of conversational shadowing and task-based instruction in Iranian EFL learners. The study found that learners who received a combination of shadowing and task-based instruction showed greater improvement in listening comprehension compared to those who received either technique in isolation. The researchers argued that shadowing helped learners internalize phonological features, while task-based activities provided the context for applying those features in meaningful communication.

While shadowing and task-based instruction have been widely studied for their individual effects on listening comprehension, there is still a significant gap in the literature regarding the integration of prosody shadowing within a task-based instructional framework. Most studies have focused on the general application of shadowing techniques or task-based activities, without investigating how prosody shadowing can be embedded within task-based instruction to target both phonological and communicative skills simultaneously. This gap in the studies is the reason for the present study, which aims to investigate the additive nature of prosody shadowing and task-based embedded instruction on the listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners. Through the exploration of this integration, the research aims to offer novel insights to facilitate and advance effective strategies for L2 listening comprehension improvement.

## 3. METHOD

### Participants

This study involved 60 female learners (n=30 per group), aged 14-25 (M=18.7, SD=3.2), who were selected from the Pardis and Simin Language Institutes in Hamadan, Iran. A two-stage sampling process was employed, with institutes selected based on managerial cooperation and participants' willingness to participate in the study. All participants were native Persian speakers with at least three years of English instruction, and none had lived abroad.

To ensure participant homogeneity, an 80-item Oxford Placement Test was administered, assessing grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension through multiple-choice and cloze formats. From an initial subset of 100 learners scoring within ±1 SD of the mean, 60 learners were included in the final sample. These 60 learners were then individually randomized to either an experimental group (n = 30) or a control group (n = 30). Although participants were drawn from the same language institutes, this individual-level randomization was implemented to ensure group equivalence while mitigating the risk of contamination. This risk was further minimized by scheduling the interventions for different sessions. The same instructor taught both groups to control for teacher-related variables. Prior to inclusion in the study, all participants provided informed consent. Data confidentiality was maintained throughout, and all procedures were conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

## Materials and Instruments

In this work, to establish the efficacy of prosody shadowing realized through task-based embedded instruction on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension skills, three stages of assessment were carried out: a proficiency test, a piloted listening pre-test, and a piloted listening post-test.

### *OPT*

The Oxford Placement Test (OPT), a widely recognized tool for determining ESL/EFL learners' language proficiency, was used in this study. The test was divided into two parts: Part A with 60 items, comprising 25 pictorial multiple-choice questions, 15 cloze text items, and 20 grammar questions; and Part B with 20 items, consisting of 10 cloze text and 10 vocabulary questions. The test duration was 50 minutes. The OPT thus contained a total of 80 items.

### *Listening Pre-test and Post-test*

To assess participants' initial listening comprehension, a researcher-designed pretest was administered prior to the treatment. The pre-test consisted of 30 items, including multiple-choice, completion, and dictation tasks, drawn from Tactics for Listening (3rd Edition, Developing) authored by (Richards, 2011). To ensure the test's reliability, it was piloted with 30 EFL learners whose proficiency levels matched those of the main sample but who were not included in the study. The reliability, calculated using Cronbach's alpha, was 0.76, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

Following the treatment, a post-test was administered to measure the participants' progress. The post-test, also consisting of 30 items, was aligned with the materials covered during the instructional phase. It included the same formats—multiple-choice, completion, and dictation—selected from the course content. The post-test had been piloted in advance, with a reliability score of 0.80 (Cronbach's alpha), confirming its suitability for measuring the learners' listening comprehension improvement.

The content validity of the tests was established through three methods: by mapping the test items to the targeted listening sub-skills, by mapping the test items to the course objectives outlined in the Tactics for Listening textbook, and by making sure that the tests were parallel in terms of test format and difficulty. Although the pre-test and post-test were parallel, we did not use the same audio passages or test items to reduce any potential practice effects.

To establish the listening pre-test and post-test's reliability, Cronbach's alpha was utilized, yielding a satisfactory level of internal consistency for both the pre-test (0.76) and the post-test (0.80), establishing the tests' reliability in assessing listening comprehension. A review of validity was determined based on expert reviews and established alignment with course materials from reputable sources (Richards, 2011). Ultimately, this validation process assures that the instruments reflect the listening comprehension abilities of Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

The resources utilized in this research comprised Tactics for Listening (3rd Edition, Developing) authored by (Richards, 2011), New Headway (Fourth Edition, Intermediate) by (Soars & Soars, 2013), in addition to a collection of animated cartoons, as well as carefully chosen authentic videos and soundtracks. Both textbooks are designed specifically for intermediate-level learners and provide content aimed at enhancing students' listening comprehension.

### Procedures

The intervention program consisted of seven 45-minute sessions conducted over three consecutive weeks, designed to incorporate prosody shadowing within a task-based embedded instruction model. Each session followed a three-stage framework:

1. **Task input:** The topic was introduced through visuals and pre-task conversations to activate prior knowledge and interest.
2. **Pedagogical task work:** Learners engaged in focused listening tasks (e.g., sorting, comparison, evaluation) appropriate to their proficiency level, with attention to both semantic and prosodic features of the input.
3. **Target task performance:** This stage featured interactive, communicative activities such as role-plays, group discussions, and prosody shadowing, where learners mimicked the intonation and rhythm from authentic listening materials.

Across the sessions, the instructor facilitated, provided feedback, and guided the learning process to encourage active participation and accurate prosodic practice. The control group received standard listening instruction of equal duration and frequency, involving passive listening followed by repetition and comprehension questions. Adherence to the prescribed instructional techniques for both groups was monitored using a session checklist.

Following proficiency screening and participant selection (as detailed in Section 3.1), a listening pre-test was administered to both groups. After the seven-session instructional period, a listening post-test was administered to all participants to measure progress.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

Descriptive statistics of the participants' pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental and control groups are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the Groups**

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | | Kurtosis | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error |
| Experimental (pre-test) | 30 | 10.00 | 17.00 | 13.8667 | 2.09652 | -.052 | .427 | -1.099 | .833 |
| Experimental (post-test) | 30 | 14.00 | 20.00 | 17.3667 | 1.79046 | -.172 | .427 | -.858 | .833 |
| Control (pre-test) | 30 | 10.00 | 17.00 | 13.8333 | 2.13482 | -.064 | .427 | -1.148 | .833 |
| Control (post-test) | 30 | 10.00 | 18.00 | 14.0333 | 2.09241 | .025 | .427 | -.909 | .833 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 30 | | | | | | | | |

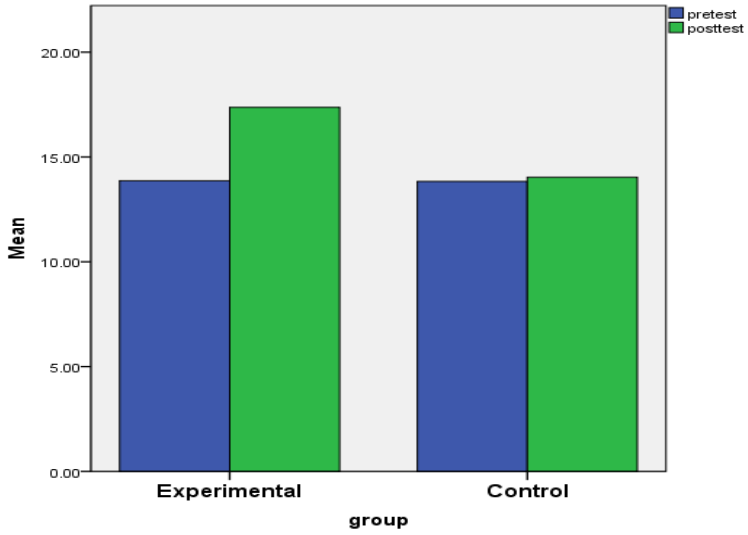


**Figure 1: The experimental and the control groups' mean scores in listening pre-test and post-test**

## Testing the Research Hypothesis

Concerning the research hypothesis, which posits that prosody shadowing through task-based embedded instruction does not significantly impact the listening comprehension abilities of Iranian intermediate EFL learners, normality assumptions were first verified. To examine the research hypotheses and to mitigate the influence of the pre-test on the students' performance in the post-test, an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted. Prior to performing the ANCOVA, the assumptions were examined to verify the quality of the analysis. These assumptions were:

1. Linearity: The relationship between the covariate (pre-test scores) and the dependent variable (post-test scores) was found to be linear in each of the groups as determined by scatter plots and correlational analyses.

2. Homogeneity of regression slopes: The interaction between the independent variable (the group) and covariate was tested and was non-significant, indicating parallelity of regression slopes across the groups.

3. Normality: Residuals from the ANCOVA model were examined for approximate normality using tests such as the Shapiro-Wilk test.

4. Homogeneity of variances: Levene's test was conducted to confirm equal variances of the dependent variable across the groups.

All assumptions were met at a satisfactory level, providing evidence for the appropriateness of ANCOVA to answer the research question. The findings of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA)**

| Dependent Variable: post-test | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared |
| Corrected Model | 359.292[a] | 2 | 179.646 | 374.970 | .000 | .929 |
| Intercept | 18.817 | 1 | 18.817 | 39.276 | .000 | .408 |
| pretest | 192.625 | 1 | 192.625 | 402.061 | .000 | .876 |
| Groups | 163.797 | 1 | 163.797 | 341.890 | .000 | .857 |
| Error | 27.308 | 57 | .479 | | | |
| Total | 15176.000 | 60 | | | | |
| Corrected Total | 386.600 | 59 | | | | |

a. R Squared = .929 (Adjusted R Squared = .927)

The ANCOVA revealed a significant effect of group on post-test scores, $F$ (1, 57) = 341.89, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .857$, indicating a large effect size. Adjusted for pretest scores, the estimated marginal mean post-test score was higher in the experimental group (M = 17.35, 95% CI [17.10, 17.61]) than the control group (M = 14.05, 95% CI [13.80, 14.30]). Therefore, the results show that there are significant differences in the mean scores of the groups on the post-test, after accounting for the potential influence of their initial knowledge as assessed by the pre-test. Hence, the research hypothesis was rejected.

## Estimated Marginal Means

Although the data in the tables point to significant differences between the mean scores of the groups on the post-test, the post-hoc comparison tests were run to compare the groups in order to check the validity of the hypothesis proposed in this study. The following tables reflect the results of such analyses.

**Table 3: Group Estimates**

| Dependent Variable: post-test | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| group | Mean | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval | |
| | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Experimental | 17.352[a] | .126 | 17.099 | 17.605 |
| Control | 14.048[a] | .126 | 13.795 | 14.301 |

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: pre-test = 13.8500.

As shown in Table 3, the estimated marginal mean score for the experimental group (17.35) was higher than that obtained by the control group (14.04).

**Table 4: Pairwise Comparisons (Bonferroni) for the Groups' Performances in the Posttest**

| Dependent Variable: post-test | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (I) group | (J) group | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig.[a] | 95% Confidence Interval for Difference[a] | |
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Experimental | Control | 3.305* | .179 | .000 | 2.947 | 3.663 |
| Control | Experimental | -3.305* | .179 | .000 | -3.663 | -2.947 |
| Based on estimated marginal means | | | | | | |

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
a. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Based on the results displayed in Table 4, the results indicate that there was a significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group (MD = 3.30, P < .05) with regard to their listening comprehension. Based on the results, it was concluded that the hypothesis might be rejected. This implied that the experimental group had outperformed the control group on the listening comprehension post-test.

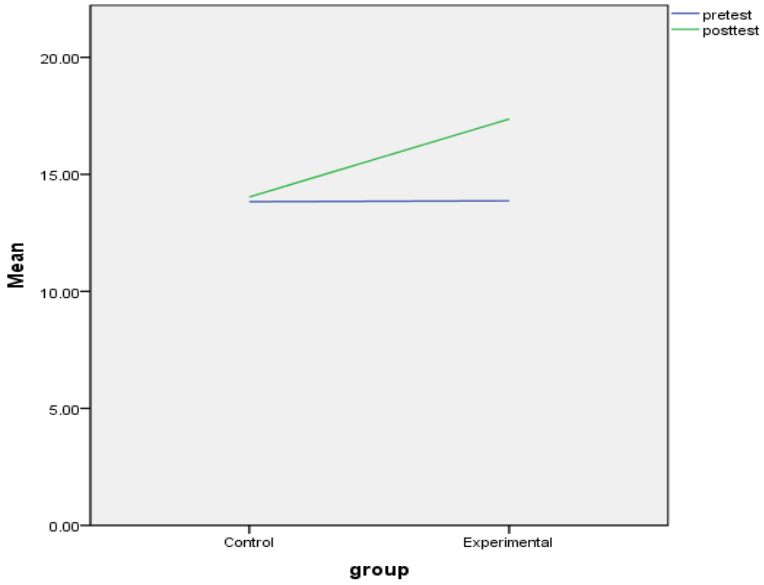


**Figure 2: The two groups' mean scores in the pre-test and the post-test**

Figure 2 indicates that the experimental group performed better in the post-test in comparison to the control group.

## Discussion

The current study investigated the influence of prosody shadowing through task-based embedded instruction on the listening comprehension capabilities of Iranian female intermediate EFL learners. Results from the statistical analysis showed a statistically significant difference in listening performance between the experimental and control groups, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. The subsequent discussion section will elaborate on these findings and situate them within the theoretical perspective and prior literature.

## Enhanced Phonological Processing through Prosody Shadowing

The experimental group's improved outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of prosody shadowing in sharpening learners' phonological processing skills. This result is consistent with the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990), which suggests that awareness and attention to language features are vital to acquisition. As the experimental group was actively imitating intonation, stress, and rhythm, they were required to notice fine-grained prosodic cues, which typically are not noticed when learners are passively listening. This active involvement likely facilitated deeper processing of auditory input, enabling better segmentation of connected speech and, consequently, improved comprehension. From a mechanistic perspective, scaffolded meta-phonological training might promote prosodic entrainment, whereby learners' perceptual systems align with the rhythm and stress patterns of second-language speech. This kind of entrainment makes auditory chunking more efficient, where prosodically meaningful units (e.g., syllable clusters, stress-timed groups) are created from the input that flows continuously. All these processes then improve bottom-up decoding and prediction, allowing learners to forecast the next phonological segment and making their pronunciation representations more robust. Our findings support Hamada (2014) and (Kadota & Tamai, 2005), who also found that shadowing, and more specifically prosody shadowing, stimulates bottom-up processing skills by enhancing auditory discrimination skills and speeding up word recognition.

## Synergistic Effects of Task-Based Embedded Instruction

The task-based embedded instructional framework contextualized prosody shadowing within a meaningful and communicative environment, which appeared to create a synergistic effect. (Ellis, 2003) suggests that tasks will promote authentic language use without intentionality while engaging learners. The three-stage structure (task input, pedagogical task work, and target task performance) supported prosody shadowing as a comprehensive focus on a communicative goal rather than a stand-alone drill. For example, in performances of role-plays or group discussions (target task performance), students needed to utilize the prosodic features they learned to effectively express meaning, emotion, and intent. This hyperlinking is consistent with a cycle of exposure, use, and reflection as presented in Willis (1996) model of TBI. The form-focused practice with shadowing within a meaning-centered framework supported both mechanical processing and interpretive processing for listening comprehension, which is not typically balanced in traditional methods and approaches.

## Fostering Metacognitive Awareness

The intervention also seemed to increase learners' metacognitive awareness of their listening processes, a major component of Vandergrift (2007) metacognitive framework. The pedagogical task work stage, which included tasks such as sorting and evaluation, required learners to reflect on their understanding and the processes they used. In addition, by drawing attention to the prosody, learners began to attend to how prosody (as suprasegmentally features) conveyed meaning — and this focus on suprasegments also influenced learners' metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness, which likely empowered them to monitor their listening efforts in the post-test in an even more strategic manner, e.g. by attending to intonation contours in order to infer a speaker's attitude. This is consistent with Vandergrift and Goh (2012), who maintain that effective listeners strategically direct their cognitive and affective resources.

### Addressing the Iranian EFL Context

The considerable gains noted among Iranian EFL learners are remarkable. Usually educated in settings with limited access to authentic speech, learners at this level often find that the English language's prosodic properties are a significant impediment to effective communication. Learning experiences that supported prosody shadowing and TBI offered learners a structured context in which to both access and practice these demanding features of English. With respect to gaps in the Iranian EFL context (Zakeri, 2014), it suggests that integrated programs such as this one can provide a meaningful opportunity in Iranian and similar EFL contexts where traditional listening lessons dominate.

### Limitations and Future Research

Although the present study yields significant insights regarding the influence of prosody shadowing through task-based embedded instruction on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension, the study has several limitations. Initially, all participant in this study were female learners, which may restrict how far the findings can be applied to male learners or environments with both genders. In addition, the research was performed in a private language school, which could vary from formal education settings such as schools or universities regarding teaching methods, student motivation, and classroom interaction. Hence, the ecological validity of the results should be taken with caution, and the observed impacts should not be regarded as completely transferable to other educational environments. Second, this study was conducted in one sociocultural and educational setting in Iran, which may be different than other EFL environments in terms of instructional methods and learners' attitudes. In addition, the extent to which these results could be generalized beyond the sociocultural and educational context from which they emanate has to be properly cautioned. Future research should examine samples with more diversity in terms of gender and use replicated research designs in other educational and cultural settings to address external validity and broaden the generalizability of the findings.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The goal of this study was to explore the effects of prosody shadowing instruction within a task-based embedded framework on the listening comprehension of Iranian intermediate EFL learners, **compared to traditional listening instruction.** The findings revealed that **this integrated approach** resulted in a statistically significant improvement in listening comprehension **compared to traditional instruction.** The study concludes that embedding prosody shadowing within a task-based framework is a valuable instructional strategy for enhancing listening comprehension outcomes. The following pedagogical implications are drawn from the findings:

1. **Embed Prosody Training in Communicative Activities:** Language program planners and teachers should look beyond traditional listening exercises. They are encouraged to weave prosodic shadowing activities into the task-based learning cycle. For example, before a role-play task, students could shadow audio models to practice the intonation and stress patterns needed for the upcoming communicative task. This ensures that prosody practice is purposeful and contextualized.
2. **Implement a Task-Based Framework for Listening:** The three-stage framework (task input, pedagogical task work, and target task performance) proved effective for systematically integrating form and meaning. Teachers should consider structuring listening lessons around this framework, where bottom-up skills (e.g., prosodic features) are developed in relation to communicative, top-down goals.

3. **Foster Metacognitive Engagement:** Instruction should **develop learners' metacognitive awareness** by encouraging them to reflect on how prosody conveys meaning. After shadowing activities, teachers can pose guiding questions such as, "How did the speaker's intonation indicate whether they were asking a question or making a statement?" **This practice fosters the metacognitive awareness essential for developing autonomous listening skills.**

Looking ahead, future research could examine the application of these approaches with more diverse learner populations over longer periods, as well as the transfer effects of such integrated instruction to other language skills, such as speaking and pronunciation. The alignment of the study's conclusions with its results supports the validity and practical usefulness of the implications for EFL practitioners and curriculum designers.

## References

Alwahibee, K. M., & Al-Mutairi, A. S. (2024). Exploring EFL teachers' views on task-based learning and English for specific purposes in Saudi Arabia. In *OSF Preprints*.

Amoli, F. A., & Ghanbari, N. (2013). The effects of conversational shadowing on enhancing Iranian EFL learners' oral performance. *Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *16*(2), 55–72.

Badr, H. M. E. A. (2022). *The effectiveness of task-based instruction on third-year secondary students' English speaking performance* The British University in Dubai].

Bhandari, B. (2024). Teachers' perspectives on task-based language teaching: Practices, strengths, and weaknesses. *SNPRC Journal*, *5*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.3126/snprcj.v5i1.83465

El Moussaoui, M. (2025). Shadowing for developing EFL learners' bottom-up listening skills: A systematic review. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, *7*(4), 388–404. https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v7i4.2260

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (2009). Task-based language teaching: Sorting out the misunderstandings. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *19*(3), 221–246. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.2009.00231.x

Field, J. (2008). *Listening in the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press.

Ghahari, S., & Ameri-Golestan, A. (2014). The impact of blended teaching methods on Iranian EFL learners' writing performance. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, *18*(3), 1–17.

Hamada, Y. (2014). Shadowing: Who benefits and how? *Journal of Asia TEFL*, *11*(2), 31–55.

Hamada, Y. (2021). Shadowing procedures in teaching and their future. *The Language Teacher*, *45*(6), 32–36. https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTTLT45.6-3

Hamouda, A. (2013). An investigation of listening comprehension problems encountered by Saudi students. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, *2*(2), 113–155.

Jafari, K., & Hashim, F. (2015). A study on the effects of listening comprehension problems on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension skills. *English Language Teaching*, *8*(5), 121–128. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n5p121

Jeon, I., & Hahn, J. (2000). Exploring EFL teachers' perceptions of task-based language teaching. *Asian EFL Journal*, *2*(1), 1–16.

Kadota, S. (2007). *Shadowing as a language learning strategy*. Cosmopier Publishing.

Kadota, S., & Tamai, K. (2005). *Shadowing: Let's speak with the brain!* Cosmopier Publishing.

Keo, V., Lan, B., Rouet, W., Roeun, S., & Ron, S. (2024). Optimizing English teaching strategies: A comprehensive review of task-based language teaching, content and language integrated learning, and problem-based learning for modern classrooms. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research*, *2*(5), 407–432. https://doi.org/10.59890/x6cpxs15

Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. Longman.

Lambert, S. (1992). Shadowing. *Meta: Translators' Journal*, *37*(2), 263–273. https://doi.org/10.7202/003378ar

Littlewood, W. (2004). The task-based approach: Some questions and suggestions. *ELT Journal*, *58*(4), 319–326. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/58.4.319

Maftuna, Y., & Sohib, E. R. (2024). Analyzing task-based writing approaches: Global perspectives and practices. *European International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Management Studies*, *4*(2), 66–81.

Murphy, J. (2003). Task-based learning: The interaction between tasks and learners. *ELT Journal*, *57*(4), 352–360. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/57.4.352

Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*. Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667336

Rakhimova, S. (2024). Enhancing receptive skills in foreign language learning: The interplay of reading and listening comprehension. *The American Journal of Social Science and Education Innovations*, *6*(8), 38–56. https://doi.org/10.37547/tajssei/Volume06Issue08-04

Richards, J. C. (2011). *Tactics for listening: Developing*. Oxford University Press.

Rost, M. (2009). *Teaching and researching listening*. Pearson Education.

Sarem, S. N., Omidikia, H., & Lotfi, A. H. (2024). The effects of supplemental blended learning on listening comprehension in Iranian EFL learners. *Journal of English Language Pedagogy and Practice*, *17*(2). https://doi.org/10.71586/jal.2024.12161193651

Schmidt, R. W. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, *11*(2), 129–158. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/11.2.129

Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford University Press.

Soars, J., & Soars, L. (2013). *New Headway: Intermediate*. Oxford University Press.

Tamai, K. (1997). *Shadowing as a listening strategy*. Cosmopier Publishing.

Vandergrift, L. (2007). Recent developments in L2 listening comprehension research. *Language Teaching*, *40*(3), 191–210. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444807004338

Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. C. M. (2012). *Teaching and learning second language listening: Metacognition in action*. Routledge.

Willis, J. (1996). *A framework for task-based learning*. Longman.

Willis, J., & Willis, D. (2007). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Yao, C., Kanjanakate, S., & Jantharajit, N. (2024). Enhancing ESL learners' executive function and cognitive ability: A hybrid approach of situated learning and task-based language teaching. *Australian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *7*(2), 1522–1532. https://doi.org/10.29140/ajal.v7n2.1522

Yavari, F., & Shafiee, S. (2019). Effects of shadowing and tracking on intermediate EFL learners' oral fluency. *International Journal of Instruction*, *12*(1), 869–884.

Zakeri, E. (2014). The relationship between shadowing and listening comprehension ability of Iranian EFL learners. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World*, *6*(3), 98–113.