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Kindergarten English Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Listening Strategies, Assessment strategies And the Obstacles They Face

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United Arab Emirates University

College of Education

Department of Curriculum and Methods of Instruction

KINDERGARTEN ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF
TEACHING LISTENING STRATEGIES, ASSESSMENT
STRATEGIES AND THE OBSTACLES THEY FACE

Ghada Yahya Abdul Razzaq Al Kilani

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education (Curriculum and Instruction)

Under the Supervision of Dr. Sadiq Ismail

November 2016

Declaration of Original Work

I, Ghada Yahya Abudl Razzaq Al Kilani the undersigned, a graduate student at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), and the author of this thesis entitled "*Kindergarten English Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Listening Strategies, Assessment Strategies and the Obstacles they Face*", hereby, solemnly declare that this thesis is my own original research work that has been done and prepared by me under the supervision of Dr. Sadiq Ismail, in the College of Education at UAEU. This work has not previously been presented or published, or formed the basis for the award of any academic degree, diploma or a similar title at this or any other university. Any materials borrowed from other sources (whether published or unpublished), and relied upon or included in my thesis have been properly cited and acknowledged in accordance with appropriate academic conventions. I further declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, data collection, authorship, presentation and/or publication of this thesis.

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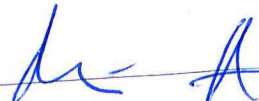
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Abstract

Education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has received great interest with respect to the best practices of twenty first century teaching and learning. The aim has been to adapt worldwide used methods in education. As a result Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC) attracted English native speakers of language to support ADEC's vision. The focus of this thesis is ADEC kindergarten English teachers' perceptions of teaching listening strategies used to help English as foreign language (EFL) learners in practicing listening activities. The main purpose is to identify the tools and approaches involved in delivering these strategies and the forms of assessment in children's listening comprehension, along with determining possible challenges and obstacles facing kindergarten teachers while applying these strategies in their classrooms. A structured questionnaire was used as an instrument in collecting the required data from a target sample of participants. The questions of the survey were proposed and grouped in line with the research questions and the objectives of this study for investigating the types of listening strategies in use and possible factors limiting the applications of these strategies. The collected questionnaire was (Q=198) KG English teachers in Al-Ain Educational Zone. The results generated revealed that the best strategies commonly used by kindergarten teachers in listening were incorporated songs and clapping as attention-getting signals, in addition to performing body movements as a reaction to simple instructions that were given by the teacher. Commonly used assessments by teachers were mainly observations of children to check their listening comprehension and their level of following instructions and answering questions related to a listening activity. Finally, the results demonstrated that those kindergarten students who had not previously been exposed to English communication experience (hearing, listening, speaking, etc.) during pre-kindergarten schooling faced difficulties in listening activities and that a lack of parents support and not having a teaching assistant to help with the cultural gap between the English native teachers and their kindergarten students were also significant.

Keywords: Kindergarten education, ADEC kindergarten system, English as foreign language, teaching listening strategies, assessment tools, teaching EFL, UAE.

Title and Abstract (in Arabic)

تصورات معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في رياض الأطفال حول طرق تدريس استراتيجيات الاستماع، وطرق التقييم والعقبات التي يواجهونها

الملخص

أظهرت دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة اهتماما كبيرا في أفضل الممارسات المستخدمة في طرق التدريس في القرن الواحد والعشرين. وحاولت تكييف تلك الأساليب المستخدمة عالميا على نطاق واسع في جذب معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية من حول العالم. وقد أنشئ مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم من أجل تطبيق هذه الممارسات، وخلق الفرص الأفضل للطلاب، وعليه كان المعلمين الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أم في محل دعم للخطط المستقبلية المرسومة لتحقيق أفضل الممارسات والوصول لأفضل الأهداف. وتهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى دراسة أفضل الطرق التي يقوم بها معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم في بتدريس مهارة الاستماع في مرحلة رياض الأطفال وكذلك طرق التقييم التي يتبعونها داخل الصفوف، وتبحث كذلك عن التحديات والعقبات التي يواجهها هؤلاء المعلمين. وقد قامت الباحثة بتصميم واستخدام استبيان قد استهدف 198 معلمة لغة إنجليزية في مدارس رياض الأطفال التابعة لمكتب العين التعليمي. يبحث الاستبيان المستخدم في ثلاث أجزاء أولا عن أفضل الطرق التي يتم بها تدريس مهارة الاستماع للأطفال من وجهة نظر المدرسين الأجانب، ثانيا الطرق والوسائل التي يتم من خلالها تقييم الاستماع لدى الأطفال، وثالثا الصعوبات التي يواجهها المعلمون في صفوف رياض الأطفال باعتبارهم من متعلمي اللغة الأجنبية. وقد أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن أكثر الاستراتيجيات شيوعا التي يستخدمها معلمو رياض الأطفال ارتبطت بالأغاني والتصفيق كإشارة للحصول على انتباه الأطفال إضافة إلى حركات جسدية كرد فعل للتعليمات البسيطة التي أعطيت من قبل المعلم. أما بالنسبة للنتائج التي تظهر أفضل طرق التقييم لمهارة الاستماع فكانت بإتباع الإرشادات المعطاة من قبل المعلمين والإجابة عن الأسئلة المتعلقة بأنشطة الإستماع. وأخيرا فقد أظهرت النتائج أن أكثر المشاكل شيوعا خلال تدريس مهارة الاستماع فكانت ضعف الحصيلة اللغوية السابقة للطلاب، إذ أن هؤلاء الأطفال لم يتعرضوا للغة الإنجليزية خلال مرحلة ما قبل رياض الأطفال، وذلك لقلة الدعم من أولياء الأمور وكذلك لعدم وجود مساعد معلم في الصفوف الدراسية للمساعدة في تضيق الفجوة الثقافية ما بين المعلمين وطلبة رياض الأطفال.

مفاهيم البحث الرئيسية: اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، رياض الأطفال، استراتيجيات التدريس،

أدوات التقييم، والصعوبات التعليمية.

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Last but not the least, I cannot find the right words to fully express my deepest love for my sister Rehab and my son and daughter who wrapped me with warm sympathy.

Dedication

To my beloved children Nasser and Alya who recharge me with a spirit of optimism and bless my life, with deep love devoted to them.

To my beloved angel Rehab who kept herself beside me during the course of my Masters study.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

Teaching a foreign language is a type of instruction strategy and an art for making acquired language proficiency by learners easier. However, the mother tongue language is the first lingual practice of a child starting learning at home and increasing vocabulary through the surrounding community. Walt Whitman (1900) put it in a poem showing that the need for words to describe objects that become a part of that child experience is part of learning.

The child enters the surrounding language by learning the names of objects and individuals accessible within the child's communication space (Ashworth, Wakefield, & Patricia, 2004). Listening, along with other language skills, is a must for interpersonal communication; thus, listening literacy plays an essential role in people lives since they listen to understand, comprehend and then respond. It is an essential form of input that allows one to communicate and be in a middle role between receptive and expressive. Knowing all of that about listening in our own language makes it easier to have a base line and a starting point for looking at the best ways to teach our kindergartener how to listen. On the other hand the question might be: 'how would listening and comprehending be if it was in a totally different and unfamiliar language'?

Although Arabic language has ranked as one of the most difficult languages to be taught and learned around the world, Bergman (2016) said that Arabic grammar and its cursive writing evoke the powerful imperial legacy of Arabic culture. It is no wonder that learning Arabic for Arabs is difficult. However, in an

Arabic-speaking sphere, the child acquires Arabic language through oral communication in his/her infancy before joining in at schools; yet, the school develops written communication along with the oral. Therefore, listening literacy and skills are easily developed within the context of a mother language.

However, Arabic-speaking children are often not familiar with English oral and written communication, because they are not often exposed to, or practiced in English language in their daily-life activities. Thus, it is believed that bilingual learning (L1 and L2) at the KG is a limitation for the KG students gaining English proficiency. In fact, acquiring English skills for children whose ages are between three and seven years old takes double the time that is being spent at school to get familiar with the input of the new language skills as listening and reading skills at first so they can produce output skills such as speaking and writing. Ashworth and Wakefield (2004) stated that:

“When young children aged three to seven who speak a home language other than English, enter an English-speaking school, they may be at risk. Suddenly the flow of comprehensible language they’ve encountered at home is unavailable and a new and incomprehensible language is substituted in its place. Understanding now becomes very difficult unless early childhood educators know how to create situations in which meaning becomes clear.”
(Ashworth and Wakefield, 2004, P-9)

Ashworth stated that our children are facing difficulties and may be at risk with the new incomprehensible language atmosphere that they suddenly enter. They may stay in this situation unless their teacher to keep them away from the risk of bad experiences in learning language, which could move up with them to the upper grades, uses a good strategy. For that teaching, listening and speaking is the first

stage of teaching EFL students by native speaking teachers. Yet, it is not an easy stage for any teacher to get early year's students to sit and listen unless s/he are able to create a better situation and use strategies to make learning more naturally.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite all the efforts that ADEC is spending in developing EFL classes, the results of the performed standardized tests still not satisfactory. It appeared that the Young Learners English (YLE) exam from Cambridge University showed low performance of the UAE during the years from 2004 and 2015. The exam aimed to measure students' level in the four skills of English between the age of 7 and 12 years old. The results showed that they were below the average especially in the listening section that is 100. The statement of results shows that those who achieved a score of 120-150 will receive the Key English Test Certificate and if they score between 100 and 119 they will receive a Cambridge English certificate stating they demonstrated ability at (Common European Framework of Reference) CEFR level A1. The CEFR is an international system that describes learners' abilities in a foreign language using six levels from A1 (the lowest) to C2 (the highest). UAE has scored throughout the years (100), which is the lowest level of the ability in using English as a foreign language. (YLE, 2016)

The main problem addressed in this study relates to the early age of children who join kindergarten for the first time and are put in a new language atmosphere that they cannot comprehend. Another problem exists at elementary and in some cases secondary grades; when young children in kindergarten move up to K-stage1 they may have been labelled as "no talent in using their listening skills" or even having average English level in other skills that should be after spending two years

studying in kindergarten level. A Grade 1 teacher in one of the schools of Al-Ain City said that her incoming students need at least a month to adjust to the language where the teacher sits and talks and tries to use different ways to draw their interest in sitting and listening to her. Usually it takes time to get familiar with the new teacher, with the other students and the language itself.

Another problem relates to the strategies used and their appropriateness for EFL children in teaching listening to the kindergarten students as foreign language learners. Whenever an EFL teacher works with children, a gap in communication will rise for many reasons, one of them being that teachers are from different backgrounds and different English speaking countries, which means each would have her/his own way of using strategies and activities to draw the interests of young children in those early ages. (Helmer and Eddy, 2003).

Another reason is that almost all the materials used in teaching are borrowed from native national curriculums and was not designed for EFL children. Some of the native English teachers at public schools at ADEC said that they usually try to use their own materials and this makes it unfair for them as well as for the children. Children could now be exposed to and experience different language levels from different teachers, a situation made even worse if those teachers fail to use effective materials and methods since each one has his/her own resources, materials and methods of teaching. The ADEC curriculum was designed in accordance with the best international standards, with a child-centred learning environment and with logical thinking and problem solving where teachers should design their resources based on teacher's understanding of their children needs. (ADEC, 2016)

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of the strategies they use in teaching listening to kindergarten children. A second purpose is to identify and explore the tools that teachers use to assess KG children's listening ability and finally the intention is to explore the obstacles that teachers face while teaching listening. Specifically, the study aims to:

- a) Investigate the teaching strategies used by teachers when teaching listening skills to kindergarten children.
- b) Investigate the strategies used by English teachers when assessing listening skills of kindergarten children.
- c) Investigate the obstacles–encountered by teachers when teaching listening skill to kindergarten children.

1.4 Research Questions

Acquiring good listening skills is an essential–base for good language learning. The questions that the study will address are:

- a) What are the teaching strategies that kindergarten English teachers perceive to use when teaching listening?
- b) What are the assessment strategies that kindergarten teachers perceive to use in assessing listening?
- c) What are the obstacles that kindergarten teachers perceive when teaching listening?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study aims to focus on the importance of teaching listening skills to younger children as a first stage in acquiring a foreign language. The results of the study and the findings will hopefully be of value to ADEC, teachers, parents and students themselves. According to the knowledge of the researcher, there was only one study that focused on the groups age however it aimed to investigate interactions between pedagogical documentation as a formative assessment techniques and an instructional intervention design to increase students learning by recording their experiences and that of their families and teachers in the UAE. The result of the Buldu (2010) study showed that a learning and teaching process using formative assessment techniques and instructional intervention designed to increase students learning added to teachers awareness of learning processes and also helped families to develop a better understanding of the learning process in their children's education. That is why this current study is considered to fill in a gap for this young age group and the strategies of teaching and assessing listening skill in kindergarten, so it can be considered the first step for subsequent studies to be developed in future.

ADEC intentions for the coming years towards Emirati teachers are that they should develop a high quality of teaching skills in interactive classes. This means teachers should have a “scaffolding model” to learn from what works the best with English teachers. New ADEC Curriculum incorporates the best practice strategies that English teachers use. Student teachers as trainees are going to learn from the experienced class teachers what works best and will apply it through ADEC Elementary schools as a first step.

Kindergarten students are going to interact and have confidence during listening skill activities and enjoy learning with fun. As for parents who are a key element in the learning process, they will be involved as a factor in progression of the students' learning. To sum up, the study will help the younger students to become an excellent bilingual generation by helping teachers, parents and students master the way they listen and interact.

1.7 Limitations

This study was done in Al-Ain office kindergartens only. It did not reach other kindergartens through Abu-Dhabi Educational council sector. It targeted only listening skills of English as a foreign language and not any other skills. Therefore the study's findings are limited to the same context of Al Ain kindergarten only and not necessarily generalizable.

1.8 Definition of Terms

EFL learners: English as foreign language learners

Silent period: According to (Chomsky, 1965) (Krashen and Asher, 1982) The silent period hypothesis is the idea that when a language is learned, there should be a period in which the learner is not expected to actively produce any language. This is based on observations of a listening period in infants when they learn a first language.

Perception: A belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem. (Perception, N.D)

Listening Strategies: a careful plan or method to get towards a goal (British Council)

Listening comprehension: It is a child's ability to understand the meaning of the words he hears and to relate to them in some way (all about learning)

Cognitive: being, or involving conscious intellectual activity (as thinking, reasoning, or remembering)

TPR: Total Physical Response, According to (Asher, 1982) it is based on the theory that memory is enhanced through association with physical movement where children respond physically to commands. (Teaching approaches)

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss information about the meaning of listening and listening strategies, how people look at listening skill and the importance of listening among the other language skills.

Chapter Two is divided into sections as follows, **i)** The first section reviews the theoretical background of listening issues, **ii)** Section two discusses the importance that listening plays in the acquisition of a second and foreign language learning, **iii)** Section three addresses listening integration with other language skills, **iv)** the fourth section deals with language learning in early years, **v)** The fifth section presents the most common listening strategies that teachers use in their classes, **vi)** Sixth section discusses assessment techniques that teachers may use with kindergartners, **vii)** Section seven discusses possible difficulties that teachers face while teaching listening to kindergartener, and **viii)** Section eight presents some studies within the UAE context in teaching listening. The chapter will end with a summary.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Most educational theories address and encompass the best ways of learning a language as a whole whether the mother tongue or any other second language. However, only a few of them govern oral language acquisition. This section concerns the theoretical background to foreign oral language acquisition drawn by the type of theory whether it relates to learning a second language or both languages.

2.2.1 Theories of Learning

Three main theories engage with language learning: Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, Piaget's Schema theory and innatism theory. These theories focus on oral skills learning in which and all of them shared the notion that second language development is similar to first language development.

2.2.1.1 Social Constructivism Theory

It is a combination of behaviourist and innate theories, however it suggests that language acquisition and development are founded upon the fact that babies learn language from imitating their parents (behaviour), and then they also learn to speak the language that their parents are speaking (innate).

Vygotsky (1978) assumed that oral language development is influenced by a number of important factors. He thinks that language is constructed through meaningful interactions with others and is also engaged with a number of important factors that are social, physical, linguistic and cognitive. According to Vygotsky, the social environment surrounding a child is the key to the time involved for language acquisitions since a child learns language through interaction with others. Vygotsky (1978) also presented the important notion of how students who have been given tasks that are too difficult for them as "individuals" to accomplish alone can work most effectively when socialising with others.

Vygotsky's Zone Proximal Development: It is defined by Vygotsky (1978) as the distance between the actual level of the learner and the potential level. He said that teaching based on students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) means that the provided tasks, materials and the pedagogical strategies utilized for learners, particularly at the kindergarten stage, should be designed based on their actual levels

as determined by teachers although it is a little bit challengeable in order to achieve development. In other words, the tasks, the materials and the strategies must be challengeable but achievable at the same time.

Vygotsky's Scaffolding Theory: It means the kinds of support provided for learners during the learning process (Vygotsky, 1978). This support could be diverse according to the learner's levels such as teachers who are considered as a type of support when they act as guiders and facilitators rather than instructors. Moreover, the types of materials and pedagogical strategies delivered to the learners, such as authentic materials, are deemed to be a kind of support as they facilitate the learning process. Parents, from another side, can also support their children in their learning process through a social interaction process (Vygotsky, 1978).

2.2.1.2 Piaget's Schema Theory

Human cognition is not discussed without starting with the numerous works on the early stages of cognition. Although criticized, Piaget is still the one who planted the seeds of constructivism.

Piaget's cognitive theory of learning has three components; the first one is the *schema* or units in which each unit of the learners' brain connects to one aspect of the world. It could be explained that children need to activate their prior knowledge from the world in order to build up new knowledge. A child in early school years needs to recall experiences; existing schemas, which assist in understanding the coming, input to reach a state of cognitive or mental balance (Yilmaz, 2011). The schema theory illustrated the importance of listening comprehension as an active cognitive process in which the learners are processing the provided input (listening materials) based on the ways utilized in line with their

prior knowledge. In that way their listening comprehension will be built up in a cognitive constructive way (Vandergrift, 2007). The second component is the process that enables them to move from one stage to another by assimilation, equilibration and accommodation. These three parts of the second components are like the stages the child goes through in a familiar situation that he has the experience to deal with, however if he faces a new situation in which there is no past experience then he will go under the second stage when he will try to adjust, drawing upon any units he has. At last he will reach the accommodation level when he totally deals with this new situation and reaches the cognition level. The third and last component consists of the four stages of child cognition. These four stages of Piaget are: sensorimotor stage, preoperational stage, concrete stage and the formal operational stage that starts from age 12 onwards. Knowing these stages will help teachers present the most appropriate tasks to their students (Wood, Smith & Grossniklaus, 2011)

2.2.1.3 Innatism Theory

The innate theory started with Noam Chomsky (1965) who argued that the language acquisition is a natural process for human beings in which language is an innate structure for human brain. Innatism gave rise to the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) which is a part of the brain that enables all children to grasp language naturally, and children being exposed for the first time to the new language utilise a silent period just to get familiar with the language as a thinking process in the brain until they can respond to the language.

Chomsky (1965) based his argument on several factors: first that mastering a language happens in the first ten years and it's hard for it to happen later. Secondly, a child does not need a trigger to begin language acquisition, it just happens and it is

not necessary to teach the child to learn the language it is enough for him to be engaged in the environment. Another factor is that a child's language does not need to be corrected, as the child will keep making the same mistakes until he by himself corrects it.

2.2.1.4 Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis

Krashen (1982) offered the second language acquisition theory, incorporating five hypotheses including: the acquisition- learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis. Away from the other four hypotheses, the input hypothesis focused on the kind of input provided for children in order to serve in language understanding before production time. It happens with extensive exposure to the target language that is consistent with the learners' levels (Krashen, 1982).

Based on that, listening is considered as an input-based skill in which learners are being exposed to the oral language through using aural authentic materials. Thus, it will help in acquiring the language naturally through processing the listening materials as a kind of input in a schematic way. Krashen confirmed what Chomsky (1965) stated that language cannot really be taught but it only happens when teachers create conditions which help in developing language in the learners' minds.

On the basis of what has been stated before, the first step in any lesson is to create the perfect motivating place for the students (Ashworth and Wakefield, 2004), in other words the wise early childhood teacher knows how to create an atmosphere in which children's experiences outside school are valued and talked about, where their ideas and comments are listened to with respect. Ashworth and Wakefield

(2004) assured that a well-created classroom contributes to encouraging second language acquisition and it should be viewed as a place where students can easily be exposed to the input they need for language acquisition.

2.2.1.5 Asher's Total Physical Response (TPR) Approach

Following Krashen's perspectives (1982) regarding the importance of providing extensive input for learners until they feel they are ready to produce the language naturally, the period that the learners spend in processing and understanding the provided input is called the silent period.

Asher (1982) confirmed in his approach (Total Physical Response) that the teachers play the role of facilitators, providing a kind of learning scaffolding through utilizing listening materials and interacting with the learners by delivering commands. Then the learners illustrate their comprehension regarding the listening input through their physical responses. This is the so-called silent stage in which learner does not produce spoken language, the only reaction being to show their understanding by body movement.

2.2.2 Using Aural Authentic Materials

The utilization of authentic materials in the EFL classroom, particularly for the kindergarten stage will help children to be exposed realistically to the target language, so their understanding of the target language will become more effective, real and experiential (Rogers & Medley, 1988). There are different kinds of authentic materials, especially for the kindergarten stage, that reflect the real usage of the target language, such as songs, stories, pictures, animated movies, puppet plays and videos.

Different studies have shown the importance of using authentic materials to develop listening comprehension. For example, a doctoral thesis conducted in the United States of America by Thanajaro in 2000 examined the influences of aural authentic materials on listening ability in students of English as a second language. Two groups of students passed through the experiment, one came to the USA with his family while the other came to continue their academic study. The results of the study showed that using authentic materials in an ESL classroom helped increase student's comfort level and their self-confidence for listening to the target language.

Another study carried out by Arevalo (2010) focussed on examining the use of songs as authentic materials in EFL classes. Six workshops were implemented in a university in Tunja in which different songs are used for the students. The study's findings showed that practicing listening with songs helped in improving the students' comprehension of the language usage.

It can be suggested that the use of authentic materials would be very effective in language learning if carefully selected to fit the learners' levels and if it is incorporated as a kind of scaffolding to support learners' understanding and to build up the target language in a constructive way.

2.3 Definition of Listening

Listening is deemed to be a critical component in foreign language learning. It is not only a hearing process, but also an active and constructive process. Listening defined by Tyagi (2013) as a process that "involves an active involvement of an individual. Listening involves a sender, a message and a receiver. It is the psychological process of receiving, attending to constructing meaning from and responding to spoken and/or non verbal messages" (p. 1). Based on that, listening is

one of the pillars that assists in understanding the second language and supports the improvement of other skills (speaking, reading and writing) through receiving sounds, trying to understand and interpret them, remembering, recalling those sounds and responding (Tyagi, 2013).

Rost (2013) defined the term listening as a complex process that allows us to understand spoken language. Listening is an active process of receiving and responding to spoken (and sometimes unspoken) language. According to the abovementioned definitions, it can be noted that listening depends on processing the perceived messages in which interaction occurs within the listeners themselves in order for them to respond appropriately.

2.4 The Significance of Listening in Language Learning

Listening is the essence of language learning in which other language skills are dependent. It is the first language skill that comes before speaking, reading and writing (Cook, 2006). It is a kind of input to which learners must be exposed in order to serve in understanding and producing the language (Nation, 2008). Morley (2001) argued that listening is the most important skill for language learning because it is the most widely used language skill in normal daily life.

Language learning starts with finding the perfect status for acquiring it naturally just like the first language; “We cannot really teach a language: we can only create conditions under which it will develop in the mind in its own way” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). Listening is a constructive process in which information processing occurs during message reception. Thus, it helps in activating the learners’ prior knowledge through connecting what they have in their own repertoire of knowledge with what they are hearing (Nunan, 1997).

2.5 Integrating Listening with other Language Skills

The four language skills are entwined with one another and working together helps in building up the language in a meaningful way. However, dealing with the four skills in an isolated way means the language will lose its constructive essence in learning (Hinkel, 2006). Listening and reading are the input-based skills in which learners are introduced to the targeted language in a way that leads them to deeply think of the language in a comprehensible, interpretive and cognitive way. Hence, their repertoire in the targeted language is continuously nurtured and improved naturally. Therefore, this will serve in developing the output-based skills (speaking and writing) in which the time of producing the language takes place based on the amount and kind of input to which the learners are exposed (Nation, 2008).

2.5.1 Listening with Reading

Listening and reading skills work together as provided input for learners to understand language usage. Therefore, the connection between the written form and the aural one will be easily constructed, particularly, for children. The best technical way to teach young children is to involve them in activities that maximize children's focus on sounds, rhythms, and phonics.

Children can learn a language more easily through reading with them in an attractive and funny way. For example, Swafford (2012) used digital stories to improve listening comprehension with Spanish young learners of English with a study on a group of 6-years-old Spanish learners using a quasi-experimental method in six state schools in Madrid with two groups of students; the results indicate that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the final test.

Moreover, Kultlu and Aslanglu (2009) claimed that the two basic learning outcomes that a Turkish lesson aims to develop in students are comprehension (reading, listening and visual comprehension skills) and narration skills (writing and speaking). Two hundred sixty five students in the 5th grade from four private schools participated in the research. Students answered a questionnaire, then completed in-class listening tasks to determine listening activity in classroom, then engaged in an out-class listening tasks. The finding showed a positive correlation with the numbers of books that students have to read during the month whether it was in class or out of the classroom. It can be indicated that both reading and listening are kinds of inputs in which they serve in building up knowledge of language before it is produced communicatively.

2.5.2 Listening with Speaking

Although listening can be integrated with other learning skills such as speaking and writing, when combining listening with oral responses among young class students, different aspects should be taken into account, for example the kinds of listening materials, the age of learners, and how learners react. A German study was carried out by Asher (1982) in which children spent sixteen hours of listening without any kind of responses. In this study, children were supposed to react with movement of the body when giving them more complex oral stimulation; and after the estimated time, students pressed the instructor to let them speak. The researcher noted that reaction to the mastering of listening comprehension and it was time to transfer to speaking and other skills. One of the most important findings was that if the instructor continued focusing on listening comprehension of new materials it would lead to gains in other language skills, especially the skill of speaking.

Nation (2009) confirmed the importance of listening as a kind of input to build language comprehension and build up the communicative situation in a meaningful way. An Ukrainian study was conducted by Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) in which a workshop was set up focusing on teaching speaking through listening. Twenty-five elementary EFL teachers participated in different online courses, showing how speaking can be integrated with listening in a skilful and professional way and answering surveys regarding the effectiveness of integration. The results of this study illustrated how teachers' attitudes regarding the integration were positive and stressed the importance of creating suitable tools to enhance oral/aural abilities. So in order to make the speaking skill more constructive and productive, the learners should develop their listening skill to achieve a meaningful and comprehensible language.

2.6 Language Learning in Early Years

The effect of age had different effects in second language learning so that the time or period that learners are exposed to the second language influences the progress of acquiring a second language. Munoz (2010) confirmed that learning a foreign language for children was influenced by the settings for the language and the amount of exposed input. Listening as a kind of input-based skill must be improved in a way that helps learners to understand the language more meaningfully.

Different studies confirmed that children in language learning are faster than adults, especially in relation to the communicative naturalistic side of the language (Munoz, 2010). Nassaji & Fotos (2011) stated that children learn the communicative and real aspect of a foreign language without focusing cognitively on how the

language works, while adults tend to cognitively learn the linguistic characteristics of the language to greater extent more than young learners.

Krashen (1983) confirmed the importance of exposure at an early age when languages are acquired naturally and incidentally. This is what is called the silent period in which the learners should be exposed to extensive comprehensible input through listening and reading, as kinds of input-based skills, until the time is appropriate for production. (Krashen,1983). Children at the kindergarten stage are still in the silent period in which they need to take their time to process input comprehensibly until their time of pushing outwards is achieved.

A study was carried out by Habeeb (2013) in Kuwait, was investigating kindergarten teachers' perceptions towards implementing English as a foreign language at the kindergarten stage. A total number of 631 surveys were collected from thirty kindergartens in five different districts. The findings demonstrated that the majority of teachers' perceptions agreed about starting teaching English at an early stage.

2.7 Pedagogical Strategies for Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension as an independent skill in language learning has become central after a significant debate in the second language about its importance. Abdalhamid (2012) stated that in the seventies there were more attention was directed to listening comprehension, and listening moved from being a secondary and incidental way of learning a language to become one of the most important skills that has to be taught with care.

According to Goss (1982) listening comprehension is a mental process in which listeners attempt to construct meaning out of the information received from the speakers. Vandergrift (2011) confirmed the abovementioned definition of listening comprehension as a metacognitive process in which processing the provided input in the learners' brains in order to shape the meaning in a comprehensible way through the application of both the bottom-up and top-down strategies.

Actually, listening comprehension is a complex process as Lund (1991, p. 201) stated, "Listening exists in time, rather than space, it is ephemeral in nature...the sound system of the language poses a significant problem". Based on that, there are different obstacles that many listeners, particularly EFL learners, face when dealing with listening materials. Osada (2004) mentioned that the main problems that may learners encounter in listening are: the control of the spoken language speed, sounds confusion, limited vocabulary repertoire, inability to recognize the meaning of words, lack of contextual knowledge and the lack of concentration in a foreign language.

Developing listening comprehension, particularly among children, needs diverse strategies and techniques. For instance, a study was carried out in Colombia by Gaspar, Lean and Barrios (2016) investigating the effect of using warming-up activities on the listening comprehension of elementary school learners through a project designed by the researchers. 26 fourth grade students were selected to participate. The warming up strategies used were auditory resources including recording, songs and activities focused on spoken instruction. Observation was used to collect data during the implementation stage of the project. The results showed

that using warming up strategies assisted in improving the students listening comprehension and they were motivated and less anxious while practicing the listening skills.

Another study was carried out by Buritica (2012) focusing on developing listening comprehension skills through using the predictable book strategy for the fifth grade EFL students in Colombia (predictable books are used with young learners with repetition and rhyming that can tell the children what will be said without reading sentences and through pictures.) Cunningham, 2010. Visual aids, games, gestures, body language and TPR (Total Physical Response) were used as strategies to stimulate participants' listening skills. Thirty-seven students participated, nineteen of them being female and the remainder male. The data collection tools used in the study was conducting observation, interview with the homeroom teacher and the used materials for documents analysis. The results showed that TPR activities served as useful pre-listening techniques based on students' reaction to the activities. Moreover, the used visual aids simplified vocabulary recognition. In addition, the use of games helped in reducing students' anxiety and practicing targeted grammatical structure in an effective way. The use of predictable book contributed to listening comprehension and in which it helped students to focus their attention on listening tasks.

Listening skill is not something that can be fully refined in a half-hour lesson many times a week, or through listening to tapes. Listening is the language skill used most in life and so needs to be a central focus- all day, every day, limited only by the availability of the target language in school, the community and media. Morley also indicated that listening instruction needs to include both two-ways interactive

listening activities and one-way reactive ‘listening and doing’ activities. Materials developers should pay careful attention to the principles of good design, communicative outcomes, language functions, language processes and affective considerations. (Morley, 2001)

Akcen (2002) completed a two year qualitative study between 2000 and 2002. The data was collected from two classes in first grade (German, French) for seven months with on-site observation, video and audio/ tapping, and interviews. It was aimed at finding effective teaching strategies that improved students’ oral second language skill. The study identified two types of teaching strategy which are: 1) analytic teaching which focuses on the form of the target language, vocabulary, pronunciation, and 2) experiential teaching that focuses on the use of the target language in a contextualized and interactive way. Accordingly, listening comprehension can be constructed depending on the age of the learners, kinds of strategies implemented in the class, period of exposure to the language and kinds of used materials.

2.8 Assessment Techniques for Listening Comprehension

Assessing listening comprehension needs strategic tools in order to be implemented in an accurate and constructive ways, bearing in mind that listening is a very complex skill. Based on the aforementioned studies, there are different teaching strategies used in listening comprehension using them as assessment tools, such as observation or games as types of formative assessment. For example, a study was conducted in Taiwan by Chan (2006) investigating elementary school EFL teachers’ beliefs and practices in relation to multiple assessment strategies for listening skills. The research design was quantitative and a questionnaire was used including a self-

report likert scale, multiple choice and open-ended questions. 520 elementary EFL teachers were selected randomly to participate in the study. The main finding revealed that most EFL teachers used in their listening assessment techniques observation, paper and pencil test and task based assessment.

In another research study, Adelman (2012) indicated that it is the teachers' role to be able to hear and see if a student makes an effort to understand through attention and sensitiveness to the spoken text by examining the information and being able to answer questions and give responses to given instructions for example.

2.9 Difficulties in Teaching Listening

Some difficulties may challenge teachers while they are teaching listening in the classroom and other difficulties relate to the students themselves. For example, EFL learners don't have enough exposure to the target language outside the classroom, and it is difficult for teachers to control or balance the use of the target language inside and outside the classroom.

English language teachers come from many different countries around the world, using different accents such as South American, South African, Australian, British and Middle Eastern. They don't necessarily convey a 'natural' English language accent, which can be used as a bridge between teachers and the listeners. Having different accents especially when teachers may change moved from one class to another makes it hard for children to adjust the new accent they hear. This would hinder and work as a barrier for the students to understand the new different accent they hear. The number of students in a classroom could also cause confusion for both teachers' control and students' understanding. The quality of selected teaching

materials as mentioned before will also influence other factors, particularly when teachers makes poor selections of the material used for listening.

Wei-Pei employed a study in (2008) investigating the methods that teachers use when they teach English language to young learners. A questionnaire and semi-structured interview were carried out in Taiwanese primary schools in which one hundred and sixty six participants answered the questionnaire about approaches used in teaching, the resources used and their perceptions. The results showed that the core problem here was poor selection of materials, these being contextually inappropriate to the EFL learners. Therefore, it is impacted on the teachers' performances in their classrooms.

Another study that was conducted in a Kuwaiti contexts to examine the perceptions of Kuwaiti KG schoolteachers and parents and the curriculum in an attempt to identify areas that needed to be improved and to help with overcoming the difficulties of teaching children oral language. The study targeted 12 KG teachers who speak Arabic language as their first language. The data from observation and questionnaires was collected in 2010-2011 and showed that children developed skills in reading, writing and oral language at an early age. The finding showed that oral language must be the foundation of English as foreign language (EFL) in the KG programs and it should be used inside and outside the classroom to practice their language with parents and others as a communication proses. One of the difficulties that leads to learning disadvantage is the ability to sit, listen to and understand the language due to their not being exposed to it before joining KG. The recommendation was that learning the new language would need time and a conversation-rich environment to be effective. (Al-Darwish, 2013). As Vandergrift

(2003) defined that as socio-effective strategy in which its focus on the environment surrounded learners and how it influences on ways of learners' interaction with the listening materials and their attitudes towards listening learning skills. Moreover, Bingol, Celik, Yildiz and Mart (2014) confirmed in their study in an Iraq context that cultural difference is considered one of the barriers facing the teaching of listening skills—as delivery of oral messages can lead to misunderstanding between teachers and learners.

Coming back to Krashens' theory in which creating an environment that enhances learners exposure to an extensive and diverse input is the essence of improving listening comprehension. This will be achieved through selecting the appropriate scaffold materials that assist both teachers in classrooms and students in their understanding of the language.

2.10 Listening within the UAE Context

Kindergarten teaching and learning in the UAE has emphasis from the government across the country and is of special interest within ADEC schools (Abu-Dhabi Educational Council). A study was conducted by (Buldu, 2010) to investigate interactions between pedagogical documentation as a formative assessment technique and an instructional intervention design to increase students learning by recording their experiences and their families and teachers in the UAE.

The study targeted 6 kindergarten schools with 6 teachers, 141 children and 67 parents, using observation, semi structured interviews and focus groups with a parent questionnaire. The results showed that a learning and teaching process using formative assessment techniques and instructional intervention designed for increased students learning added to teachers' awareness of learning processes and

also helped families to develop a better understanding of the learning process in their children's education.

2.11 Summary

The review of the literature reveals that listening is not only a learning skill in second language acquisition but it goes beyond that to be a complex process that allows one to understand a spoken language. While teaching listening to children the atmosphere and the motivation of the class are important to generate student experiences outside school and to exercise their mental capacity and knowledge to be applied while listening. Another finding shows that engaging students in listening activities had a great impact on learning how to listen, especially when it is applied in an interactive way.

Responding to a student while listening whether in a verbal or non-verbal way leads them to listen more carefully for information. As for the difficulties of teaching listening, teachers can overcome hurdles by using attractive listening activities and by keeping the first language, whenever it emerges side by side with the target language.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology that was employed for the present study and the rationale behind the steps taken, procedures for teachers' selection, data collection as well as data analysis. First it identifies the strategies used by English teachers, the assessment tools that teachers use and the difficulties that were encountered while teaching kindergarten students. At the end it describes the best approaches towards listening strategies.

The chapter has five sections: section one starts with a research design and a justification for choosing this design. Section two identifies participants, their characteristics, their number and how they were selected. The third section covers the instrument used in collecting data followed by a review of the reliability and validity of the instrument and how it was tested. The procedure for collecting data and how it was collected and analysed is provided in detail in the data collection section. A fifth section addresses ethical issues.

As introduced in section 1.4, the research questions addressed in this study are:

- a) What are the teaching strategies that kindergarten English teachers perceive to use when teaching listening?
- b) What are the assessment strategies that kindergarten teachers perceive to use in assessing listening?
- c) What are the obstacles that kindergarten teachers perceive when teaching listening?

3.2 Research Design

The purpose of this study was to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of strategies that had been used in teaching listening skills in kindergarten at ADEC schools. A quantitative design was the choice for collecting data using a Likert-scaled questionnaire that was designed by the researcher. The participants were asked to complete a questionnaire. The collected data was analysed using SPSS to create an objective description of the effective strategies practiced in teaching English listening, the tools of assessment and the difficulties.

3.3 Participants

3.3.1 Teachers' Selection

The participants of this study were selected purposively from a total population of about 500 teachers working in 34 Kindergarten public schools in Al-Ain area. The participants were English teachers with at least two years' experience in ADEC schools. All participants were female teachers. They were informed of the value of their participation to secure their agreement to be part of the research. Five hundred copies of the questionnaire were distributed to all the 34 kindergartens in Al-Ain area, however only 198 were answered and collected.

It was noticed that teachers were from different backgrounds and from all over the world, including Arabs, Indians and Pakistanis who hold other passports from English native-speaking countries. All the teachers were females from different age groups who have been working for ADEC for at least two years. The majority were holding a teaching licence obtained after their Bachelors degree. Other teachers held higher education or specialized qualifications in teaching EFL.

3.3.2 Instruments

The research employed a questionnaire designed by the researcher. At first it was given to five members of a trusted committee from the university to assess its validity. Useful feedback from the members was taken before drafting of the final questionnaire paper.

3.3.2.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 26 statements included in the three parts, related to the three questions. The first part was about strategies of teaching English at kindergarten; the second part about the forms of assessments used and the third one targeted the difficulties that encountered teachers in the classrooms. The three sections included five Likert scale: the first one included 9 items to elicit information about the strategies used by English teachers in their classrooms in kindergarten, the second section had 8 items on the extent to which the teacher agreed or disagreed with the forms of assessments used with listening kindergarten students. The scale for the first two sections varies from “Always” to “Never”. The third section had 9 items that sought the obstacles that EFL teachers are facing while teaching children listening skills. The scale in this section varies from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”

3.3.2.2 Validity and Reliability

In designing the questionnaire-26 statements were developed and presented for test validity. A group of six professors from the College of Education of the United Arab Emirates University reviewed those statements. Each member of the panel was provided with a copy of the questionnaire and asked to comment on each statement and to give his/ her opinion if the content and construct validity was

proven. Content validity relates to the extent to which the questionnaire statements measure the intended content area whether the items are relevant and representative in the measurement of the targeted content area as (item validity). Construct validity refers to how well a test or tool measures what it was designed to measure (Williams, 2015). As a novice researcher, both content and construct validity were thought best evaluated through the panel of university trustful professors. Based of the professors' feedback all the tools' statements were reviewed following the guidance thus provided. All recommended changes were implemented carefully-and results validity was established using SPSS.

Reliability was established throughout Cronbach Alpha that was obtained by evaluating the 26 statements. It showed that the scores of the questionnaire were reliable since Cronbach Alpha was .79. The scores of the three parts of the questionnaire varied between .736 and .776, which is between the degree of significance below and above one as shown in the table below.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.79	26

3.3.3 Data Collection

After the advisor approved the questionnaire, the researcher received a letter of permission from ADEC to facilitate meeting with sample groups at selected schools. Questionnaire papers were handed out by the researcher and collected from the ADEC kindergarten schools in sealed envelopes. A total of five hundred questionnaire papers were distributed to all kindergarten schools but only one hundred and ninety eight teachers participated. Data collection took more than a

week to distribute and collect all the papers from the thirty-four kindergarten schools. This process was completed by 2016.

Due to the large number of schools, help from a trustworthy agent was recommended to implement the questionnaire in schools. A set of sealed envelopes was produced, labeled with school name, schools' position, schools' phone numbers and number of teachers in each school was attached along with the letter of permission that had been received from ADEC. The agent was informed about the kind of questionnaire and the correct way of administrating it.

3.3.4 Data Analysis

Collected data was input and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program to obtain descriptive statistics, mainly standard deviation, mean and rank. The results responded to the target questions and led to a list of the best practices in strategies for teaching listening skill for early age students in ADEC schools, the forms of assessments and the difficulties that teachers face when teaching listening skills to EFL kindergarten students.

3.4 Ethical Issues

All participants were assured about information confidentiality. No names of participants or schools were collected with the questionnaire. All participants had a chance to answer the questions in their appropriate time and were not rushed into submitting a response. Collected data was kept confidential, not to be used for other purposes and not to be shared.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this research study was to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding the best way to teach listening skills for kindergarten students as EFL learners. This chapter presents the results of the data collected through the questionnaire to answer the three research questions that stated as the following:

- a) What are the teaching strategies that kindergarten English teachers perceive for use when teaching listening?
- b) What are the assessment strategies that kindergarten teachers perceive for use in assessing listening?
- c) What are the obstacles that kindergarten teachers perceive when teaching listening?

The results tackled three main themes that addressed the research questions. The first theme is about the strategies that English teachers use when teaching EFL listening to Kindergarten. The second theme tackled the assessment tools that teachers use in assessing EFL listening for Kindergarten. The third one showed the difficulties that English teachers face when teaching EFL listening to Kindergarten. Then, the chapter is concluded with the summary of the main results.

4.2 Results of Research Question One

To answer the first question, "What are the strategies that kindergarten English teachers perceive to use when teaching EFL listening?" "The descriptive analysis of the mean score, standard deviation and rank were calculated and presented in Table (1)

Scores for teaching EFL listening to Kindergarten ranged between ($M= 4.38$) and ($M= 3.06$) and the average for the 9 strategies was ($M= 4.38$). The mean scores of the highest five strategies that English teachers used when teaching EFL listening to Kindergarten were above ($M= 4.0$). In addition, the highest two scores indicated lessons starting with “Attention-getting signals” and “training children to listen to simple instructions and react” scored ($M= 4.38$).

Table 1: Strategies used by English teachers in teaching EFL listening to KG

Statement	Mean	SD	Rank
1. I start each lesson with “Attention-getting signals” (e.g. Clapping or songs.)	4.38	.708	1
2. I train children to listen to simple instructions and react (e.g. “Simon said” stand up, sit down, jump, and freeze, etc.)	4.38	.708	1
3. I ask children to listen to a song and act out the movement many times.	4.34	.735	3
4. I let children listen to recorded animal sounds and guess the name of the animal by pointing to its picture.	4.28	.811	4
5. I reread stories and ask simple questions regarding characters, colour, place, etc.	4.07	.898	5
6. I reread stories using different methods (e.g. book, songs, play, pictures, recorder, role play, etc.)	3.56	1.020	6
7. I use rhymes (rhyming words) and ask the children to point out or circle the letter of the sound they hear.	3.38	1.110	7
8. I use “Bingo cards” (listening to the sound and tick out the matching picture in the bingo card)	3.15	1.054	8
9. I use picture dictation based on oral instruction for drawing responses (e.g. big square face, one circle eye, big mouth, two teeth, etc.)	3.06	1.043	9
Total average Total average mean score	3.84		

The lowest two mean scores were using “Bingo cards” (listening to the sound and tick out the matching picture in the bingo card) with a mean score of ($M= 3.15$) and using picture dictation based on oral instruction for drawing responses (e.g. big square face, one circle eye, big mouth, two teeth, etc.) with a mean score of ($M= 3.06$).

4.3 Results of Research Question Two

Table two relates to the second question: what are the assessments strategies used in EFL listening for kindergarten? Mean scores, standard deviations and ranks were calculated and presented in the table below (Table 2).

Table 2: Assessment strategies used by teachers in assessing ESL listening for KG

Statement	Mean	SD	Rank
1. I observe children to check if they follow instructions and directions.	4.79	.445	1
2. I observe children to check if they can answer questions related to listening activities.	4.63	.570	2
3. I observe children to check if they are able to follow instruction and work on paper while listening (draw a circle face, one eye, etc.)	4.61	.601	3
4. I observe children while playing together to check if they are communicating and listening to each other.	4.55	.617	4
5. I assess children’s ability of retelling a word they have just listened to from the story.	4.24	.891	5
6. I ask questions during different activities to check their understanding.	4.07	.887	6
7. I observe children while using “Bingo cards” (listening to the sound and tick out the matching picture in the bingo card).	3.56	1.056	7

8. I use picture dictation to check if children are following oral instruction such as drawing big eyes, yellow hair, one big mouth, etc.	3.35	1.186	8
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Total average mean score

4.22

Table two shows that the mean score of the assessment tools that teacher's use in assessing EFL listening ranged between ($M= 4.79$) and ($M= 3.35$) and the overall mean scores of the assessment tools was ($M= 4.22$). The mean scores of the most often used assessment strategies that English teachers use when teaching EFL listening to Kindergarten were very high and above ($M= 4.5$).

The lowest mean score was for using "picture dictation to check if children are following oral instruction such as drawing big eyes, yellow hair, one big mouth, etc." with a mean score of ($M= 3.35$) and the second lowest mean score was for observing children while using "Bingo cards" (listening to the sound and ticking off the matching picture in the bingo card) with a mean score of ($M= 3.56$).

4.4 Results of Research Question Three

To answer the third question "What are the difficulties that English teachers face when teaching EFL listening to Kindergarten? ", the descriptive analysis of the mean score, standard deviation and rank were calculated and presented in Table 3.

Table three shows that the mean scores of the teachers' difficulties in teaching listening ranged between ($M= 4.42$) and ($M= 3.36$) and the overall mean scores of the assessment tools was ($M= 3.87$). The mean scores of the highest three difficulties in teaching listening were high and above ($M= 4$). Thus, the teachers strongly agree about the three main difficulties that are "Students have never been exposed to English language before joining Kindergarten." "Some parents cannot

support their children because they don't know English." and "Not having a teaching assistant".

Table 3: Teachers' difficulties in teaching listening

Statement	Mean	SD	Rank
1. Students have never been exposed to English language before joining Kindergarten.	4.42	.445	1
2. Some parents cannot support their children because they don't know English.	4.23	.570	2
3. Not having teaching assistant.	4.01	.601	3
4. Language barriers between (native English) teachers and children who are newly exposed to the language.	3.96	.617	4
5. Class time is not enough (one and half an hour)	3.96	.891	4
6. Curriculum materials were not designed for second language learners.	3.83	.887	6
7. The recorded materials are difficult for second language learners.	3.56	1.056	7
8. Managing some students' behaviour's while doing listening activates.	3.55	1.186	8
9. Number of students in some classes makes it difficult to manage listening activities.	3.36	.445	9
Total average mean score	3.87		

The lowest mean scores were managing some students' behaviours while doing listening activities with a mean score of ($M= 3.55$) in addition to the number of students in some classes makes it difficult to manage listening activities with a mean score of ($M= 3.36$).

4.5 Summary of the Results

Regarding the results of the first research question, the mean score of the strategies that English teachers use when teaching EFL listening to Kindergarten ranged between ($M= 4.38$) and ($M= 3.06$) and the average mean scores of the 9 strategies was ($M= 3.84$). Thus, the mean scores are in the category of “almost always”.

For the results of the second research question, the mean score of the assessment tools that teacher’s use in assessing EFL listening ranged between ($M= 4.79$) and ($M= 3.35$) and the average mean scores of the assessment tools was ($M= 4.22$). The mean scores of the highest four assessment tools that English teachers use when teaching EFL listening to Kindergarten were very high and above ($M= 4.5$). In addition, the highest four tools were mainly about observing tools. Thus, the mean scores are between the category of “almost always” and the category of “always”.

The results of the third research question showed that the mean score of the teachers’ difficulties in teaching listening ranged between ($M= 4.42$) and ($M= 3.36$) and the average mean scores of the assessment tools was ($M= 3.87$). The mean scores of the highest three difficulties in teaching listening were high and above ($M= 4$). Thus, most teachers “agreed” about most of the difficulties.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the present study. A summary of the study, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions is presented for stakeholders and any future researchers. In addition, limitations of the study are also identified.

Summary of the Study

This study started with the idea of looking at the best strategies that kindergarten teachers think should be used to teach listening skills to children at ADEC schools in Al-Ain. It also took into consideration the best way of assessing the listening skills of kindergarten children, and at the same time examined the difficulties that EFL teachers might face in classrooms while teaching listening to young children.

The study reviewed relevant literature and theoretical frameworks that supported the current context of ADEC and its EFL children. Research design and method used in collecting data was quantitative, using a questionnaire that targeted all Al-Ain kindergarten teachers, however there were only 198 participants. The results were presented after analysing the data, using the proposed research questions as a guide and by using standard deviations, means and ranks. Summaries of the results are provided in the following paragraph:

1. The main three strategies that English teachers used when teaching EFL listening to kindergarten were “Attention-getting signals”, training children to listen to simple instructions and react with body language and children listening to a song and responding with a movement.

2. The main assessment strategies that English teachers use when assessing children were observing children to check if they follow instructions and directions, observing them to check if they can answer questions related to listening activities and observing them to check if they are able to follow instructions and work on paper while listening.
3. The main difficulties that English teachers faced while teaching EFL kindergarten children were that children had never been exposed to English language before joining kindergarten, that parents could not support their children because they did not know the English language and finally that not all teachers had teaching assistants.

5.2 Discussion of Results

The number of participants was sufficient to enable interpretation of the results, so the following sections discuss the findings related to the proposed research questions concerning the best strategies that EFL teachers used in kindergarten schools in Al Ain, their assessment tools and the most common difficulties they faced when teaching listening skills.

5.2.1 First Research Question Discussion

What are the strategies that kindergarten English teachers use when teaching listening?

In fact, the majority of EFL kindergarten teachers at ADEC schools in Al Ain area agreed about the three best strategies they used when teaching EFL listening skills to kindergarten. These strategies were “Attention-getting signals”, “training children to listen to simple instructions and react with body language” and “children

listen to a song and react back with a movement”. The top strategy they used was Attention-getting signals with a mean score of 4.38, which had the same result with the second strategy “listen to simple instructions and react with body language. The third strategy that showed a high mean score of 4.34 where children listen to a song and act out the movement many times.

This finding is supported by the study of Gaspar, Leon and Barrios (2016) in which they concluded in their study the effectiveness of using warming up strategies like songs and recordings in developing listening comprehension for elementary learners. In addition to that, it showed how the warming up activities increased the students’ motivation in engaging in listening skills. Moreover, Buritica (2012) that focussed on developing listening comprehension skills through using the “predicable books” strategy in the fifth grade in Colombia, and showing that following instructions and using body language did stimulate and improves listening skills. Another supporting study was Akcen (2002) on first graders, with the aim of finding effective teaching strategies and which showed that, depending of the age of the students, listening comprehension could be constructed. In this case little children learned by songs and body language. All of these results indicate that EFL teachers use strategies based on a total physical response (TPR) approach.

Asher (1982) stated that children could demonstrate their understanding of the provided listening materials, as a kind of input-based skill, through body language reaction. Krashen (1982) agreed with Asher about the importance of extensive input exposure of the target language in the silent period stage during which children acquire language naturally until they produce it. From another perspective, it is

important to create a supportive and constructive environment in which learners can engage in an interactive way during the learning process (Vygotsky, 1982).

The use of authentic materials, like song, can be considered a kind of scaffolding that will help support students understanding of the provided language besides the selective strategies implemented in the class. This is exactly what Vygotsky (1982) mentioned, in that the offered scaffolding must be supportive and at the same time challengeable. In addition to that, identifying the actual level of learning of children will help in selecting what kinds of materials and strategies best fit the kindergarten learners, named by Vygotsky (1982) The Zone of Proximal Development. Moreover, the abovementioned strategies serve in building up the target language knowledge in a schematic way. Ormord (2011) argued that Piaget's schema theory clarified the importance of strategies and techniques used in the classroom to build up new content through connecting it with learners' prior knowledge, which again has been supported by Akcens' research (2002).

Based on the results mentioned in chapter four, the two lowest mean scores showed that "using picture dictation based on oral instruction for drawing responses" 3.6 and using "bingo cards" with 3.15 were the least used strategies due to the difficulties that many children faced while practicing these activities. Actually, implementing such strategies is not suitable in the context of the Kindergarten EFL learners' levels in their silent period stage. Asher & Krashen (1982) considered them to be initial production strategies of the language.

Osada (2004) mentioned that learners in that young age had a limited vocabulary repertoire and were unable to recognize the meaning of words, in addition to the problems of contextual knowledge and the lack of concentration in the foreign

language at this starting period of learning the language. So in that case, since kindergarten students didn't have enough exposure to the language, they could not yet start their language production. Vygotsky (1982) confirmed the importance of the Zone of Proximal Development when teachers identify their students' actual levels and the selection of materials and strategies will be on the basis of their students' levels in order to achieve development and reach the potential level.

5.2.2 Second Research Question Discussion

What are the assessment strategies that kindergarten teachers use in assessing listening?

The results indicated that the most used assessments strategies by Kindergarten English teachers were: "observing to check their ability to follow instruction and directions" with a very high mean score of 4.79. The second-highest tool was observing them while answering questions related to listening activity like reading a book for them and asking them about the colours or shapes or names related to what they have listened to and the mean score of this tool was 4.63

The third-highest score was by observing the children while giving directions and instructions and following it to work on paper while listening, the mean score being 4.61 The fourth highest assessment tool was observing children while playing together to check if they were listening and communicating with each other, with a mean score of 4.55 On the other hand, the lowest used tool was using picture dictation with a mean score of 3.35

Based on these results and analysing the literature it can be inferred that observation as a major assessment strategy in listening serves in identifying whether

the potential level of the learners is achieved or not. Ormord (2011) observed that learners cannot continue building their knowledge without being provided with with feedback from the teachers' assessment strategy to check the learners' schema building. That is why observing children to assess their understanding and actual level of listening ability will help the teachers decide what materials s/he should use. Also, Chan (2006) confirmed in his study the importance of using multiple assessment tools to assess listening skills for elementary school learners including the observation. Furthermore, Gasper, Leon and Barrios (2016) had used observation as a kind of assessment strategy to assess the effectiveness of warming up activities in listening comprehension for fourth grade learners. This finding has also been supported by the study of Adelman (2012) in which a teachers' job is seen as being able to hear and see if students make any effort to understand through attention and sensitiveness to the spoken text by examining the information and their being able to answer questions and give responses to given instructions.

These studies and the recent findings indicate that children can only learn and move on to the next step of learning after being assessed as to what level of learning they are actually in. Using the same strategies of teaching as observing with the young age was supported by Vygotsky (1982) who mentioned that, in the Zone of Proximal Development, the distance between the actual level and the potential level will be diminished through implementing particular techniques relevant to the learners' level. So the assessment tool (observation) clarifies whether this distance is being reduced or not. Also, using observation as an assessment strategy is associated with Piaget schema theory in which it helps build up knowledge in a constructive, schematic way.

As we can see so far, learning and assessment strategies are connected to each other at this early stage of learning. Children who learn by (TPR) will show development in their language learning and it will also show in the subsequent years of learning. Kultlu and Aslanglu (2009) claimed that the two basic learning outcomes that lessons aimed to develop in students are comprehension skills such as reading and listening and narration skills such as writing and speaking. The findings of the study also indicated that listening and reading are types of input that serve in building up knowledge. If children are engaged then it will show that they have reached an appropriate level to move on to the next level of learning.

As for the children who learn with Total Physical Response approach which developed by Asher (1982) as a pedagogical strategies and assessment contributes to understand whether listening comprehension is achieved or not through demonstrating the provided commands. The use of observation is very appropriate for this approach through observing their reactions regarding to the commands or instructions without producing the language considering them as in their silent period stage.

5.2.3 Third Research Question Discussion

What are the obstacles that kindergarten teachers face when teaching listening?

Foreign language teachers who participated in this study faced different kinds of difficulties that hindered their teaching for this critical age group. As results have shown, the most prominent three difficulties teachers agreed on were: “Students have never been exposed to English language before joining kindergarten” with a mean score of 4.42; secondly, difficulty was related to “parents and unfamiliarity with the

English language” with a mean score of 4.23; while thirdly, high difficulty was related to “not having any teaching assistant” with a mean score of 4.1

However, the results showed that the least prominent difficulties that teachers agreed upon were firstly “managing some students’ behaviours while doing listening activities” with a mean score of 3.55, While the lowest mean score was “the large number of students in some classes makes it difficult to manage listening activities” with a score of 3.36.

From the above-mentioned results, it can be pointed out that the more extensive the exposure to the target language, the greater is the understanding of language use. By relating this to the study made by Al-Darwish (2013) in Kuwaiti kindergartens its shown that EFL learners who join the kindergarten for the first time to learn a new language had difficulty in their setting and in listening to and understanding a totally different language. If children are not being sufficiently exposed to English then they need more time in the kindergarten exposed to oral language at first so they must be in a conversation rich environment. Also, Vandergrift (2003) confirmed the importance of the environment surrounded the learners considering it as a Scio-effective strategy. The results in this study was in tandem with Vandergrift’s views in which the lack of parents’ support as a part of the learners environment is considered as one of the most essential obstacles in teaching listening skills. Based on that, Parents’ involvement in the learning process could be initially based on the same Kuwaiti study finding that children will learn more if they are exposed to the language both in and out of the classroom and with their parents; having many students with poor exposure to the language outside the classroom is considered to be one of the top difficulties that teachers face.

The third obstacles extracted from the results was “not having a teaching assistant” which is strongly related to the cultural differences between the teachers and the learners.-Bingol, Celik, Yildiz and Mart (2014) identified in their study that cultural difference is one of the barriers that leads to misunderstanding during interaction between teachers and learners while practicing listening skills. However, a study that investigated the way teachers teach English to young learners was employed in Taiwanese primary schools by Wei-Pei (2008) and showed that the core problem was poorly selected materials which were contextually inappropriate to the EFL learners, leading to poor teachers’ performances in their classrooms and adding to the difficulty in keeping control of children who were supposed to be listening. While the results in this study did not give core attention to materials selection as one of the obstacles in listening skills by having a mean score ($M= 3.83$).

Looking at the results mentioned above and comparing with the two studies in Kuwaiti and Taiwanese contexts, it is seen that the main problem that teachers could face is that of children not being exposed to the language and that teachers can be overcome this difficulty if they use materials that target EFL students and only if these could be provided in a rich conversational environment. For teachers of EFL in kindergarten it can be difficult to control students, to sit them still and get them to listen, especially when the teacher is not using enjoyable materials that are age appropriate.

Parents’ involvement in the learning process could be initially based on the same Kuwaiti study finding that children will learn more if they are exposed to the language both in and out of the classroom and with their parents; having many

students with poor exposure to the language outside the classroom is considered to be one of the top difficulties that teachers face.

The results of studies could be considered within Krashens' theory (1982) which identified the significance of supplying enough comprehensible input (listening) in the silent period stage in which language is acquired naturally for children through creating a supportive environment that includes appropriate pedagogical strategies and materials, parents' involvement and a supportive context around the learners. If there is not enough exposure to the target language, it will negatively influence their understanding and the productive stage of the language in the future (Krashen, 1982).

Regarding the lowest mean scores, it is expected from students, particularly of kindergarten stage, that they behave in a way that is hard to control. As the Kuwaiti and Taiwanese studies showed, when children lose interest in the learning setting then they will act in line with their age. However, creating the supportive and environment of Vygotsky (1982) shows the essence of scaffolding in a learning process, which it motivates, children and lets them focus on their learning rather than on behaving in non-controlled ways.

5.3 Conclusions

Listening, compared with other language skills is the most important skill to which kindergarten children should be exposed. Across the world listening skill was neglected for a long time but, with new models of teaching and learning foreign languages, listening was prioritised and has increasingly become the first skill that teachers address especially with kindergarten children who have never been exposed to a second language before.

This study aimed to identify the best strategies for teaching listening skill to kindergarten children by EFL teachers. It also sought the best way of assessing listening comprehension in a way that recognised their level and helped them to progress to the next appropriate listening activity. The third purpose of this study was to highlight the difficulties that teachers encountered while teaching this critical age so they could be overcome. The methodology used in this quantitative study was a three part Likert-scale questionnaire. The participants were 198 English teachers from Al-Ain kindergarten schools.

EFL teachers commonly use strategies related to a Total Physical Response Approach in which showing a reaction based on the provided commands and instructions demonstrated that listening comprehension had occurred. The assessment tool that kindergarten English teachers most used is observation, to check if children are following instructions and direction, if they can answer questions related to listening activities and if they are able to follow instructions and work on paper while listening. The final idea to stress is the importance of exposure to the target language which most EFL learners lack. The latter is the main obstacle that most kindergarten English teachers face.

5.4 Recommendations

It is recommended that stakeholders and policy makers take into consideration this study's finding that the most important strategy in teaching English language to EFL kindergarten children is that related to Total Physical Response. Materials should be selected on the bases of the EFL learners contexts. This means having fun with learning, for example using songs and body language and keeping the EFL context. The more children are exposed to oral language and

get engaged in songs and body language, the more easily they will acquire the language. It is also recommended that teachers should try and keep parents engaged in the learning process outside the classroom by providing them with online and other materials such as songs or reading websites, to assure continuity of exposure to the language even outside the classroom.

It is also recommended that ADEC adapts assessment strategies that fit the EFL learner's purpose. All assessment tools should be serving the UAE context depending on observations to find to what extent has their listening improved. Providing local teaching assistants is also proposed to minimize the cultural rift between teachers and students.

Finally, since this study aimed only to study teachers perceptions of teaching listening and assessments strategies in AL-Ain kindergarten only, it is recommended that follow up is considered such as more research within the Emirati context and specifically targeting listening teaching skills for other grades.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Kindergartens English teachers' perceptions of listening strategies, assessment methods and the obstacles they face

The purpose of this study is to examine kindergarten teachers' perceptions of listening strategies, assessment methods and the obstacles they face in their practices. This questionnaire is conducted as part of the requirements for the MA degree in education, college of education, United Arab Emirates University. Your responses will be anonymous and will never be shared with a third party. Your responses are voluntary. Thank you for your cooperation.

Name: Ghada Alkilani,
 Email: 200220108@uaeu.ac.ae
 Mobile Number: 0508677882

Years of experience in Kindergarten schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	1-5	<input type="checkbox"/>	6-10	<input type="checkbox"/>	more than 10
First language	<input type="checkbox"/>	Arabic	<input type="checkbox"/>	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	other
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female		
Qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	BA	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA	<input type="checkbox"/>	other

Please circle the number that best reflects your view.

	I use the following strategies for teaching listening in KG classes:	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	I start each lesson with "Attention-getting signals" (e.g. Clapping or songs.)	5	4	3	2	1
2	I train children to listen to simple instructions and react (e.g. "Simon said" stand up, sit down, jump, and freeze, etc.)	5	4	3	2	1
3	I ask children to listen to a song and act out the movement many times.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I let children listen to recorded animal sounds and guess the name of the animal by pointing to its picture.	5	4	3	2	1
5	I reread stories and ask simple questions regarding characters, color, place, etc.	5	4	3	2	1
6	I reread stories using different methods (e.g. book, songs, play, pictures, recorder, role play, etc.)	5	4	3	2	1
7	I use rhymes (rhyming words) and ask the children to point out or circle the letter of the sound they hear.	5	4	3	2	1
8	I use "Bingo cards" (listening to the sound and tick out the matching picture in the bingo card)	5	4	3	2	1
9	I use picture dictation based on oral instruction for drawing responses (e.g. big square face, one circle eye, big mouth, two teeth, etc.)	5	4	3	2	1

	I use the following methods for listening assessment:	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
10	I observe children to check if they follow instructions and directions.	5	4	3	2	1
11	I observe children to check if they can answer questions related to listening activities.	5	4	3	2	1
12	I observe children to check if they are able to follow instruction and work on paper while listening (draw a circle face, one eye, etc.)	5	4	3	2	1
13	I observe children while playing together to check if they are communicating and listening to each other.	5	4	3	2	1
14	I assess children's ability of retelling a word they have just listened to from the story.	5	4	3	2	1
15	I ask questions during different activities to check their understanding.	5	4	3	2	1
16	I observe children while using "Bingo cards" (listening to the sound and tick out the matching picture in the bingo card).	5	4	3	2	1
17	I use picture dictation to check if children are following oral instruction such as drawing big eyes, yellow hair, one big mouth, etc.	5	4	3	2	1

	Teachers Difficulties in teaching listening:	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
18	Students have never been exposed to English language before joining Kindergarten.	5	4	3	2	1
19	Some parents cannot support their children because they don't know English.	5	4	3	2	1
20	Not having teaching assistant.	5	4	3	2	1
21	Language barriers between (native English) teachers and children who are newly exposed to the language.	5	4	3	2	1
22	Class time is not enough (one and half an hour)	5	4	3	2	1
23	Curriculum materials were not designed for second language learners.	5	4	3	2	1
24	The recorded materials are difficult for second language learners.	5	4	3	2	1
25	Managing some students' behaviors while doing listening activates.	5	4	3	2	1
26	Number of students in some classes makes it difficult to manage listening activities.	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix B: ADEC Permission for the Researcher



Date: 20 th December 2015	التاريخ: 20 ديسمبر 2015
Ref:	الرقم:
To: Public Schools Principals,	السادة / مديري المدارس الحكومية
Subject: Letter of Permission	الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة باحثين
Dear Principals,	تحية طيبة وبعد،،،
The Abu Dhabi Education Council would like to express its gratitude for your generous efforts & sincere cooperation in serving our dear students.	يطيبُ لمجلس أبوظبي للتعليم أن يتوجه لكم بخالص الشكر والتقدير لجهودكم الكريمة والتعاون الصادق لخدمة أبنائنا الطلبة.
You are kindly requested to allow the researcher/ Ghada Yehia Abdulrazaq Al Kilani , to complete her research on:	ونود إعلامكم بموافقة مجلس أبو ظبي للتعليم على موضوع الدراسة التي سيجريها الباحث/غادة يحي عبد الرزاق الكيلاني، بعنوان:
KINDERGARTEN ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LISTENING STRATEGIES, ASSESSMENT METHODS AND THE OBSTACLES THEY FACE	KINDERGARTEN ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LISTENING STRATEGIES, ASSESSMENT METHODS AND THE OBSTACLES THEY FACE
Please indicate your approval of this permission by facilitating her meetings with the sample groups at your respected schools.	أثنا، يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحثة ومساعدتها على إجراء الدراسة المشار إليها.
For further information: please contact Mr Helmy Seada on 02/6150140	للاستفسار: يرجى الاتصال بالسيد/ حلمي سعده على الهاتف 02/6150140
Thank you for your cooperation.	شماكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم
Sincerely yours,	وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاختيار والتقدير،،،
 محمد سالم محمد الظاهري المدير التنفيذي لقطاع العمليات المدرسية	
	

Appendix C: List of Professors

Name	Position
Dr. Ali Ibrahim	Member of teaching faculty of UAE university in the Department of educational leadership
Dr. Nagimeldin Al Sheikh	Member of teaching faculty of UAE university in the Department of Curriculum and instruction
Dr. Mohamad Shaban	Member of teaching faculty of UAE university in the Department of Curriculum and instruction
Dr. Mohamed Al Hosany	Member of teaching faculty of UAE university in the Department of Curriculum and instruction
Dr. Efthymia Efthymiou	Member of teaching faculty of UAE university in the Department of Curriculum and instruction
Dr. Mohamed Jaber	Member of teaching faculty of UAE university in the Department of Curriculum and instruction