

## **Effect of Pre-Listening Relaxation and Self-Affirmation Exercises on L2 Listening Comprehension Test Performance**

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This true-experimental study investigated the effect of pre-listening relaxation and self-affirmation exercises on the listening comprehension test scores of 70 learners of English in the English Language Teaching department of a state university in Turkey. Participants in the experimental group completed the exercises before listening comprehension tests while those in the control group took these tests without exercising. The t-test results indicated that pre-listening exercises had no significant effect on test performance. The Test Influence Inventory (TII) post results indicated that the exercises had a positive effect on the test anxiety levels in the experimental group. ANOVA analysis revealed a significant main effect on the anxiety levels of the time that TII was administered, that is when it was given before versus after the experiment, as well as significant effects between time and gender, time and group, and time, gender and group. Tests of between-subject effects also revealed a significant main effect of group on TII scores. Implications are discussed in terms of general language learning anxiety as well as more specific listening comprehension test anxiety for language learners in Turkey as an expanding-circle and South Africa as an outer-circle country in Kachru's model of World Englishes.



**Effect of pre-listening relaxation and self-affirmation exercises on L2 listening comprehension test performance**




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## Literature

**Listening comprehension & Anxiety**

- Stress and anxiety related to listening comprehension tasks.
- Possible causes:
  - Limited time to process incoming info.
  - Bad sound quality & unfamiliar accent
  - Additional test anxiety

**The Result:** Learners may score much lower than they would do in an anxiety-free state (Arnold, 2000).




## Literature

**Previous Research:**

- a negative but generally moderate correlation between test anxiety and test performance (e.g., Sapp, 1999).
- Sometimes, a very weak relationship (as low as  $r = -.12$ ) between the two variables. (e.g., Hembree, 1988)
- Sometimes, no relationship at all (In'nami, 2006).


**In short:** Contradictory findings of previous studies.



## Literature

**Some suggestions from previous research:**


- «instructors should recognize student teachers' feelings of Foreign Language anxiety instead of simply evaluating them»  
(Kunt & Tüm, 2010, p. 4675).
- Teachers should deal with anxiety by making the learning environment as stress-free as possible.  
(Horwitz et al., 1986)



## Literature

**Possible Pre-listening exercises:**


- systematic decentralization (Arnold, 2000)
- use of music and relaxation videos.
  - positive effects of music (e.g., Hallam, Price, & Katsarou, 2002) and binaural alpha waves (e.g., Filimon, 2010) were found on working memory, relaxation and concentration (e.g., Gantt, 2011).
- Self-affirmation techniques.
  - Positive effects of increased self-confidence



## The Study

**Rationale:**

- Few studies directly investigated test anxiety in the language classroom (In'nami, 2006),
- L2 listening test anxiety was neglected in general (Elkhafaifi, 2005).
- Little research exists concerning the effects of pre-listening relaxation and self-affirmation activities on improving learners' performance during a listening comprehension task (Chang & Read, 2006).
- The effect of anxiety on L2 listening comprehension is not straightforward, with contradictory findings and opinions.



## The Study

### Research Questions

- **RQ1:** Is there a relationship between the participants' listening comprehension test scores and their self-perceived anxiety level?
- **RQ2:** Would learners exposed to pre-listening relaxation and self-affirmation exercises and listening comprehension practice perform better on a posttest than those who were exposed only to listening comprehension practice?
- **RQ3:** Would learners exposed to pre-listening relaxation and self-affirmation exercises and listening comprehension practice report a significantly lower anxiety level on an anxiety scale than those exposed only to listening practice?
- **RQ4:** Would there be a significant interaction on the participants' Test Influence Inventory (TII) results and listening comprehension test scores according to their gender, group and the time that they took the tests and survey?



## The Study

### Aim:

To investigate the effect of pre-listening relaxation and self-affirmation exercises on the listening comprehension test scores and self-perceived test anxiety level.

### Method:

- A true-experimental research design
- Within-subjects as well as between subjects comparisons with both Paired samples and Independent samples t-tests and repeated measures (RM) ANOVA.



## The Study

### Participants:

- 70 EFL teacher candidates in the English Language Teaching Department of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University.
- Selected from among the 154 first-year students.
- Mean scores for three previous TOEFL listening tests as the selection criteria. (Some students were excluded for homogeneity).
- Random selection from among the remaining 119 learners.
- Non-systematic allocation to experimental vs. control group.
- 23 male (13 in the experimental, 10 in the control group) & 47 female (22 in the experimental, 25 in the control group.)



## The Study

### Procedures:

- *Before the experiment:*
  1. All students completed the Test Influence Inventory (TII) developed by Fujii (1993) in order to determine the initial level of self-perceived test anxiety
  2. A pretest was given (TOEFL listening comprehension practice test)
- Eight sessions on two successive weekends (two on Saturdays & two on Sundays).
- The first and last sessions allocated for the pre/post-test and TII
- A total of six listening practice tests of similar difficulty (all from the same TOEFL Preparation Set)
- One-hour interval between sessions on the same day



## The Study

### Experimental Group:

- Pre-listening relaxation & self-affirmation exercises before all of the six practice tests (not before the first and last sessions)

Mainly done in L1

Max 20 minutes altogether.

A variety of activities used in each session, just before the test.

Teacher talk as warm-up (2-3 minutes)

A self-affirmation video in Turkish (3-4 minutes)

A scenery video with baroque music (4-5 minutes)

Guided visualization exercise (3-4 minutes)

Exposure to binaural alpha waves during question check through headphones (3 minutes)

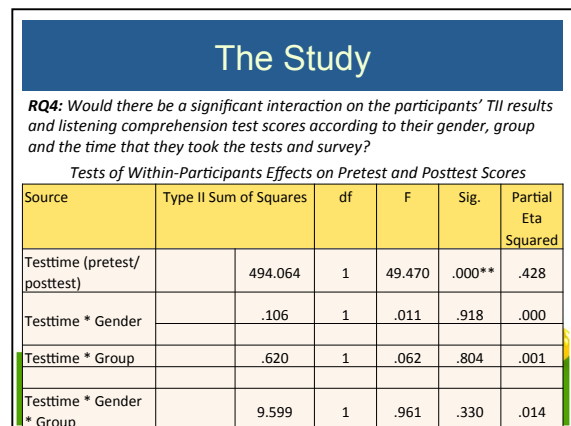
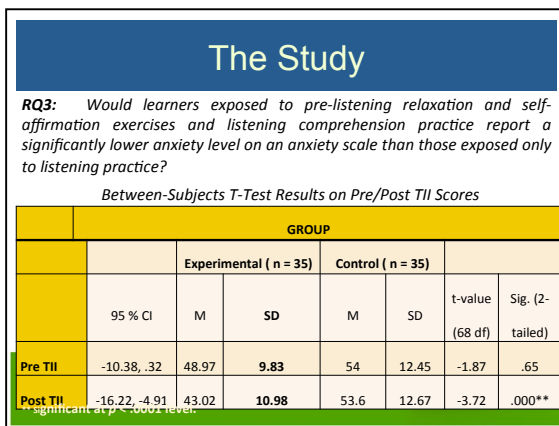
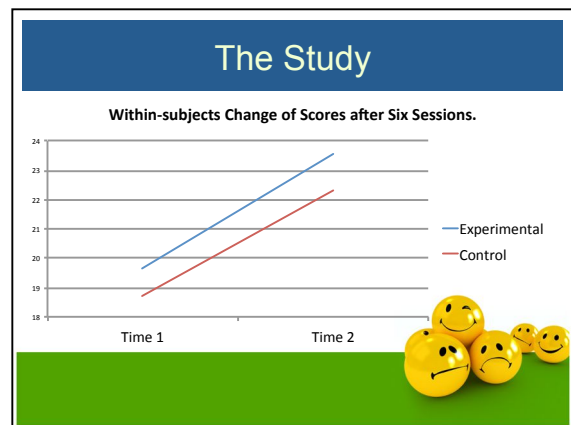
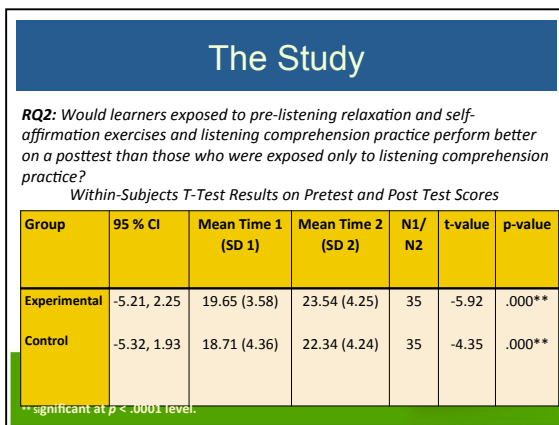
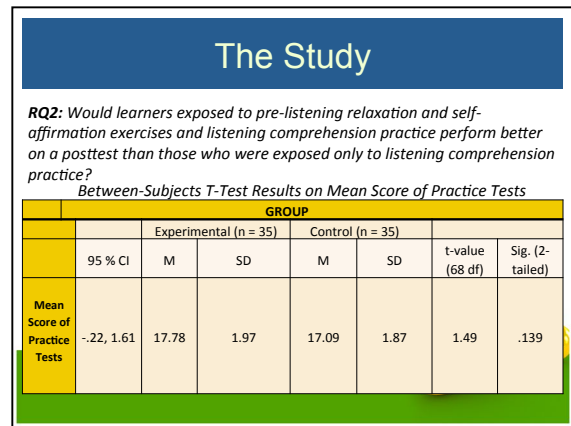
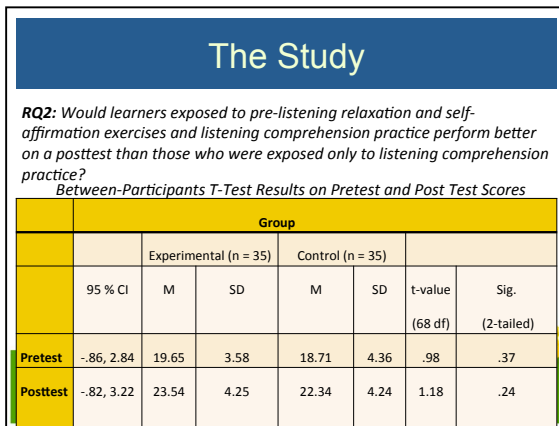


## The Study

**RQ1:** Is there a relationship between the participants' listening comprehension test scores and their self-perceived anxiety level?

- Learners' pretest scores and pre TII scores were not significantly correlated (Pearson's  $r(70) = -.08, p = .52$ ).
- No significant relationship between the two variables
- The listening comprehension test scores of the participants in this study were not positively or negatively related to their perceived level of anxiety or vice versa.





### The Study

**RQ4:** *Would there be a significant interaction on the participants' TII results and listening comprehension test scores according to their gender, group and the time that they took the tests and survey?*


*Tests of Within-Subjects Effects on Pre and Post TII Results*

| Source                      | Type II Sum of Squares | df | F     | Sig.  | Partial Eta Squared |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|----|-------|-------|---------------------|
| Surveytime (Pre/Post)       | 352.029                | 1  | 5.011 | .029* | .071                |
| Surveytime * Gender         | 302.510                | 1  | 4.306 | .042* | .061                |
| Surveytime * Group          | 320.933                | 1  | 4.568 | .036* | .065                |
| Surveytime * Gender * Group | 339.833                | 1  | 4.837 | .031* | .068                |

### The Study

**Main Findings in a nutshell:**


- Relaxation and self-affirmation exercises help decrease self-perceived anxiety among language learners before a major FL listening comprehension test.
- The participants may not positively reflect this change on their listening comprehension test scores especially if no relationship is found between their perceived test anxiety level and listening comprehension scores.
- Pre-listening relaxation and affirmation exercises may not be effective on the listening comprehension test scores of students who do not display significant exam anxiety as the ones in this study.



### The Study

**Implications & Suggestions**

- Students' previous exam results should be correlated with test anxiety scales before embarking on relaxation and self-affirmation exercises.
- Similar studies may take into account English varieties (inner, expanding and outer circle varieties in Kacru's model); and compare learners according to their listening comprehension test scores to find any possible differences in terms of their anxiety level that can be related to the variety used in the listening test.
- Mutual intelligibility as the focus. The variety used in listening passages can make a difference in terms of the perceived anxiety levels of the participants.
- A longitudinal replication of the study is recommended.




**THANKS  
FOR  
LISTENING**

