The degree of primary third-class female teachers' practice of raising questions of higher mental skills in teaching listening

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Abstract

The current study aims at unveiling the degree of how primary third-class female teachers practice posing the questions that address students' higher mental skills when teaching listening. The study sample consists of randomly-selected 35 third-class female teachers who have worked in primary schools of Private Education Department. The two researchers, in attempt to achieve the study aims objectively, adopt the observation-based instrument. The statistical results elucidate that female teachers, namely the study sample are of the opinion that lower mental skills, i. e. analysis and application play a leading role and represent a prominent stage through which higher mental skills, i.e. synthesis and evaluation are chiefly acquired. The researchers think that the Arabic language courses of the third classes provide more focus on analysis and application than synthesis and evaluation and this, in turn, contributes to female teachers' feeling to adopt the former skills rather than the latter ones. In addition, when applied, synthesis and evaluation require more allotted time and more exerted efforts than those of lower skills.

Keywords: Analysis skill, Synthesis skill and evaluation skill.

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1. Introduction

There are plenty of skills and techniques on which a teacher can count in order to show his desired teaching quality. The teacher is able to rely on higher mental skills which paves the way for the fact that intelligence can easily be developed by exerted efforts. This state of affairs has drawn attention of various educational systems around the world whereby [1] believes that people of higher mental skills can, over time, develop their own abilities, exert laborious efforts and take on challenges successfully. Teaching students strategies of mental-skill development entails taking into consideration four factors that may affect students' self-efficacy: well-acted performance, indirect predictions, social persuasion and physiological affairs. Teachers can mount fruitful challenges and offer experiences to develop and improve higher mental skills. A man of a higher mental skill looks upon failure as being an opportunity of growth; when developing their own mental skills as a reaction against total failure, students definitely have the ability to do so with aid of endless efforts and patience and thus their self-efficacies and learning motivations would be evolved [2].

In the early stages of education, a learning listening skill seems to be so apparent that a teacher communicates with children via several methods that contribute effectively to convey information [3]. In fact, listening skill is viewed as one of the most outstanding linguistic skills on which the human brain is chiefly based and according to which an individual can consequently gain knowledge. Moreover, it is undoubtedly seen as being the commonest communicative means used widely among individuals: anyone daily listens to others exponentially in comparison with what he/she reads. Since it is classified as a receptive skill, one can acquire different cognitive sciences and experiences available in the fields of knowledge so as to build up his/her linguistic repertoire. A child hears sounds, and then grows up to hear words and their meanings before he/she speaks, reads and writes. Listening is an integral tool that is accordingly brought about as result of a kind of a satisfactory engagement carried out by the senses of hearing, sight and mind. A speaker, on this principle, follows up and understands what he/she is saying, and then he/she determines and restores his/her own thoughts in attempt to create a harmony between linguistic expressions and their meanings. Involving into different skills, people should be subsumed under extensive training courses simply because these skills are integrally and harmoniously operated to show how far listening is of primly important aims and functions in the realm of linguistic interaction [4].

Finally, the importance of the techniques employed by primary third-class female teachers in posing the higher-mental-skill questions of listening plays a pivotal part in helping them carry out their educational outputs easily and in creating a type of active participation with learners. This humbly motivates the researchers to conduct such a study and to make the curtain go up revealing the extent to which listening can possibly be scaled in the light of higher-mental skill questions.

2. Literature Review

As far as the researchers' viewpoint is concerned, a lot of studies have already been conducted in the discipline of listening and this study really moves within the orbit of previous ones in relation to the points of similarity that cover all of them.

Jabbr and Al-Dajani [5] conduct a study whose aim is to deal with listening skill as being taught in Book II and Book III of non-native speakers of Arabic at University of Jordan. The study analyses the vital role played by listening in linguistic interaction and is concerned with the prime importance of applied linguistics, particularly for those who do not speak Arabic as a mother tongue. A questionnaire is the study instrument developed to survey students' opinions on certain insights offered by listening and reading skills. Next, the study provides an analysis of the results to show how difficulties can best be overcome when a teacher employs in-class innovative and well-known techniques to meet non-native speakers' needs and to push them up to learn Arabic.

In his study (2014), Nassif [6] adopts the easiest framework and the most straightforward approach to teach non-native speakers Arabic via employing linguistic skills. It is well-known for anyone that classifying linguistic skills enjoys considerably teaching-learning advantages from which a teacher, a syllabus designer and a student fully benefit. Next, Nassif [6] touches on the linguistic skills that should become a teacher's focus of concern when students are trained. He sheds light on the aspects of listening skill and presents a detailed screening of the most important learning capacity on which listening skill is chiefly based and with which students are positively provided, particularly at the beginner, intermediate and advanced level. Nasri's presentation of listening skill also detects certain insights that enable students to distinguish sounds from each other and to perceive what is being heard when different questions are raised for the sake of an objective test. It is worth-noting that Nassif [6] takes into his consideration subsidiary skills, i. e. follow-up capabilities of listening skill which contribute more to study different students' linguistic levels.

As for Al-Hafnwai [7], digital-video hints are widely used to show their effect on improving hearing-impaired kindergarten children' skill of listening and speech, and are consequently manipulated to find possibly gender differences on the skill scale. To achieve his study objectives and to verify its hypotheses Al-Hafnwai [7] adopts a semi-experimental approach in which the study sample involves 40 hearing-impaired kindergarten children between the ages of five and seven living in Riyadh. The sample members are divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The study instrument is a digital-video program designed by the researcher himself and is mainly devoted to measure skills of hearing and speech. The study findings show that there are differences of the statistical significance at the level of ($\alpha= 0.05$) between grade levels of pre-measurement and post-measurement and it is found that these differences tilt the balance towards the latter measurement. The results also unveil that differences in favor of the experimental group rather than the control group are traced in the statistical significance at the level of ($\alpha= 0.05$) between grade point averages of pre-measurement.

On the same footing, Hajja [8] conducts a study (2015) whose goals are also to find out the impact of employing educational software in developing kindergarten children living in Latakia. She counts on a semi-experimental perspective to divide children into an experimental group (18 children) and a control group (18 children). The educational software is designed to be presented to the former group not the latter one. To reach the desired goals of the study, Hajja [8] prepares an achievement test and comment

cards to be answered and filled out by kindergarten female teachers respectively, and after its reliability is verified, the test is applied to the two samples. Non-parametric statistics is used to deal with the differences of the average of children's achievement in both groups. The results illustrate that in the first place, differences in favor of the experimental group rather than the control group are found in the average of children's achievement of the post-test. Next, no differences are seen between the averages of males' and females' achievement of the experimental group. Thirdly, no differences also emerge between the averages of children' grades of the pre-test and the post-test. In a word, Lahja views that it is of great advantage to use different educational software techniques and media in developing listening skills since they provide sensory tools fitting children in this learning stage.

Harmonious as they are, this study and Nassif [6] are two poles of the same ingredients in touching on the issue of listening skill. Nassif conducts his study to check up the influence of cross-cutting questions on secondary school students when acquiring listening skill. The study follows the semi-experimental line of argument and its sample purposively consists of (76) students. (38) Students are purposively selected out of the total number of the sample from Kanaan Secondary School of Diyala. Two literary sections of the fourth class are chosen to represent experimental and control groups which are tested with (30) question items. The findings exhibit that the experimental group outperform the control one on acquiring listening skills where calculated T-value is larger than tabular value: the former records (14.5), while the latter is (1.91).

In the light of the study instruments used by Nassif, the researchers think that the test which is set up to know the effect of cross-cutting questions on acquiring listening skills suits a particular category of children who are below primary third class. As far as children of primary third class and over are concerned, oral answers to questions are sufficient to assess students' ability to speak in relation to their level of comprehending listening skills.

3. The Problem and Questions of the Study

The researchers' broad experience in educational training and supervision has been the trigger for pondering over the problem of this study and then writing down on it. Received with welcome by proponents, traditional teaching techniques are still doomed to memorization and indoctrination and this, in turn, leads to retain a student's thought in minimum levels. To the researchers' knowledge, listening-skill activities whose function is to motivate and develop though are conspicuously absent in many institutions. Moreover, in Jordan, studies and papers are rarely conducted to deal with the development of thinking skills, particularly via listening standards in the first three classes. A teacher also lacks teaching strategies that are set up to employ students' thinking development.

In the view of the foregoing, the study is an endeavor to answer the following main and secondary question:

What is the degree of primary third-class female teachers' practice of raising questions of higher mental skills in teaching listening?

The main question is divided into the following sub-questions:

1- What is the degree of primary third-class female teachers' practice of raising analysis-skill questions of in teaching listening?
2- What is the degree of primary third-class female teachers' practice of raising synthesis-skill questions of in teaching listening?
3- What is the degree of primary third-class female teachers' practice of raising application-skill questions of in teaching listening?
4- What is the degree of primary third-class female teachers' practice of raising evaluation-skill questions of in teaching listening?

4. Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in that the main thoughts should be discriminated from the secondary ones, a student's ability to tie in speech with its presentation must be developed, a student's ability to draw conclusions from a listening-based situation in which he/she involves has to be improved and positive sides as well as values, like showing respect to those who are speaking, interacting with a speaker and showing interest in his speech, should be increased.

5. Definition of Terms

This study is concerned with certain terms that should necessarily be defined theoretically and operationally. They are as follows:

1. Mental Skills are theoretically defined as being a mental effort exerted by a student to catch up on an query or to seek a problem-solving in such a way that he/she observes something, recalls something, classifies something, predicts something, sets a comparison of something, infers from things or represents information in a form of figures and paintings [9].

On the other hand, mental skills are operationally defined as being those which reflect a student's mental capability to deal with an audible text in analytic, synthetic and evaluative ways as a result of his/her cognition of the textual ideas and elements.

2. Listening skills are theoretically described as being those acts of performance closely related to a certain listening skill. They are operationally embodied by hearing discrimination, classification, conclusions and evaluation. Moreover, they refer to the grade a student gets when he/she is tested on main and secondary listening skills as shown in the used test.

6. Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted within the following boundaries:

1. Time limits: the study was essentially conducted on primary third classes during the first semester of the academic year 2022-2023.
2. Spatial limits: the study instruments were applied to virtual third classed via Zoom and Teams platforms.
3. Human Limits: Students under consideration were from Amman.
4. Objective limits: a list of thinking skills was prepared to cope with the students of primary third classes and a test was conducted to evaluate listening skills.

7. Methods and Procedures

7.1. The Study Approach

The study was chiefly based on an analytic-descriptive approach to cope with the nature of the topic in which a detailed observation was carried out on female teachers' use of higher mental-skill questions.

7.2. Sample of the Study

The sample of this study included randomly-selected 35 third-class female teachers who worked in primary schools of Private Education Department during the first semester of the academic year 2024-2025.

7.3. The Study Instrument

To accomplish the objectives of the study, the researchers manipulated the study instrument on the basis of carrying out a direct observation of:

- Educational literature related to the study subject-matter and the instruments of previous studies, particularly Nassif [6], Al-Hafnwai [7] and Nassif [6].
- A Teacher's Guide of the third class published in 2017.
- The researchers' broad experience in the domain of educational training and supervision.

The study instrument was an observation form (see Appendix 1 and 2) specifically designed for the purpose of the study. The researchers recorded the questions asked by each teacher in the study sample as they were presented during listening-focused classroom sessions. Each question was carefully reviewed and compared to the core listening skills—such as recalling, understanding, analyzing, synthesizing, applying, and evaluating what is heard—to ensure that the questions adequately represented these six key listening skills.

7.4. Procedures of the Study

The researchers follow the following procedures to conduct their own study:
1. Meeting the sample informants first of all in order to introduce themselves and secondly to show the aim of the meeting and thirdly to provide instructions.
2. Upon obtaining a consent from the following schools to carry out the study, the researchers attended 30 classes where the sample informants were subsumed under a direct observation in International Independent Schools, International Leaders Academy, Al-Hasad Al-Tarbawi Schools, Al-Fekr Al-Tarbawi Schools, Mehwar International Schools, Droob Alasala and Almoasara Schools. The Study instrument particularly used for a primary third class relied on grading observations according to the five-point Likert Scale and thus a student got marks ranging from 1 to 5.

7.5. Statistical Treatments

Data of the study questions were statistically treated by virtue of calculating arithmetic means and standard deviations on the one hand, and using frequencies and percentages on the other.

8. Results

It is of great significance to display the study results concerning the main and secondary questions that have already been posed in section (4). However, the following serves as reminder of the study questions:

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3. What is the degree of primary third-class female teachers' practice of raising application-skill questions of in teaching listening?
4. What is the degree of primary third-class female teachers' practice of raising evaluation-skill questions of in teaching listening?

Providing an answer to the main question requires that frequencies and percentages of linguistic skills must be measured when incorporated into the questions raised by primary third-class female teachers. Table 1 below illustrates the statistical side of the results of the main question:

Table 1.
Frequencies and Percentages of Linguistic Skills Involved in Teachers' Questions.

Skills	Number of Questions Involved	Percentages
Analysis	61	19.37
Remembrance	112	35.56
Understanding	82	26.03
Synthesis	15	4.76
Evaluation	19	6.03
Application	26	8.25
Total	315	100.00

Table 1 demonstrates the values of the linguistic- skill questions posed by primary third-class female teachers. When statistically exposed, uhe values show that the question of remembrance skill is the most frequent question asked by the female teachers; it records 112 times with 35.56%. This high percentage implies that female teachers have concentrated more and more on remembrance skill when teaching their own students. Understanding skill occupies the second order; it is included in 82 questions raised by the female teachers and thus it scores 26.03%. At the third level, analysis skill is covered in 61 questions, registering 19.37%. It is worth-noting that the foregoing skills, i. e. remembrance, understanding and analysis, are of a high percentage among others (approximately 80%), while the other three skills score minimum percentages: application skill is incorporated into 26 questions registering 8.25%, evaluation skill is implied in 19 questions with the percentage of 6.03 % and synthesis skill is contained in 15 questions achieving 4.76%.

On the other hand, Table 2 below is designed to answer the first question displaying frequencies and percentages of the analysis-skill questions.

Table 2.
Frequencies and Percentages of the Analysis-Skill Questions.

Question No.	Questions	Total Questions	Percentage
1	How did the moon talk with Sana? Did it have a vocal track?		
2	Was the mother surprised when she heard Sana talked with the moon?		
3	Do you expect that the moon is beautiful as we see it?	61	19.37
4	Do you expect what is there on the moon?		
5	How do you infer this story is imaginative?		

As indicated in Table 2, There are 61 questions whose texts reflect analysis skill. The percentage of these questions is 19.37% out of the total number of questions including the above-mentioned six skills.

The second question is posed as to how remembrance skill is measured when primary third-class students provide their own replies. Hence, Table 3 outlines the total number of the questions 112 and their percentile image 35.56%:

Table 3.
Frequencies and Percentages of the Remembrance-Skill Questions.

Question No.	Questions	Total Questions	Percentage
1	Is Ibn Batutta nicknamed a trusted traveler or an honest person?		
2	Who is the greatest Islamic traveler?		
3	Mention the places that Ibn Batutta visited in Jordan.	112	35.56
4	What did Ibn Batutta survive from frequently?		
5	What were the risks Ibn Batutta faced?		

A reply to the third question necessitates a profound look at the question texts that underlie understanding skill. These questions are formulated to reflect how the students are required to understand and then to answer. Table 4 points out that the female teachers raised 82 questions whose wordings contain the skill and this number of questions scores 26.03%:

Table 4.
Frequencies and Percentages of the Understanding-Skill Questions.

Question No.	Questions	Total Questions	Percentage
1	Why was Ibn Batutta travelling?		
2	Do you wish you were a traveler? Why? What will you do?		
3	Why is the school considered the second home?	82	26.03
4	What was the thing that made Ahmed feel as if he was flying when he read the book?		
5	Was Ahmed scared or happy when he was on Flying Rug?		

Table 5 represents the synthesis-skill questions posed by the female teachers. The questions are contextualized in a way that they express how students are or are not able to grasp synthesis skill. It offers a detailed account of the total questions raised and their percentage: they are 15 with a percentage of 4.76%:

Table 5.
Frequencies and Percentages of the Synthesis-Skill Questions.

Question No.	Questions	Total Questions	Percentage
1	Use the word 'food' in a correct sentence of your own		
2	Who presents a good summary of this story?		
3	Did human beings count on the moon to get some information?	15	4.76
4	Where did you go if you did not choose the moon?		
5	Describe this situation (Ibn Batutta told people what he had seen)		

As shown in Table 6, evaluation skill is incorporated in 19 questions whose forms are set up to suit the students' capacity for evaluating what they are asked about. The statistical screening indicates the following: the total questions are 19 and their percentage register 6.03%:

Table 6.
Frequencies and Percentages of the Evaluation-Skill Questions.

Question No.	Questions	Total Questions	Percentage
1	Do you like travelling as Ibn Batutta did? Why?		
2	Are travel and mobility useful?		
3	What is the sentence you like very much in the text?	19	6.03
4	Write down what you learned about the risks of playing in driveways		
5	Is it possible for human beings to abstain from food and drink?		

Finally, Table 7 elucidates the questions that cover application skill. They are (26) questions of application-based wordings and they score a percentage of (8.25%):

Table 7.
Frequencies and Percentages of the Application-Skill Questions.

Question No.	Questions	Total Questions	Percentage
1	If you were a participant in the game, which role did you play?		
2	Give me a solution for the water waste, air pollution and visual impairment.	26	8.25
3	Use the phrase 'necessary energy' in a good sentence of your own without referring to food.		
4	Who reads the text as you heard it without errors?		
5	Who performs the characters mentioned in the class?		

9. Discussion of Results

The study results shed light on the predominant focus of third-grade elementary school teachers on specific language skills through question posing. This aligns with broader discussions in the educational literature regarding pedagogical practices and the emphasis placed on foundational skills in early education. The findings suggest a notable concentration on recall, comprehension, and analysis, while revealing a relative neglect of higher-order thinking skills like synthesis, evaluation, and application.

The substantial attention given to the recall skill, comprising 35.56% of the questions, resonates with previous research on assessment practices in elementary classrooms. Smith [10] noted a prevalence of memory-focused evaluations in primary education, indicating a consistent inclination among educators to prioritize the memorization of information [10].

Similarly, the emphasis on comprehension 26.03% aligns with the broader discourse on language acquisition. Johnson, et al. [11] emphasized the critical role of understanding in language development, highlighting a shared perspective among educators regarding the significance of this skill [11].

The third position's focus on analysis 19.37% underscores the importance placed on this skill by teachers. This finding corresponds with studies by Brown and Jones [12], who identified analysis as a key component in language assessment practices, reflecting a common instructional approach in elementary education [12].

However, the study's revelation that recall, comprehension, and analysis collectively constitute around 80% of the total questions raises concerns about the potential neglect of higher-order thinking skills. This pattern may be attributed to the belief that lower mental skills (recall, comprehension, and analysis) form the foundation for higher mental skills (synthesis and evaluation). Consequently, teachers often focus on mastering these lower mental skills before progressing to higher ones. They may believe that the set of questions they use is contextually relevant. However, it's essential to consider that

this stage may be suitable primarily for this level of questions in preparation for developing more complex skills, such as composition and evaluation. Additionally, teachers tend to prioritize skills like analysis and application over synthesis and evaluation because the latter are perceived as more challenging to teach and require more time and effort

The limited attention given to application 8.25%, evaluation 6.03%, and synthesis 4.76% suggests an area for improvement in instructional strategies to promote higher-order cognitive processes. Anderson [13], argued that there is a need for a balanced and diversified instructional approach that encompasses both foundational and higher-order thinking skills. Clark [14] advocated for such an approach, emphasizing the need to cultivate a comprehensive set of cognitive abilities in students. In conclusion, while the study provides valuable insights into current pedagogical practices, it also prompts a critical reflection on the need to foster a more holistic development of students' cognitive skills in elementary education.

10. Recommendations

In light of the results obtained, the researchers put forward several recommendations aimed at enhancing the quality of education and developing students' cognitive skills. First, there is a need to promote a better balance between textbook questions and learning questions. This balance ensures that students are not merely memorizing content but are also engaged in meaningful learning experiences that foster deeper understanding and critical thinking.

Moreover, it is essential that Arabic-language courses at the primary level include a greater number of questions targeting higher-order thinking skills, with a particular focus on listening skills. These questions should be designed and improved in a way that actively supports the development of students' listening abilities, encouraging them to analyze, interpret, and evaluate what they hear rather than simply recall information.

The researchers also emphasize the need for further studies on the use of digital stories in education, especially in light of the rapid changes in technology and their application across different educational stages. Such research can help determine the effectiveness of digital storytelling in promoting engagement and skill development among learners.

Additionally, future studies should examine the extent to which mental skills are practiced in relation to speaking skills, or explore these issues within different age groups. Understanding how students develop cognitive skills across various domains and stages can inform more targeted and effective teaching strategies.

Finally, the researchers stress the importance of asking questions that require inference and higher-level thinking, rather than those that simply test a student's ability to recall what they have heard. Encouraging students to generate their own questions based on auditory input can serve as a powerful tool to assess and enhance their systematic thinking and comprehension abilities.

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Appendix 1.
Teacher Name: Laila Al-Mahamid
School Name: Al-Mustaqilla
Grade and Section: 3 National
Text Title: The Girl and the Moon

Lesson: 7
Date: 17/11/2024

No.	Question	Question Type
1	What is the title of our lesson?	Recall
2	Where did the girl sit?	Recall
3	In which season does the family sit in the garden?	Comprehension
4	Why did Sanaa sit in the garden?	Comprehension
5	Did she initially intend to look at the moon?	Analysis
6	What did Sanaa see in the sky?	Recall
7	Can you name some of the senses that God has blessed you with?	Analysis
8	Which sense did she use to recognize the names of the animals she listened to?	Comprehension
9	What is the organ responsible for the sense of hearing?	Comprehension
10	What did Sanaa say to the moon?	Recall
11	What type of sentence is: 'How far you are, O moon!'?	Analysis
12	Is this reality or imagination?	Comprehension
13	Can imagination become reality?	Analysis
14	Who is Sanaa talking to?	Recall
15	The moon answered that man used to dream of discovering the world. What did man used to dream of?	Recall
16	By what means did man sail the seas?	Comprehension
17	What did man use besides boats to sail the seas?	Comprehension

Appendix 2.
Listening Questions Used by the Teacher
Teacher Name: Doaa Al-Basyouni
School Name: Al-Mustaqilla
Grade and Section: 3 National
Text Title: The Girl and the Moon
Lesson: 6
Date: 17/11/2024

No.	Question	Question Type
1	What is the name of the story's heroine?	Recall
2	Where was Sanaa sitting?	Recall
3	What was Sanaa doing?	Recall
4	What did Sanaa see?	Recall
5	What did Sanaa say?	Recall
6	What type of sentence did Sanaa say: "How far you are, O moon!"?	Comprehension
7	Who answered her?	Comprehension
8	Someone entered the story and answered her. Who was it?	Recall
9	If you sit alone at night and talk to the moon, will it answer you?	Comprehension
10	What did Sanaa ask, and how?	Recall & Comprehension
11	How was man able to make space vehicles? What was his goal?	Comprehension
12	Did man dream of reaching space, or stay in Jordan?	Evaluation
13	How did the first human discover the existing countries and continents?	Analysis
14	Did man later discover how to reach the moon?	Comprehension
15	Does man try to reach the moon and then his mission ends?	Evaluation
16	What else exists in space besides the moon that we might discover?	Synthesis