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Breaking the Status Quo of Non-Authenticity in the Design of Listening Input for the EFL Classroom at the Greek State Primary School

Angeliki Ypsilanti*

PhD Student, Ionian University, Greece, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8333-4169>

Ioannis Karras

Associate Professor, Ionian University, Greece, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1635-8192>

***Correspondence email:** angyps12@gmail.com.

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Abstract. This study aimed to investigate various approaches to designing listening input within the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language in Greek state primary education. The research centered on the endeavor of an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher to foster positive motivation among sixth-grade students towards enhancing their listening comprehension skills. Consequently, the proposal to substitute traditional listening comprehension stimuli with spontaneous teacher discourse was advocated as the benchmark for offering authentic listening materials. As a first step, concerns about the adaptation of non-authentic materials were addressed through the evaluation of a specific listening section of the sixth grade's coursebook. Subsequently, an alternative proposal is advanced, suggesting that fostering new avenues for the potency of storytelling could serve as a solution to enhancing listening proficiency. More specifically, with the focus shifting from coursebook-oriented to teacher-generated listening input, storytelling was pinpointed as the most promising strategy for guaranteeing the English as a Foreign Language listener's hard focus through listening for pleasure. The transcription of the teacher's discourse for future utilisation constituted the preliminary phase in crafting a design-based research approach aimed at formulating a theoretical framework for investigating processes related to listening input design. The development of a detailed lesson plan idea based on the teacher talk revealed the effectiveness of the adoption of the enriched input approach in the production tasks that were both instructive and entertaining. At the same time, the integration of

the remaining skills (i.e., speaking, reading, writing) indicated the possibility for expanding the content and the scope of the available listening material to cater for the role of emotion and creativity in combatting demotivation. The study prepared the ground for perceiving the positive dimensions to spontaneous teacher talk as a medium of personalised storytelling to which students can relate. As a result, this has led to implications regarding the recognition of the teacher's capacity to enact curriculum adjustments informed by personal experience, reflection, and intuition.

Keywords: authentic materials, listening for pleasure, listening stimuli, spontaneity, storytelling, teacher talk

Introduction

In Greece, English is taught for three hours a week in the sixth grade of state primary school. Considering that English in Greece is taught as a foreign language, that is “as part of the primary and secondary education curriculum system” (Sifakis, 2004a, p. 37), students are expected to cultivate their English language skills during the classroom lesson. Placed in the expanding circle of Kachru's (1985) three concentric circles model of the English language, alongside other countries like China and Japan, Greece serves as an example of using English as a foreign language with no institutional or official status (Kirkpatrick, 2014; Yamanaka, 2006). However, Greek students are expected to become familiar with the power of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), enabling them to use it on a global level. For this to happen, Sifakis (2022, p. 299) contends that both teachers and learners would have to gradually develop an “ELF state of mind”. The aim is for students to achieve the “minimum-maximum of their fluency” by the end of their final year of primary school, as outlined by the Integrated Foreign Languages Curriculum (IFLC), corresponding to the A2-B1 levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The coursebook, supplied by the Greek Ministry of Education, serves as the main teaching resource for English. The fact that it prioritises the language content to be taught has made it a common replacement for syllabus design (Harmer, 2001). Nevertheless, the Integrated Foreign Languages Curriculum (Government Gazette, 2016) detaches the national curriculum from the coursebook's prescribed syllabus linking it directly to the National Foreign Language Testing System (KPG) and, more precisely, to the CEFR's descriptors of language competency levels. Developing communication skills in relation to the targeted level, rather than following the content of the coursebook, is regarded now as top priority (Government Gazette, 2016). Therefore, the goal of the Integrated Foreign Languages Curriculum is to serve as a guide for teachers, enabling them to create their own syllabuses. In other words, it is increasingly becoming the teacher's responsibility to determine how to enhance, adapt, and restructure the existing material.

The coursebook package for the sixth grade includes the Pupil's Book (Efremidou et al., 2017), the Pupil's Workbook (Efremidou et al., 2011), and the audio CD. The Pupil's Book is broken down into ten units, which are then further divided into three lessons each. Each unit focuses on a different topic bringing a cross-curricular approach to the teaching of English language skills (Efremidou et al., 2009). Through the four skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing, each lesson seeks to teach grammar and syntax as well as language functions. In addition to the standard grammar and vocabulary sections, the project method – which is the group work on researching a particular topic related to the unit – and the portfolio assessment – which is a compilation of the student's completed assignments – represent creative and resourceful ways of keeping the learner interested. All the recordings from the Pupil's Book's listening activities are available on the audio CD.

Research Problem

Experience and research have demonstrated that student engagement in listening activities cannot be assumed, and that a successful response largely depends on the teacher, who is typically responsible for actively creating conducive conditions (Kolb & Schocker, 2021). In the case of young learners, the lack of concentration, reluctance to broaden their horizons of knowledge by showing interest in a variety of subjects as well as the degree of heterogeneity among students are some of the possible explanations for this phenomenon. However, strong listening skills are undeniably crucial not only because they provide access to a wealth of information but also because they constitute the base of communication between speakers. Another reason for seeking methods to maintain sustained engagement in the EFL classroom is the particular challenges posed by unexpected listening comprehension barriers, such as background noise, unintelligible speech due to a high-pitched voice, and unique or exaggerated accents.

When it comes to teaching listening, Rost (2011, p. 202) considers that variables such as “age of learners, motivation, level of proficiency, cultural learning styles and expectations, class size and number of contact hours, and access to sources off listening input” should be taken into serious account when tailoring the listening activities to the students’ needs. A point to consider though is whether the students’ needs can be compiled and assessed in a way that can produce the desired result which should be that of sustaining the students’ long-term focus on specific listening stimuli. Going back to the Greek context, EFL teachers are granted significant freedom to modify existing materials or create their own to boost student motivation. Despite the potential benefits of experimenting with syllabus interventions to determine their effectiveness with students, implementing them may be challenging due to the focus on teacher-oriented input design. Authenticity in listening input choice and design has often been described as the best solution to the problem of motivating students (Sabet & Mahsefat, 2012). Obviously, the wealth of resources on the internet has been and is still used for this purpose as it is not only an easy way out for teachers but also an optimum opportunity for learners to practice autonomously.

An often overlooked area of authentic listening material is the natural, off-the-cuff language used by teachers in the classroom. With careful consideration and regular use, this spontaneous teacher talk can serve as a valuable alternative to traditional resources. The benefits of devising listening input on the spot can be numerous. To name just a few: saving planning time, connecting to students, improvising on the go to adjust to students’ needs, interacting with students.

Research Focus

At Greek State Primary School, listening comprehension is taught in a “teacher-led” and “coursebook-oriented” manner (Sifakis, 2004b, p. 195) because of the suitably selected listening input (Rost, 2011) in order to achieve the educational goals. The listening exercises that are employed are selective, interactive, and intensive. To complete tasks that either assess or improve their comprehension, primary school students are expected to listen not only for specific and detailed information but also for gist. The listening input, according to Efremidou et al. (2009, p. 6), can be “extracts from authentic listening texts which either introduce or review lexical items, grammatical structures, and language functions related to the lesson’s thematic focus”. Thus, in order to achieve successful listening outcomes, students must first be highly focused on what they listen to (“hard-focused listening”) and they must then process what they listen to in detail (“bottom-up processing”) (Sifakis et al., 2004). The importance of the “enriched input approach” use is further emphasised in the categorisation of the listening activities into pre-, while-, and post-listening stages that are supported by verbal and visual cues (Rost, 2011, p. 154).

Research Aim and Research Question

The main purpose of this study was to find a middle course between the mainstream types of listening (i.e., intensive, extensive, interactive, hard-focused, autonomous listening) in order to reach a harmonious balance where teachers and students collaborate to achieve shared objectives. Additionally, a new variable will be introduced for evaluation, focusing on the enjoyment of listening without allowing any negative impact on academic performance. Because pleasure is by definition a term that excludes performance evaluation, the main requirement is focus maintenance primarily for overall comprehension and secondarily for attaining at least a limited level of detail.

The research question that guided the study was as follows: How can the EFL teacher propose an effective intervention into the syllabus with regard to teaching listening for pleasure?

What follows was a short overview of what teaching the listening skill in Greek state primary education entails, an evaluation of the coursebook's only listening section based on storytelling, and the introduction of spontaneous teacher talk through a detailed lesson plan as a counter-response to the established adaptation of authentic materials for listening purposes.

Literature Review

Approaches to the Development of Listening Skills through Storytelling

Prior to conducting an evaluation test on the listening section of the sixth grade coursebook that utilises storytelling as a teaching method, it would be beneficial to examine recent literature on various storytelling techniques employed for educational purposes. Bearing in mind that the digital age has changed the way people connect to and transfer information, it comes as no surprise that digital storytelling is the predominant form used in enhancing the improvement of students' listening skills. More specifically, Akdamar and Sütçü (2021) advocate in favour of the contribution of technology in the way stories are received by EFL listeners, while Basyoni et al. (2020) have found that critical listening skills (CLS) can be improved through the "retelling" possibility provided by digital storytelling (DST) media. In another case, Avcı and Hol (2023) have investigated the positive effects of DigiFlyer, which is a digital storytelling program, on the listening skills of EFL young learners taking the Cambridge YLE (Young Learners English) exam. But what about utilizing traditional storytelling methods for improving listening skills? Are these still capable of sustaining the young learners' interest and how could they be most effectively implemented for a positive impact on their performance?

The dilemma between digital and conventional stories might as well be a false one as both types process the same content, only in a different way. While Akdamar (2021, p. 10) gives emphasis to the classification of the types of digital stories (i.e., "personal narratives", "stories that inform or instruct", "stories that examine historical events"), there is no additional emphasis on the type that might stand a better chance of resonating with young learners when teaching listening. The conventional story under evaluation below shares some of the characteristics of digital stories in that it belongs to the type of story that "informs and instructs" (Akdamar, 2021) while meeting the selection criteria of piquing learners' interest (Avcı & Hol, 2023).

The listening section of Unit 3 (Efremidou et al., 2017, pp. 30–31) represents a unique case of using storytelling to pique students' interest in listening comprehension. This is an example of a literary work that was turned into a play. It is a ghost story called *The Fifty-Cent* (www.americanfolklore.net). As dramatization involves exaggeration, the listening result is not authentic due to the scripted adaptation, feigned spontaneity, or lack of spontaneity altogether. On the same note, the learners' communicative needs are only partially met by the dramatic presentation of the story, as interaction is mainly associated

with the exchange of information for the purposes of the story's plot advancement. Since the primary goal of this listening input is enjoyment, the level of comprehension difficulty has been kept low to ensure that all listeners can access it. In order to help the mind better understand the events, the original story is simplified in terms of vocabulary and sentence structure, a process known as "restrictive simplification". Although the subject matter may not directly address the needs or circumstances of the students in real life, the entertainment value of the material is part of the education process especially for those who wish learning how to value the structure and meaning of literature. Pre-, while-, and post-listening stages indicate how the related tasks are organised. The while-listening stage's tasks C and D integrate reading and writing skills, which motivate students without placing an undue cognitive strain on them. While task D emphasises the listening piece's interactive potential, task C requests open-ended responses (Efremidou et al., 2017, p. 31). Task E, a monster quiz that follows the post-listening stage, seems unnecessary and deviates from the prescribed linear task sequencing (Efremidou et al., 2017, p. 31).

The above suggests that storytelling can be an effective method for shifting perspectives and improving classroom behaviours for students at risk of fulfilling negative expectations about their academic potential. What remains to be addressed is whether Rost's (2011) "enriched input" approach could be developed into an off-the-beaten-track approach to listening input design that builds upon creating pleasure and arousing curiosity whilst venturing beyond the aims of informing and instructing through the medium of spontaneous storytelling.

Attempts at Breaking the Status Quo in Listening Skills Development

Among the recorded attempts at teaching listening for pleasure as a way of combatting the lack of motivation in the EFL classroom, it is worth mentioning Aminatun et al.'s (2021, p. 264) proposal of the technique of dictogloss "where students work together to create a reconstructed version of a text read to them by their teacher". On the same note, Telaumbanua et al. (2022), Purba and Zaki (2022) explored the concept of "appreciative listening" to show how students can benefit from being exposed to listening stimuli that they find appealing such as English music, movies, talk shows, etc. The related concepts of "listening for pleasure" and "appreciative listening" hint at students' expectations about possible variations in the way they interact with the listening input.

But what about using spontaneous teacher talk as listening input to enhance students' listening skills? Apart from the aforementioned suggestions, fostering the proper conditions for teaching listening for pleasure is intricately connected to the concept of nurturing the right mindset in students through acknowledging their individual preferences. Additionally, promoting and augmenting spontaneity in teacher discourse emerges as another crucial means of enhancing students' focus and engagement. However, how each researcher views spontaneity as an attention enhancement factor is an entirely different matter. In the following two cases of spontaneous teacher talk, intentionality and spontaneity go together to embrace and involve the demotivated listener. For example, Cossavella and Cevasco (2021) underscore the importance of catering for specific features of spontaneous spoken discourse such as filled pauses in the improvement of the listener's comprehension. On a different front, Jin and Webb (2020, p. 563) argue that, when listening to teachers intentionally include "target words and collocations in their speech", students are aided with "incidental vocabulary learning", which means that they acquire new vocabulary without being consciously aware of doing so.

Given all perspectives, the query that emerges is: Can an EFL instructor purposefully integrate the storytelling technique with elements of impromptu speech to foster students' appreciation for enhancing their listening skills? Answering in the affirmative entails designing a listening lesson from scratch based on the EFL teacher's storytelling skills to integrate narration of true experience in speech

and give a good performance for students, premeditated albeit in the form of unplanned informal speech.

Materials and Methods

The following listening input has been inspired by the listening section of Unit 3 of the coursebook for the sixth grade and could be regarded as an alternative proposal of a ghost story that has been well thought out in advance but appears to have been made up on the spot by the teacher. It is a spoken narrative text whose authenticity is supported by the fact that it includes components of real spoken discourse, such as discourse markers (i.e., deictic expressions, comment clauses, fillers, hedges, degree modifiers, etc.) and paralinguistic features (i.e., tone and pitch of the voice). The performativity of language in the suggested input is primarily dependent on the teacher, even though it was created with the intention of providing a satisfying listening experience. The selection of an oral narrative for EFL listeners served as a practical test of a teaching strategy used for effectiveness reasons (Dujmović, 2006). A ghost story driven by the words of the narrator was created with the goal of providing an "extensive listening" type of input (Rost, 2011) that could spark the "content-based learning" (Sifakis et al., 2004) through the promotion of "global intrinsic motivation" (Ur, 1991).

It becomes implicit knowledge that the students share this "generalised desire to invest effort in the learning for its own sake" when the teacher is on the lookout for captivating language content to pique the learners' interest (Ur, 1991, p. 280). Sharing stories, whether through spontaneous "teacher talk" (Sifakis et al., 2004) to add a creative twist to traditional teaching methods or as standalone listening material for different parts of a lesson, serves as a teaching strategy that can be implemented in numerous ways and at various points during instruction.

Instrument

Since this is a preliminary study that goes as far as the descriptive stage, the detailed listening lesson below has been developed by the EFL teacher using an instance of real spontaneous talk on a day that improvisation emerged in a natural way because of the circumstances. Thus, the suggested tool for implementing a similar listening approach is by leveraging the spontaneity and intuition of real-life events to foster an environment conducive to genuine empathy and understanding.

Procedure and Lesson Plan Analysis

The EFL teacher utilised a pedagogical technique known as storytelling to engage sixth grade students in a lesson on real-life events. The auditory input provided by the teacher in the form of a ghost story on a rainy morning was intended to captivate students' attention and enhance their participation in the learning experience. By incorporating personal anecdotes into the narrative, the teacher effectively conveyed the information in a manner that encouraged student curiosity and engagement. This method of instruction is grounded in the principles of cognitive psychology, which emphasize the importance of using storytelling as a tool for promoting active learning and cognitive development in students. To prevent misunderstandings, the listening input included teacher talk with added paralinguistic features. As per the recommendation made by Krashen (1982), the input should encourage "negotiation of meaning" and "contain linguistic features a little beyond the learner's current level of competence" (Richards, 1983, p. 234). Therefore, it is expected of students to listen for gist as much as for specific information and to be able to summarize the story using integrated skills exercises in speaking and writing. The goal is to show through real-world examples that both top-down processing, which emphasises understanding overall meaning in listening, and bottom-up processing, which involves analysing language details, are equally crucial (Richards, 1995). In Table 1 is the lesson plan that includes all three stages.

Table 1*Lesson Plan*

Procedure	Aims	Time
<u>Pre-listening</u>		
Teacher introduces worksheet to students.		
1. Students interact with the images to make predictions about what will happen in the story by coming up with answers to the questions that will be asked.	Elicit answers to wh-questions about the plot by using a visual representation of the story to pique the students' interest.	5 mins
<u>While-listening</u>		
Part A		
2. The first part of the recording is played for students, who concentrate on key details (persons and objects).	Practice paying close attention to specific details when listening in order to highlight the key plot points.	3 mins
3. Students check off statements that correspond to their anticipations for the story's progression.	Make predictions about the story's progression by pointing out forthcoming events based on what is currently known.	3 mins
Part B		
4. After listening to the second part of the recording, students assign actors to certain events.	Check for expectations and make connections between individuals, items, and occasions.	6 mins
Part C		
5. Students listen to the entire narrative and determine which of the claims made regarding its plot are true or false.	Recall the storyline and assess the veracity of the claims (causality and temporality).	9 mins
6. Students pair the spoken words with the corresponding images.	Connect the spoken words to the same images from the pre-listening phase.	2 mins
<u>Post-listening</u>		
Teacher gives students the transcript.		
7. Students look through the transcript to fill in the blanks in a poem written from the perspective of a ghost.	Make guesses about the missing speech segments.	6 mins
8. Students look for a potential explanation for the ambiguous ending (the disappearance of the	Encourage students to participate in the completion of the story in	5 mins

enormous teddy bear) and offer a conclusion of their own.	order to involve them in the creative writing process.
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9. Teacher assigns homework for students to rewrite the story using key words to help them remember it.	Reactivate students' long-term memory by revisiting the ideas and emotions sparked by important words in the listening input.
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Source: Author's development.

Pre-listening Stage. First, in order to create continuous engagement, listeners' "situational or contextual knowledge" is emphasised by having them tune into the listening input's atmosphere (Richards, 1995). The pre-listening task rubric provides details regarding the occurrence of the monologue, while the picture strip – which is not in random order – along with the wh-questions serve as the foundation for prediction. The students are provided with the expected vocabulary for the listening input through the teacher's monitored anticipated responses.

While-listening Stage. In this section of the recording (Table 2), learners were asked to fill in a basic tree diagram with each entry denoting "one piece of information" and use hard-focused listening to identify the story's main points of reference (Burgess, 1994, p. 25). To ensure that the students were paying attention, the second task in the first part of the lesson examined expectations regarding the story's progression in a guided way (Part A, Task 2). In the second section of the recording (Table 3), the students not only analysed whether their theories fitted the facts but also filled in the grid (Part B, Task 4) and determine "who did what" by listening for the main idea. Next, the students listen to the entire recording in order to synthesise the gained knowledge and complete a True or False exercise (Task 5, Part B). In verifying the truth of every single statement, listeners are pleasantly surprised by the realisation that this was a twist-in-the-tale task. As a result, the students developed a feeling of achievement and adopted a positive outlook on what lies ahead.

Post-listening Stage. A rhyming poem extended the enjoyment of the listener, who as a reader summed up the story's plot in a literary manner from the viewpoint of the ghost girl. More specifically, the students read two parallel texts, i.e., the cloze task for the poem and the transcript of the story. The students quickly glance through the transcript to pinpoint any missing words, all while their brains simultaneously process the information both top-down and bottom-up in a cohesive manner. As a final integrated skill task, the students composed a narrative using the input's provided lexical prompts to encourage focused recall (Rost, 2011).

Results

What follows is a presentation of the results of the teacher's spontaneous talk in the form of tasks developed in three stages.

1. Look at the four pictures below and consider the events in the story before you start listening.

Figure 1

The Teddy Bear



Source: Author's development.

- a. Who is the story's narrator?
 - b. Where does the narrative take place?
 - c. What is the weather like in the story?
 - d. Whose teddy bears are the tiny one on the ground and the enormous one nailed to the tree?
 - e. Why has a tree been split in half?
2. Listen to the First Part of the story. What or who is the story about?

Table 2

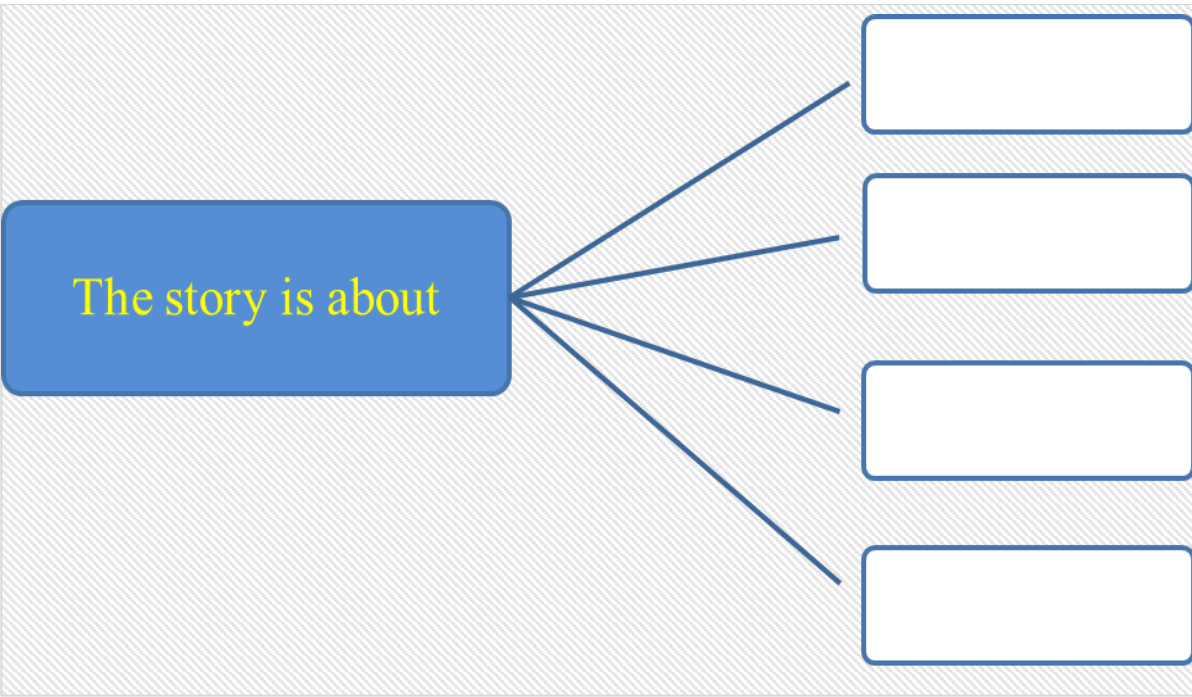
Transcript (First Part)

I'll share a story with you today. I hope you'll find it interesting, and perhaps you'll join me in my search for a satisfying conclusion. The reason for being late to class this morning is also contained in this story. In other words, it's sort of a story within a story, as you might imagine. I'll be more specific. I'll provide you some hints. A really big teddy bear that never gets wet, a forest full of sycamore trees, a teacher who commutes to work by car every morning (that would be me), and a young girl who, sorry to say, has passed away are all part of the story. But allow me to simply begin at the beginning. Every morning on weekdays, I get in my old red car and drive to your school for about an hour. Let me assure you that this isn't the most enjoyable experience to have on a rainy day. Why? Because I need to drive with greater caution than usual and with the hope that nothing bad will happen to me. And can you guess where I go slower? I reduce the speed when I pass through the sycamore tree forest—you know the one I'm talking about—because it can be extremely hazardous when it rains really hard. Still, I have more time to look around when I do that. Now prick up your ears and listen carefully to what follows next! It's kind of strange what I'm about to tell you. It's even possible that you'll believe that I'm just using my imagination to trick you after hearing what I have to say. But rest assured that everything you're about to hear is true. There's an enormous teddy bear nailed to a sycamore tree that I see every time I drive very slowly through the forest. And the fact that this teddy bear always appears dry makes things even stranger.

Source: Author's development.

Figure 2

About the Story



Source: Author's Development

3. What are you anticipating to hear next? Mark items 1 through 5 with a tick (✓) or a cross (×).

- a. The teacher got soaked to the skin in the pouring rain. ☐
- b. A little teddy bear caught the girl's eye and she took it home. ☐
- c. The heavy rain caused the forest to overflow. ☐
- d. Both the enormous teddy bear and the sycamore tree were hit by a thunder. ☐
- e. The teddy bear came to life thanks to a fairy. ☐

4. In the Second Part, the teacher tells the story of the teddy bear. Listen and put a tick (✓) in the correct box.

Table 3

Transcript (Second Part)

It can't have been too long ago. Let me think back to the last time it rained cats and dogs, hmm... that must have been a few weeks ago. On a rainy day as I was driving, I turned off the engine, got out, and felt the teddy bear with my bare hands. There was a major surprise waiting for me as soon as I touched it. The rain made my hands wet, but the teddy bear wasn't even slightly soaked. The teddy bear's fur remained dry despite the tree leaves drizzling water on my hair. That's why I decided to play detective yesterday after letting my curiosity take over. I typed "teddy bear", "sycamore tree", never wet" on the internet. What I came up with will come as a big surprise to you, too. A girl who was struck by lightning three years ago was the subject of an article I discovered in the local newspaper. The girl was reportedly out in the rain looking for her teddy bear in the forest when the thunder struck her, according to the article. When she couldn't find her teddy bear at home, she reasoned that it might have fallen out of her schoolbag on the way to class. She just couldn't bear the idea of her teddy bear being stranded in the woods without any means of protection from the rain. Her parents were the ones who hung the enormous teddy bear from the sycamore tree after the tragedy. They thought it

would be like helping her to locate it. Rumour has it that her spirit roams the forest, searching for the stray teddy bear, each time it rains. That's why the enormous teddy bear is on stand-by, waiting for her.

I had trouble arriving at your school on time today. I had to pull over for a few minutes to decide which way to go because the forest road was covered in mud and water after it had rained. My car abruptly came to a stop right next to the sycamore tree. If that was a coincidence or not, I'm still not sure. The teddy bear was no longer there, I mean no trace of it anymore. I turned to look around, hoping to see the girl holding the teddy bear nearby. However, she was nowhere to be found. Rain continued to fall heavily... looking and sounding unstoppable. Nothing could have prepared me for what happened next. Right before my very eyes, a huge lightning bolt struck the sycamore tree. Splitting it in half. I suppose I was fortunate that it struck the tree instead of me. Now that you know everything, I'm sure you can forgive me for being late to class today.

Source: Author's development.

Table 4

Who Did What?

Who did what?	never found the little teddy bear	saw an enormous teddy bear	was lost	slipped off the schoolbag
The teacher		✓		
The girl	✓			
The enormous teddy bear			✓	
The little teddy bear				✓

Source: Author's development.

5. Choose True (T) or False (F) for each of the following statements.

- The teacher found that the teddy bear was entirely dry when she touched it. **T**
- The teddy bear was lost when it fell out of the girl's schoolbag. **T**
- Soon after being struck by thunder, the girl passed away. **T**
- The enormous teddy bear sat there hoping that the little girl's ghost would discover it. **T**
- The teddy bear's sycamore tree was split in half by another thunder. **T**

6. Now listen again both parts and match the images with the phrases a-d.

Figure 3

True Facts about the Teddy Bear



Source: Author's Development

- a. this teddy bear always appears dry
- b. without any means of protection from the rain
- c. splitting it in half
- d. reduce the speed

7. Go through the transcript and then fill in the gaps in the following poem about the ghost girl.

The ghost girl

A **lightning** struck her
when she went
to find her little teddy friend.

On **rainy** days
she's out there
hoping to provide shelter for her bear.

A ghost girl people say she is
roaming among the sycamore trees.
To comfort her soul
her parents thought
to buy another bear
which for her they sought.

Nailed to a sycamore tree

like a haunting plea

waits for the little girl

the toy bear till

again one day disaster struck.

This time the lightning bolt **struck** in two

the sycamore tree's trunk

and the teddy bear's heart too.

Since then

the ghost never appeared again.

Safe in her arms people hope it is

the teddy bear with the rainless fur.

8. What do you think happened to the enormous teddy bear at the end of the story?

9. Use some or all of the words **below** to retell the whole story.

The Whole Story

enormous teddy bear nailed rain cats and dogs ghost girl lost roam lightning bolt sycamore tree split in half get soaked thunderstruck

Discussion

Going back to the research question, “How can the EFL teacher propose an effective intervention into the syllabus with the regard to teaching listening for pleasure?”, a first observation remark to make is that without going to great lengths, the EFL teacher has been effective in transforming an oral personal narrative into an appealing listening stimulus as well as using spontaneity for instructive purposes. As far as the EFL teacher is concerned, fuelling the listening input with her creative flair was the first step towards predicting the change in attitude in her students during her account. The listening lesson incorporates a mix of creativity and enjoyment by integrating other skills such as reading, speaking, and writing into the task requirements. The effectiveness of the listening input is ultimately determined by the EFL teacher based on whether the content is suitable for creating tasks that foster student appreciation for the provided stimuli.

Clearly, fostering a positive mindset is crucial in effectively preparing in advance to inspire students. Although conducted in a university context, Abdolrezapour and Ghanbari's (2021) research on the role of students' positive mood in the improvement of their listening ability verifies their study's hypothesis that emotion has a role to play in the issue of anticipated effectiveness. In the above academic context, positivity translates into regulating students' positive emotions towards the listening skill through selected materials, one of which being “short authentic lectures” (Abdolrezapour & Ghanbari's, 2021, p. 1169). In some respects, the proposed spontaneous teacher talk as listening input is about

raising and regulating emotion in an escalating manner, in the way an oral story is sequenced from beginning to end. Towards these ends, Zhu and Aslan (2023, p. 3) have researched the role of enjoyment (i.e., Foreign Language Enjoyment) in listening comprehension in a Chinese EFL context only to find out that “Chinese EFL learners’ FLE is mainly rooted in the teacher” on whom the conditions for a positive listening environment are dependent. From this perspective, why not encourage the idea that teachers can also provide positive and engaging listening experiences by incorporating spontaneous storytelling with a character-driven emotional journey that resonates with the listener's empathy? The proposed listening input invites the listener’s empathy through the teacher’s emotional arc since the story is told from her point of view and is about her own emotional engagement.

It is important to incorporate empathy and performativity in both improvised and preplanned listening tasks to maximize their effectiveness. For empathy-building reasons, the proposed tasks in all three stages are not aimed at assessing performance but at improving the conditions of listener performance via engagement without interruption. Clearly for empathy-sustainment purposes, the listening-for-pleasure precondition ought to be fulfilled and extended to the effect that engagement is by no means lost on the way. Reinforcing identification with the ghost story’s characters by signposting teacher talk with appropriate discourse markers is a good starting point. On the same note, McRae and Nainby (2015) have built a case for “engagement beyond interruption” via “performativity” by involving students in the adoption of different standpoints during the listening experience. The post-listening tasks 8 and 9 provided students with the perfect opportunity for swapping positions with the teacher to become the performers who address a listening audience.

Limitations of the Study

Note that the study in question primarily focuses on design and serves as an initial step towards developing theory regarding the incorporation of spontaneity into teachers' narrative spoken discourse. In spite of lending a fresh perspective on the issue of connecting spontaneous teacher talk to storytelling, the lack of empirical evidence restricts the possibility of extracting robust conclusions since the impact of the implementation of the proposed listening lesson has not been investigated in a systematic way. Recording the specific listening input for putting it to the test will give rise to further discussions on its serviceability to the purposes of listening comprehension in an EFL context, thus facilitating reflective practice on a realistic basis.

While the research is based on a specific local case to improve listening input for young students in Greek state primary schools, it also considers the possibility of broader appeal due to the inclusion of a universally interesting topic (i.e., narrating ghost stories as a pastime on different occasions). Along the same lines, it could also be claimed that building upon previous knowledge of or experience with ghost-related concepts and terms used in other school subjects qualifies as an additional predictive factor for pre-existing familiarity.

Due to the necessity of the pleasure dimension, this emotion-focused intervention can be successfully implemented, it should by no means be breached as the risk of losing the students’ trust in that this is not yet another case of a listening experience that exposes their low achievement is always present.

Suggestions for Improvement

To prepare the ground for better results and in view of providing an uninterrupted extensive listening experience whose aim is listening for pleasure, the teacher could spend more time pre-teaching new vocabulary to increase familiarity during the pre-listening phase. Awareness should also be raised of the fact that correcting errors is of secondary importance. Furthermore, it is best to encourage

learners to read the poem aloud instead of having them read it silently to themselves during the while-listening stage, when they are exposed to it in order to complete a gap-filling task. In this manner, they will have the ability to successfully retrieve information by recognizing rhyming patterns and understanding both the meaning and sound associated with them. Regarding the transcript's contribution to the lesson, it would be wise to use it in conjunction with the previous replay because real speech – which in this instance has undergone "elaborative" rather than "restrictive" simplification – can also be utilized for language output. Another way of processing the listening input to produce listening activities would be to build upon the emotions of the different characters involved in the story as well as on the teacher's emotional reactions to the story. Such emotion-related activities could address the students' involvement on the creative side by asking them to answer back by writing a poem of their own to read aloud in class or by preparing a similar ghost story to present in class. Using their personal experience to put up a performance in the form of roleplay in class could also prove beneficial for the purposes of practicing among them their improvisation skills as interactive listeners and speakers at the same time.

Conclusions and Directions for Further Research

It's crucial to bear in mind that employing storytelling as a pedagogical approach has the potential to reduce the "affective filter" (Rost, 2011, p. 151) of the students when their attention is at its lowest point. It is important to value the pleasure of listening purely for the sake of listening, as this is how "positive motivation" reaches its highest point (Ur, 1991). Therefore, teachers should urge students to listen for the main ideas but caution them against becoming discouraged if the listening material's language level is just a little bit above their comfort level (Bala, 2015). According to Vandergrift (2004, p. 13), "listeners also need judicious practice in perception skills that will help them overcome the word segmentation skills of their native language and learn to identify words in L2 connected speech". "Unscripted, unplanned spoken discourse" can help learners tell the difference between the lexicogrammatical features of real-world speech and the scripted language of textbooks, e. g., through materials adaptation (Wagner, 2014, p. 293).

Bearing in mind that teachers have the privilege of functioning as "language models for authentic" For that reason, talking can be modified through materials adaptation. By using more authentic language in classroom materials, teachers can demonstrate proper usage and pronunciation for students to emulate. This change can also help students better understand and internalise the language in a real-world context (Kolb & Schocker, 2021, p. 64), it would be a waste of their potential not to be encouraged to act as such on the listening comprehension front as well by becoming the direct source of input. Going back to Zhu and Aslan (2023), whose findings suggest that if EFL teachers implement the teacher-centered approach to teaching listening, chances are that students will be more positively disposed towards the prospect of listening to the end. In this respect, the EFL teacher can regulate and test how and why competences are acquired before things get out of hand during a listening session that has limited appeal.

As it has already been emphasised, the proposed listening input has not assessed student response in the EFL classroom in a systematic way. Further research is needed to validate the effects of the spontaneity-in-teacher-talk approach and to judge the suitability of providing an alternative to the coursebook-oriented type of listening input. What is more, conventional storytelling should be given emphasis on equal grounds with digital storytelling and not be opted out as out-dated. On the same note, it would be a good idea to explore the ability of students to act as storytellers who crave the audience response and encourage classroom interaction for student-oriented stories that integrate the cultivation of all skills. As a final note, it might be worth to review the policy rubrics at curriculum level on listening

comprehension in Greek primary education to reset the terms of the relationship between teacher intervention and the syllabus.

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