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外籍英語助教對中小學生英文聽力理解能力之影響

**The Impact of Native-Speaking English Teaching Assistants on  
Younger Students' Listening Comprehension Skills in English**



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## 摘要

本研究旨在探討外籍英語助教(NEST)在協同教學的模式中，對台灣學生於溝通式取向之英文聽力能力之影響。參與本研究的受試者來自台灣五個地區：北部、中部、南部、東部、離島，此研究的受試者包含 584 位學生，年齡分布為 12 至 14 歲，受試者分為兩組：一組為具有一年以下外籍英語助教的協助，另一組則有三年以上外籍英語助教協助。透過比較兩組受試者的英語聽力測驗分數以及在各大題的作答情形，以及課室觀察報告的分析，探討學生於溝通式取向之英文聽力能力的表現，以及外籍英語助教對其表現結果的影響為何。

研究結果顯示如下：第一，有三年以上外籍英語助教的學習環境之學生的英語聽力測驗結果分數高於有一年以下外籍英語助教的學習環境之學生。第二，在各大題的表現上，有三年以上外籍英語助教的學習環境之學生的英語聽力測驗結果顯著高於有一年以下外籍英語助教的學習環境之學生，這個研究結果顯示因為三年以上外籍英語助教的學習環境讓學生有更多接觸道地英文的機會，例如在日常生活中聽從英文的指示，或是較長的英文口說內容，因此學生對於未知的訊息有更好的包容力與耐心，也就是與本研究聽力測驗相類似的對話。

最後，根據本研究結果，對未來研究提出建議，期許未來研究者以此為基礎，更進一步深入探討學生在溝通導向方面之英語能力在外籍英語助教的協助之具體變化。

關鍵字：外籍英語助教、溝通式取向、英語聽力能力、聽力能力測驗、協同教學

## Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate younger learners' listening proficiency with the authentic input of NESTs in a co-teaching model in a listening test developed based on the communicative testing approach. The participants included 584 students from different parts of Taiwan including the North, the East, the Middle, the South, and the offshore islands, aging from 12 to 14. They were put into two groups: less-than-a-year NESTs assistance group and more-than-three-year NESTs assistance group. The result of the communicative listening test and the annual reports were analyzed to provide both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Base on the analysis, two major findings were identified. First, participants who received NESTs' assistance for a longer period of time performed better than those who received shorter ETA instruction throughout the six areas. Second, participants with more than three years of NESTs' assistance perform better throughout the entire test, which might suggest that NESTs might have helped training students' ability to concentrate and tolerate unfamiliar words and long unknown information in English learning especially listening comprehension.

In the end, recommendations and suggestion were proposed based on the findings of the present study in the hope of providing a basis for future directions on more in-depth investigation of younger learners' listening proficiency with the assistance of NESTs.

*Keywords:* NESTs, communicative approach, English listening ability, listening ability test,  
co-teaching



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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background**

Listening plays a key role in everyday life. As Hedge (2000) pointed out that when people are engaged in daily communication, 45 percent of the time is spent on listening. Numerous studies have also stressed the importance of listening (e.g., Arnold, 2000; Dunkel, 1991; Gilakjani, 2011; Long, 1985; Rost, 1990; Vogely, 1995). As the studies pointed out, listening plays not only an important role in the communication process (Gilakjani, 2011) but also in the development of learners' language (Rost, 1990). In fact, it is a significant skill to develop in second language learning. To be more specific, listening is the most frequently utilized skill in language learning classrooms (Ferris 1998; Hamouda, 2013; Hasan, 2000; Krasen, 1985; Kurita, 2012; Murphy, 1991; Rost, 2002; Vandergrift, 1999; Vogely, 1995). Hasan (2000) and Hamouda (2013) claimed that listening comprehension provides an ideal venue for language acquisition and the development of other language skills.

In Taiwan's English education, listening ability has been emphasized since the introduction of English at the elementary school level curriculum in September 2001 (Chang, 2007). That is, in September 2001, The Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum for Elementary and Junior High Schools which focuses on developing students' listening

and speaking abilities was implemented (Chern, 2010). After students finish elementary schools, they move on to junior high schools where all four skills are equally emphasized. Moreover, starting in 2014, English listening test has been included in the Comprehensive Assessment Program for Junior High School Students (RCPET, 2014). Now, with the implementation of the 12-year Basic Education Guideline on its way, listening competency will be a major part of language learning in Taiwan's English education (NAER, 2018).

When considering learners' listening comprehension, researchers have extensively studied the cognitive aspect of listening comprehension in recent years, which mainly examines the process of comprehension (e.g., Baddeley, 2003; Field, 2010; Goh & Taib, 2006; Lightbown, 2008; O'MALLEY, Chamot, & Küpper; 1989; Richards, 2008; Rubin, 1994; Vandergrift, 1999). Despite the fact that the major focus of the recent listening comprehension studies has been laid on the process of the comprehension, there is also a body of research on listening comprehension about how learners interact with the authentic input (e.g., Markham, 1988; Griffiths, 1991; Rubin, 1994; Shohamy & Inbar, 1991) and the measurement of the listening comprehension (e.g., Arnold, 2000; Buck, 2001; Rost, 1990).

As Vandergrift (2007, p. 200) pointed out that “exposure to authentic-type texts and natural speech rate is preferred by L2 learners and can be beneficial for listening

development,” it seems that it is vital to incorporate authentic materials in the activities developed for language learning. The term “authentic” was defined by Rogers and Medley (1988, p. 468) as “language samples that reflect a naturalness of form, and an appropriateness of cultural and situational context that would be found in the language as used by native speakers.” Although the benefit of authentic input was demonstrated in the past research (e.g., Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Rogers & Medley, 1988), little attention has been paid to the authentic input from the native-English speaking teachers (NESTs). In other words, the effectiveness of NESTs as an authentic input in language learning classrooms has not been sufficiently studied. Mixed statements have been claimed considering whether NESTs are positive authentic input for language learners, especially in an EFL context.

In terms of measuring learners’ listening ability, researchers have been turning the theoretical notions of listening comprehension into different types of tasks in a listening test, such as phonemic discrimination, paraphrase recognition, gap-filling, etc (Buck, 1995). Many empirical studies explored learners’ listening comprehension with different tests (e.g., Chang & Read, 2006; Chien & Wei, 1998); however, whether the tests or tasks reflect what the researchers intended to explore is yet to be confirmed. In other words, the listening constructs were neglected in the previous studies. Furthermore, with the rise of the communicative teaching, it is necessary to develop

listening tests in a communicative approach in response to the trend. After all, the ultimate goal for language learning is to facilitate L2 learners to comprehend the target language in real-life situations. It is hoped that the present study can reveal ways to improve the listening performance of the students in Taiwan and might provide pedagogical insights for Taiwan's English education programs.

## **1.2 Motivation of the Study**

There are many native speaking teacher programs in Taiwan such as the Ministry of Education's Foreign English Teachers in Taiwan (MOE FET program), King Car Education Foundation's English Education Schweitzer Program, and Fulbright Foundation for Scholarly Exchange's English Teaching Assistant ETA program (Fulbright ETA Program). All of the programs recruit native English speakers to serve as either co-teaching teachers or teaching assistants in the elementary schools and junior high schools in Taiwan. Annual reports from the above-mentioned programs have shown that these programs were beneficial to not only learners, but also Taiwanese English teachers and native English-speaking teachers or assistants. However, the reports had limited investigation on the actual impact of the native-speaking teachers on younger students' English listening performance. To be more specific, questions such as the influence of the native-speaking teachers on learners' different listening comprehension skills remains to be explored. Furthermore, the annual reports and the

existing studies were limited to specific areas, schools, and programs. Therefore, in order to provide a more holistic view of the listening performances of younger students in Taiwan, the present study recruited students from the above-mentioned type of programs in different parts of Taiwan. It sets out to explore the actual effectiveness of NESTs' authentic input by applying a communicative listening test.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

The present study aims at investigating younger learners' listening proficiency with the authentic input of NESTs in a co-teaching model in a listening test developed based on the communicative testing approach. The significance of the study can be inspected from both theoretical and pedagogical perspectives. In terms of the pedagogical perspective, it is hoped that the present study can reveal ways to improve the listening performance of the students in Taiwan and might shed lights on the future direction for Taiwan's English education programs and policies. With regard to the theoretical perspective, the findings of the study might explain the effectiveness of authentic input for L2 learners' listening competence.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

1. Do students who are assisted by NESTs show a better improvement in their listening comprehension skills than those who are not assisted by NESTs?
2. Do the effects of having NESTs as English Teaching Assistants vary by different listening comprehension skills?

## **1.5 Organization of the Study**

The thesis is organized as follows. Chapter One provides the background and motivation of the present study on young learners' listening proficiency in a communicative test with authentic input from NESTs. Chapter Two reviews relevant papers to the present research topic including (a) general backgrounds of listening comprehension and authenticity, (b) the effectiveness of English-native teachers' authentic input in a co-teaching module, and (c) three primary approaches in listening assessment. Chapter Three describes the details of the methodology in the present study. Results and discussions are presented in Chapter Four. Finally, Chapter Five summarizes and concludes the major findings. Limitations and suggestions for future research are also provided at the end of the chapter.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

The present study investigated the influence of NESTs on younger learners' listening performance on communicative tests. To explore the stated research questions, the relevant literature reviewed in this chapter is separated into three sections: Section 2.1 summarizes the general backgrounds of listening comprehension and focuses on the aspect of authenticity; Section 2.2 explores the effectiveness of English-native teachers' authentic input in a co-teaching module; Section 2.3 reviews listening assessment with three primary approaches to language testing; and finally, major findings and limitations from previous studies will be summarized in Section 2.4.

#### 2.1 Listening Comprehension

##### 2.1.1 Listening Comprehension Process

Listening comprehension has been under great interest and been investigated from many aspects for decades among educational researchers. Most researchers in recent years focus on the cognitive aspect of listening comprehension, which mainly examines the process of the comprehension (e.g., Kurita, 2012; O'Malley & Küpper, 1989; Rost, 1990; Rubin, 1994; Vandergrift, 1999, 2007). There are two commonly adopted models of listening comprehension: Anderson's (1985) three stages of language comprehension and top-down processing versus bottom-up processing. Anderson (1985) proposed that

comprehension is an interrelated and recursive process which involves perceptual processing, parsing, and utilization. In the first stage, perceptual processing, attention is focused on the encoding of the spoken message. In the second stage, parsing, words and messages are utilized to build up meaningful mental representations. The third stage is utilization, in which the listener relates the mental representation to the existing knowledge and it is the stage where comprehension takes place if the mental representation and the existing knowledge are matched.

Based on the aforementioned listening comprehension model, O'Malley and Küpper (1989) conducted an empirical study to examine whether L2 learners process information as proposed by Anderson and the strategies used while comprehending academic texts with a group of high school students in an ESL context using "think aloud" protocol. The participants were asked to listen to different types of listening passages including lectures and short stories and think aloud in either Spanish or English to explain how they understood the listening passages. The result showed that the listening comprehension presented by the participants was consistent with the three stages proposed by Anderson. Furthermore, the strategies used by effective and ineffective listeners were different and were applied in various ways depending on the phase of comprehension.

Another model of listening comprehension deals with the idea of top-down processing and bottom-up processing. Top-down processing refers to the application of background knowledge in understanding the meaning of a message, while in the bottom-up processing, the understanding of each of the linguistic characteristics from the incoming input is used as the basis for understanding the whole message. It is generally agreed by many researchers that listening comprehension occurs when both top-down and bottom-up processes continuously interact (Vandergrift, 2007). For example, Chien and Wei (1998) investigated the strategies used by different proficiency levels of college EFL learners in listening comprehension with two sets of authentic listening materials in recall tasks. The result showed that to match the new information with what is already known (top-down processing) and to infer meaning between words or phrases (bottom-up processing) are two most effective cognitive strategies for understanding the aural input. Chang and Read (2006) also evaluated the influence of listening strategies on the listening performance of college EFL learners. The listening comprehension test they applied was a section of TOEIC listening comprehension test which was recorded by native-speaking ESL teachers with diverse accents. They found that the most effective type of support was providing information about the topic, which is more of a top-down processing; vocabulary instruction was the least useful form of support, which is more of a bottom-up processing.

Despite the fact that all the empirical studies mentioned above explored listening comprehension strategies used by learners with different tests or tasks and put much emphasis on the process of comprehension, the listening constructs, that is, the definition of listening competence and the listening tasks, in the aforementioned studies were neglected. As Chapelle (1999) pointed out that there are two ways to define a construct: (1) to define the competence, that is, the abilities that we believe the test-takers should acquire and (2) to define the tasks that we think test-takers should perform. However, either way was applied in the abovementioned studies. When using listening tests to conduct research, the construct validity should be of primary concern (Vongpumivitch, 2007). In terms of the listening assessment, further literature review will be presented in the later section. Apart from the listening constructs, the materials that learners process during the comprehension in both the empirical studies and the real-life situations are also of importance considered by many researchers (e.g., Buck, 1995; Field, 2010; Goh, 2002; Rubin, 1994; Vandergrift, 2004) which were also overlooked in the above-reviewed empirical studies.

### **2.1.2. Authentic Input for Listening Comprehension**

Despite the fact that the major focus of the recent listening comprehension studies has been laid on the process of the comprehension, there is a body of research on listening comprehension about how learners interact with authentic input (Rubin, 1994).

Some researchers examined the text characteristics such as the text type of the listening passage (e.g., Shohamy & Inbar, 1991), the acoustic variables (i.e. speech rate) of the authentic input (e.g., Griffiths, 1991); others from the aspect of interlocutor characteristics such as the gender of the speaker (e.g., Markham, 1988).

The term “authentic” was defined by Rogers and Medley (1988, p. 468) as “language samples that reflect a naturalness of form, and an appropriateness of cultural and situational context that would be found in the language as used by native speakers.”

As Vandergrift (2007, p. 200) pointed out that “exposure to authentic-type texts and natural speech rate is preferred by L2 learners and can be beneficial for listening development.” Such statement coincides with Rogers and Medley’s (1988) study that they believed students should experience the language which is used for real communication by native speakers. It is necessary to incorporate authentic materials in the activities developed for language learning. After all, the ultimate goal for language learning is to facilitate L2 learners to comprehend the target language in real-life situations (Rogers & Medley, 1988). This might also explain why all the empirical studies reviewed adopt authentic listening materials when examining listening comprehension.

However, not all studies present such point of view. For example, Teng (2001) examined the effects of modified sentences and the speech rate of listening texts on the

listening comprehension of a group of 168 EFL freshmen in college. The results showed that students performed better when they listened to the tests that were syntactically modified. Besides, students performed better in the slower version of the input instead of the original version. The researcher concluded that the use of modified listening passages should be applied in the listening tests. It seems that mixed statements have been claimed considering the use of authentic or modified listening materials when examining listening comprehension. Thus, the present study intends to investigate how the authentic input of NESTs in a co-teaching model influences younger learners' listening proficiency.

## **2.2 Co-teaching Native-English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) and Non-Native-English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs)**

As the effectiveness of NESTs as an authentic input in language learning classrooms has long been a controversial issue, the advantages and disadvantages of NESTs and NNESTs have been under great interest for decades among educational researchers (e.g., Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Florence Ma, 2012; Herbert & Wu, 2009; Medgyes, 1992). The findings suggested that NESTs and NNESTs have their own strengths and weakness. NESTs are valued for their authenticity and positive personal traits (Barratt & Kontra, 2000). They are good at teaching conversation classes, providing perfect linguistic models, getting learners to speak,

being friendly (Benke & Medgyes, 2005) and creating relaxing and lively classroom atmosphere (Poon & Higginbottom, 2000). However, NESTs are mostly criticized for being unable to identify language learner's common problems (Barratt & Kontra, 2000), lack of expertise in English language teaching (Chang, 2007), and their non-examination-oriented teaching styles (Florence Ma, 2012). In contrast to NESTs, findings pointed out that NNESTs are appreciated for understanding students' learning difficulties and needs (Florence Ma, 2012) and serve as models of successful language learners (Medgyes, 1992). Nonetheless, it is suggested that they are usually poor in pronunciation and tend to have traditional and textbook-based teaching styles (Medgyes, 1992). In short, it seems that NESTs and NNESTs make up for each other's disadvantages, which "make both groups of teachers serve equally useful purposes in their own terms" (Medgyes, 1992, p. 349). Thus, having NESTs and NNESTs to co-teach can help consolidate their qualities and make a learning environment which benefits students' English learning.

Co-teaching is defined as "two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space" (Cook & Friend, 1995, p. 2). It is a commonly applied teaching model in East Asian native English teacher programs, including Hong Kong NET (Native-speaking English Teacher) scheme, EPIK (English Program in Korea) program, Japanese JET (the Japan

Exchange and Teaching) scheme, and etc. Taiwan, as well, utilized co-teaching in different programs which include NESTs, such as MOE's FET (Foreign English Teachers) program, Fulbright's ETA program, King Car's Schweitzer Program, etc. As findings suggested that co-teaching provides more opportunities for students to use the target language (Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Carless & Walker, 2006), creates a more pleasant learning environment (Buckley, 2000), and helps facilitate learners with low English proficiency (Storey et al., 2001).

Although co-teaching seems to help facilitate learners with low English proficiency, studies directly assessing the effects of authentic input provided by the NESTs in a co-teaching model are still very limited (e.g., Lin, 2017; Wu, 2015). Wu (2015) explored the effectiveness of different co-teaching models between NESTs and NNESTs on sixth graders' English listening and speaking performances in an EFL context. There were three types of co-teaching in the study: (1) NEST dominated the teaching while NNEST facilitated, (2) station-teaching, and (3) team-teaching. The participants were given a pre-test and followed by a post-test after 10 weeks of different co-teaching instruction. The result showed that NEST dominated the teaching while NNEST facilitated and station-teaching both had significant effects on students' listening and speaking performances. The team-teaching model had a greater effect on students' speaking abilities; however, it only had a limited effect on students' listening

abilities. In general, NESTs in co-teaching models have a positive effect on language learners. Lin's (2017) study also supported such a finding. The study investigated the influence of NESTs and NNESTs' co-teaching on Taiwanese students' listening comprehension. The results indicated co-teaching by NESTs and NNESTs greatly impacted young EFL learners' listening. Such co-teaching influenced not only learners' listening comprehension, but also their performance on different questions types such as those requiring English listening and reading at the same time. Learners with longer co-teaching experience performed better on question types requiring English listening and reading. In short, it seemed that the authentic input provided by the NESTs did have a positive effect on learners in a co-teaching model.

### **2.3 Listening Assessment**

Listening comprehension is a complex and active process (Vandergrift, 1999). A number of theories have been established to explain the construct for such process and researchers has been turning these theoretical notions into actual practice, that is, the listening tests. According to Buck (2001), there are three major approaches to language testing: the discrete-point, integrative and communicative approaches. The approaches will be reviewed in the following sub-sections.

#### **2.3.1 Discrete-point Testing**

Discrete-point testing is based on the theory proposed by Lado (1961). He assumed

that it is possible to identify the isolated elements of language (i.e., grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) and to test each of these items separately. He believed that by testing a representative item of the language can estimate learners' language proficiency. Typical discrete-point tests include phonemic discrimination tasks, response evaluation tasks, and paraphrase recognition tasks (Buck, 2001).

However, the opponents of the discrete-point tests pointed out that the actual function in communication might not be evaluated through discrete-point testing (e.g., Carroll, 1961; Oller, 1975). Oller (1975) claimed that the assessment of the individual items in a language is no better than the language as a whole for an item cannot represent the overall proficiency of a learner's language ability. Both Carroll and Oller advocated that integrative test is a better approach to assessing language learning.

### **2.3.2 Integrative Testing**

In contrast to discrete-point tests, integrative tests are intended to evaluate L2 learners' language abilities as a whole. Oller (1973, p. 37) explained that "whereas discrete items attempt to test knowledge of language one bit at a time, integrative tests attempt to assess a learner's capacity to use many bits all at the same time." The theoretical notion associated with integrative testing is that listening is to process texts in real time, that is, to interpret the semantic meaning. Some well-known integrative tests are the close test, dictation, and gap-filling (Buck, 2011). The problem with

integrative tests is somewhat similar to discrete-point tests in the way that both types of the test tend to evaluate language as an individualized item as in discrete-point tests or as an isolated event as in integrative tests. When language processing is considered to be an isolated event, learners merely get the fundamental linguistic information in the message without relating to the context.

### **2.3.3 Communicative Testing**

With the rise of communicative teaching, communicative testing was developed in response to the trend. Communicative testing is based on the theoretical notion that language proficiency is seen as communicative competence (Hymes, 1972). That is, the test should be less concerned with how much a test-taker knows about the language, but more about how he or she can apply such language to communicate. According to Widdowson (1978), communicative tests should test the *use* of the language for its communicative function, rather than *usage*. Carroll (1980) also pointed out that the use of language is the objective while the mastery of the usage of that language is a means to achieve that objective. In communicative tests, it is important to identify whether learners can use the target language to communicate in real-life situation instead of knowing the correct usage of the grammar. In other words, a communicative test tests the “use of language in ordinary situations” (Morrow, 1979, p 148).

The most salient characteristics of communicative tests include (1) authentic texts

(2) communicative purpose and (3) the authentic tasks used in the tests. In terms of authentic text, Brindley (1998, p. 175) suggested that the test should include conversations, narratives, directions and talkback exchanges. For example, Buck (1990) conducted a research study which used several communicative tests. In one of the tests, students were told to imagine that they were going to England for a vacation, and they called the Tourist Information center to ask for the tours in London. Students listened to the man who worked at the center and based on the passage to fill in the missing information, a total of 12 questions, in the grid. The questions asked include “What is the speakers’ recommendation of a full day bus tour?” and “When will the Thames River tour depart?” In respect of communicative purpose, “the language use takes place for a definite communicative purpose” (Buck, 2001, p. 89). That is, test-takers should well understand the purpose of listening. Possible tasks reflecting communicative purposes could be asking for and giving personal details such as names, ages, etc., or identifying and describing simple objects such as shape, size, weight, color, etc. (Cambridge English Certificate Handbook for Teachers, 2018). As to the authentic tasks used in the test, some people argued that listeners do not perform any task in real-life situations; however, the idea is that the test tasks should reflect the real-world listening situation (Buck, 2001). For example, the test-takers were asked to tell a simple story which happens in everyday lives with the help of pictures and matched a list of

illustrated words or names with a set of pictures, such as a picture of parents, a picture of uncle, and a picture of daughter, by writing the letter of the correct picture in a corresponding box. (Cambridge English Qualifications Hand book for Teachers, 2018).

Given the interest in communicative language teaching nowadays, it is not surprising to find that many of the standardized tests such as *TOEIC*, *TOEFL Junior* tests and *Cambridge English: Young Learners* tests aim at evaluating learners' communicative ability. Weir (1993) provided a comprehensive taxonomy of communicative listening sub-skills. He categorized the sub-skills in four aspects (see Table 1). The four aspects included (1) direct meaning comprehension, such as listening for gist, listening for specifics, (2) inferred meaning comprehension, such as making inferences and deductions, relating utterances to their social and situational contexts, (3) contributory meaning comprehension, such as understanding phonological features and discourse markers, (4) listening and taking notes.

Table 1. A Taxonomy of Communicative Listening sub-skills (Weir, 1993).

---

**Direct meaning comprehension**

- listening for gist
  - listening for the main idea(s) or important information; and distinguishing that from supporting detail, or examples
  - listening for specifics, including a recall of important details
  - determining a speaker's attitude or intention towards a listener or a topic
- 

**Inferred meaning comprehension**

- making inferences and deductions
  - relating utterances to their social and situational contexts
  - recognizing the communicative function of utterances
  - deducing the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items from context
- 

**Contributory meaning comprehension**

- understanding phonological features
  - understanding grammatical notions such as comparison, cause, result, degree etc.
  - understanding discourse markers
  - understanding the main syntactic structure of clauses or idea units
  - understanding cohesion, especially reference
  - understanding lexical cohesion, especially lexical set membership and collocations
  - understanding lexis
- 

**Listening and taking notes**

- ability to extract salient points to summarize the text
  - ability to select relevant key points
-

As each approach has its supporters and opponents, there is no panacea for testing learners' language proficiency for the process of language is too complex. Farhady (1982) also indicated in his study that there might be some other factors such as test takers variables including their characteristics, educational and family backgrounds, which were not directly related to language proficiency but should also be taking into consideration when applying tests on L2 learners. However, given the interest and trend in communicative language teaching nowadays, the present study adopted a communicative testing approach and tests so as to investigate the listening comprehension of L2 learners of younger students throughout Taiwan with the authentic input of NESTs in a co-teaching model.

#### **2.4 Synthesis**

As more and more native speaker-oriented programs have been gradually incorporated into Taiwanese's educational settings, a new issue considering the effectiveness of such authentic input has emerged. Many researchers (e.g., Riley & Zoppis, 1985; Underwood, 1989) pointed out the advantage of having native speaker-oriented programs in the language classroom for their genuineness and authenticity as native speakers were mostly acknowledged as perfect linguistic models and authentic cultural input (Benke & Medgyes, 2005). However, some researchers argued that the authentic input does not lead to the genuineness purpose such as developing the ability

to deal with natural language outside the classroom for the learners, that is, learners were not able to use English in real life situations (e.g., Candlin & Edelhoff, 1982). Thus, the present study aims at investigating the differences found in the previous studies (e.g., Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Chang, 2007; Herbert & Wu, 2009; Rubin, 1994; Teng, 2001; Vandergrift, 2007) and hoped that the finding could reveal the importance and legitimacy of the introduction of the native speaking teachers or assistances for the existing native speaker-oriented programs in Taiwan.

In addition, previous studies (e.g., Griffiths, 1991; Teng, 2001) have mixed statements about whether to use authentic or modified input when examining learners' listening comprehension in a listening test and how influential is NESTs' authentic input in terms of learner's listening comprehension in a communicative testing, which focuses on the use of the language for its communicative function rather than the usage of the language. It seems that in Taiwan very few studies conducted a communicative listening test when investigating young learners' listening ability not to mention with the input of NESTs. Most of the existing studies (e.g., Huang, 2011; Lin, 2017; Wu, 2015; Yen, 2016) assessed learners' listening ability by applying listening tests without examining the construct validity of the tests, such as defining the tests on theoretical levels and operationalize that through the selected texts and task that the learners were asked to perform. In contrast to the previous studies which might neglect the construct

validity when applying listening tests as measurements for the participants' listening ability, the present study applies a communicative listening test, which is adapted from a number of standardized tests, that not only meets the construct validity of a test by theorizing each of the listening test parts, but also fits the characteristics of a communicative test in terms of its texts, communicative purpose and the authenticity of the tasks. Thus, it is impetus for the present study to probe the effectiveness of NESTs' input on young learners by applying a test based on the communicative approach.



## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

As mentioned earlier, there are different co-teaching programs which include NESTs throughout Taiwan, such as MOE's FET (Foreign English Teachers) program, Fulbright's ETA program, and King Car's Schweitzer Program. Some of these programs have been implemented in Taiwan for almost 20 years and their annual reports seem to be positive about the recruitment of native speakers of English to assist teaching. Fulbright's ETA program is one such an example. The foundation behind the program has been investigating the relationship between NESTs and students' learning motivation, learning anxiety, and English listening achievements for more than four years. The reports showed that NESTs motivated students, lessened their learning anxiety and improved their listening and speaking abilities (e.g., Ho, 2013; Huang, 2011; Yen, 2016). It seems that the impact NESTs make on the learning of English for Taiwanese students cannot be neglected. However, the reports provided by these programs or the previous studies (e.g. Herbert & Wu, 2009; Lin, 2017; Tsai, 2005; Wu, 2015) either included a small scale of participants investigating only limited area of Taiwan or schools, which might not reflect the overall influence of the assistance of the NESTs. Therefore, the present study intends to extend the scale of the previous studies

and reports on a larger number of participants and a wider range of areas across Taiwan.

The present study adopted a communicative listening test to measure students' listening performance as Vandergrift (2007, p. 192) asserted that test scores "can be easily administered to large groups." The test used in the present study was adapted from a number of standardized tests such as *TOEFL Junior* tests and *Cambridge English: Young Learners*. These tests are intended for younger learners. The tasks in the tests were designed based on authentic situations which could reflect learners' real-life communication skills. Furthermore, the topics and the tasks in the tests were designed to reinforce what learners learned in the class, which will have a positive washback effect on the learners.

### **3.2 Participants**

The present study included 584 students randomly recruited from different parts of Taiwan including the North, the East, the Middle, the South, and the offshore islands in order to reflect the overall picture in Taiwan (see *Table 2*). These participants were of the same English listening proficiency level and were pulled from selected schools. The schools were selected according to the guidelines set up by the researcher. That is, two to four schools of similar scale, in terms of their geographical allocations and the number of students, were recruited from each part of Taiwan. The participants from one school would either receive less than a year or no instruction from NESTs whereas the

participants from the other school would receive the instruction from NESTs for more than three years. In terms of the student gender, the numbers should be roughly equally distributed since the Ministry of Education requested normal class grouping for both elementary schools and junior high schools. Lastly, the age range of the participants was between 12 to 14.



Table 2. Information of the Participants.

Participants	Numbers
<b>Grouping</b>	
less than a year or no instruction of NESTs	279
more than three years instruction of NESTs	305
<b>Gender</b>	
male	314
female	270
<b>Area of Taiwan</b>	
North	192
Middle	95
South	109
East	88
offshore islands	100

\*n=584

### **3.3 Instruments**

#### **3.3.1 Classroom Observation Reports**

Classroom observation reports were collected through various reports of the co-teaching programs in Taiwan, such as MOE's FET (Foreign English Teachers) program, Fulbright's ETA program, and King Car's Schweitzer Program. These classroom observations were done by the research groups, which consisted of professors, scholars, and researchers, in order to see how the classes were conducted with the assistance of NESTs. The classroom observation reports include classroom observations, field notes, and photos, all of which were thoroughly and repeatedly examined. Field notes include a more detailed and rich description of the participants' learning situation and improvement, and the activities or the interactions that happened during class or after the class between the participants and the NESTs. These field notes would not only provide extra information on the participants' English learning, but also give insight on NESTs' role and teaching strategies of the NESTs that might have had an impact on participants' listening comprehension proficiency and the communicative competence in English listening.

#### **3.3.2 The Communicative Listening Test**

The listening test was modified from standardized tests such as *TOEFL Junior* tests and *Cambridge English: Young Learners* tests with the aim of evaluating students'

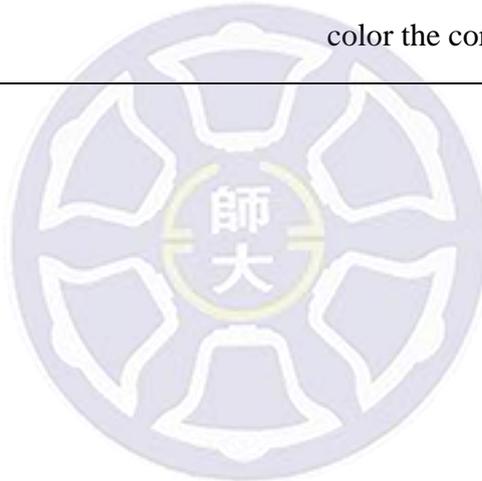
listening comprehension for communication purpose. These tests are intended for younger age learners. The tasks in the tests were designed based on authentic situations which could reflect learners' real-life communication skills. Furthermore, the topics and the tasks in the tests were designed to reinforce what learners learned in class, which would have a positive washback effect (Chang, 2007; Kitao & Kitao, 1996) on the learners. There were six parts in the listening test. The content, test type, and the objective of each part are described below in *Table 3*. *Table 4* illustrates the required communicative listening skill(s) for each part. Since whether the vocabulary covered in the test was learned or not affects students' listening anxiety (Kurita, 2012), most of the vocabulary used in the listening test was tailored into the elementary level following the elementary vocabulary list proposed by the MOE.

There were five questions in each part and 30 questions in total. The entire test lasted approximately 30 minutes. Participants were given listening items and asked to either select the correct answer or to draw or color specific items using color pens or pencils. To eliminate the possible hindrance of other skills such as reading the questions or writing the answers, the questions were not printed but spoken twice and the participants were allowed to write in Chinese if they did not know how to spell the English words. Example questions of each part are shown in *Table 5*.

*Table 3. Description of the Content and the Objective of the Test.*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Task Type</b>	<b>Task Description</b>
Part One	Names,  Animals	matching	Listening for names and  descriptions in a conversation  and match the correct answer  with the corresponding picture
Part Two	Names,  Sizes,  Colors,  Animals,  Locations	gap-filling	Listening for names, spellings  and detailed information in a  conversation and then fill in an  information grid
Part Three	Foods,  Weather,  Items, Time	multiple choice  questions	Listening for questions twice  and choose the correct  responding
Part Four	Days of the  week,  Actions	matching	Listening for days of the week  and descriptions of actions in a  conversation and match the  correct answer with the  corresponding picture

Part Five	Foods, Animals, Symptoms	multiple choice questions	Listening for descriptions in a series of conversation and choose the corresponding picture
Part Six	Animals, Colors, Locations	coloring and drawing	Listening for words, colors and specific information in a series of conversation and draw or color the corresponding items



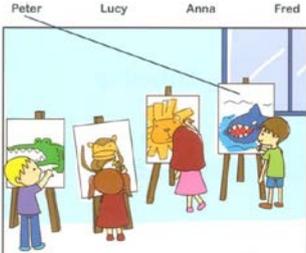
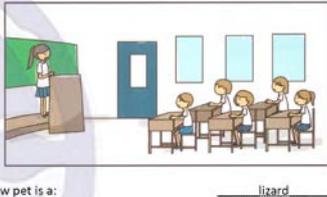
*Table 4 Description of the Communicative Listening skill(s) Required in Each Part*

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<b>Part</b>	<b>Communicative Listening Skill(s) Required</b>
Part One	Deduct the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items from context
Part Two	Listen for specifics, including a recall of important details
Part Three	Relate utterances to their social and situational contexts
Part Four	Listen for the main idea(s) or important information; and distinguishing that from supporting detail or examples
Part Five	Determine a speaker's attitude or intention towards a listener or a topic
Part Six	Listen for the main idea(s) or important information; and distinguishing that from supporting detail or examples

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Table 5 Example Questions for Each Part

Part	Example Conversation and Question	Corresponding Picture
One	<p><u>Example conversation</u></p> <p><i>(Woman) Is this your art class, Peter?</i></p> <p><i>(Boy) Yes. It's my favorite class.</i></p> <p><i>(Woman) Which one are you?</i></p> <p><i>(Boy) I'm standing near the window, drawing a shark.</i></p> <p><i>(Woman) Oh yes, I can see you.</i></p>	
Two	<p><u>Example conversation</u></p> <p><i>(Man) Hello class. Jane is going to tell us about her new pet. So, Jane, is your new pet a cat, or a dog?</i></p> <p><i>(Girl) It's not either of those. We went to a pet shop and got a lizard. My brother and I have always wanted one.</i></p> <p><i>(Man) Well, that's an interesting pet.</i></p> <p><u>Example Question</u></p> <p><i>What is the new pet?</i></p>	 <p data-bbox="922 1137 997 1155">New pet is a:</p> <p data-bbox="1193 1137 1230 1155">lizard</p>

Three	<u>Example Question</u>  <i>How's the weather today?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>(A) I am Windy.</b>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>(B) It's cloudy.</b>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>(C) I like snow.</b>

Four Example Conversation

*(Man) Hello, Daisy. Have you had a good week? Did you do anything interesting?*

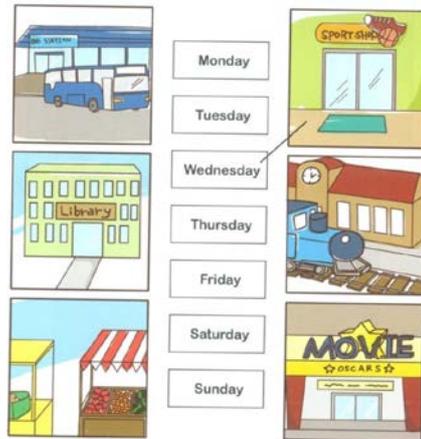
*(Girl) I was really busy all week, because the holidays are coming soon.*

*(Man) Did you have to go shopping for some things for the holiday?*

*(Girl) Yes, on Wednesday I went to buy a swimsuit with my mum.*

*(Man) Did you go the sports shop for that?*

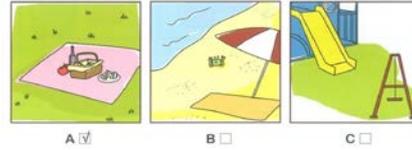
*(Girl) Yes, we went to the one next to the cinema.*



---

Five Example Conversation

*(Girl) The weather was really nice on Sunday, so we decided to go out to party.*



*(Man) Did you go to the beach?*

*(Girl) The beach was closed, so we went for a picnic in the countryside.*

*(Man) That must have been fun.*

Example Question

*What did they do on Sunday?*

---

Six Example Conversation

*(Woman) What a lovely picture of the countryside. Would you like to color it?*

*(Boy) What should I color first?*

*(Woman) Can you see the two rocks near the lake?*

*(Boy) Yes, I can see them.*

*(Woman) Color the small one black.*

*(Boy) Right. The small rock is black.*

---



### **3.4 Quantitative Data Collection Procedures**

Before the listening test began, each participant would have a test book and would be asked to prepare the color pens or pencils for answering the test. The researcher guided them through the listening tests, including telling them what each part would be and that the instruction would be spoken in both Chinese and English with an example given. During the listening test, the participants would have to either write down or draw their answers on the test books.

After the listening test, the researcher checked the answers on the test books. The scores were calculated and processed afterward. In other words, quantitative data were collected through the listening tests. Each question was worth three points. Therefore, the entire listening test is 90 points in total.

### **3.5 Qualitative Analysis and Scoring and Data Analysis**

The qualitative analysis in this study included the classroom observation reports collected from different co-teaching programs throughout Taiwan, which would help to provide a more in-depth understanding of interactions between the participants and the NESTs which might help explain the relationship between the listening ability of the participants and the NESTs. Data were read and re-read so as to get a better understanding of the content, to discover or label variables and to find the relationship among variables (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

As for the quantitative analysis of the result of the communicative listening test, statistical analysis was performed using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, in which descriptive statistics, *t*-test and one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used.

(a) Descriptive statistics: This study adopted mean scores and standard deviation analysis to investigate participants' English listening test performances with NEST instruction of one-year and three-years.

(b) *T*-test: *T*-test was used to compare the standard deviation of two different groups. In this study, it was used to compare (1) participants' listening performance with NEST instruction of one-year and three-years; (2) listening performances in each part of the listening test with NEST instruction of one-year and three-years. With *T*-test, standard deviation and test statistics would be taken into consideration so that we could see whether the difference reaches the significance level.

(c) One-way ANOVA: It was used to compare the standard deviation of more than two groups of participants. In this study, one-way ANOVA was adopted to compare participants'

English listening performances across different parts of  
Taiwan with NEST instruction of one-year and three-years.



## Chapter 4

### Results and Discussion

As mentioned earlier, the present study aims at investigating younger learners' (age 12-14) listening proficiency with the authentic input of NESTs in a co-teaching model in a listening test developed based on the communicative testing approach. The findings and the analysis of the quantitative results and the supports from the qualitative reports regarding the influence of the NESTs are presented in the following sections.

#### 4.1 Influence of the Assistance from NESTs on Students' Listening

##### Comprehension Skills

*Question 1: Do students who are assisted by NESTs show a better improvement in their listening comprehension skills than those who are not assisted by NESTs?*

The descriptive statistic of less-than-a-year NESTs' assisting group and more-than-three-year NESTs' assisting group is shown in *Table 6*. Generally speaking, participants who received NESTs' assistance for a longer period of time performed better than those who received shorter ETA instruction throughout the six areas. The mean score of the participants who received less than a year of NESTs assistance (mean=61.13) was strikingly lower than those who received more than three of NESTs assistance (mean=70.23). *Table 7* shows how participants performed remarkably different in terms of the listening comprehension tests between the less-than-a-year

NESTs-assisting group and more-than-three-year-NESTs-assisting group. There are statistically significant differences in participants' listening performance between the groups ( $t=-5.61$ ,  $p<.000$ ). Such result is in line with the previously reviewed studies in that having NESTs and NNESTs to co-teach can make a better learning environment thus improve students' English learning (e.g., Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Poon & Higginbottom, 2000).

*Table 6.* Descriptive Statistic of Less-than-a-year NESTs Assistance Group and More-than-three-year NESTs Assistant Group

	N	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Less-than-a-year NESTs Assistance Group	268	61.13	21.46	3	90
More-than-three-year NESTs Assistance Group	324	70.23	17.23	9	90

*Table 7.* Difference of Less-than-a-year NESTs Assistance Group and More-than-three-year NESTs Assistant Group in scores

	Mean Difference	S.D.	t score	p-value
(1-year group-3-year-group)				
Score	-9.101	1.623	-5.61	0.000***

\*\*\* $P < .001$

Prior studies have reported that NESTs and NNESTs have their own strengths and weaknesses and they seemingly make up for each other's disadvantages (Medgyes, 1992). In this study, we compared groups of participants with less than a year of NESTs' assistance and with more than three years of NESTs assistance and found that students outperformed greatly with more years of NESTs' assistance. The result of the present study could suggest that NESTs might have actually created a more relaxing and livelier classroom atmosphere which enhanced students' learning motivation and thus influenced their willingness to engage in class (Ryan & Patrick, 2001). The quantitative analysis of the reports also provides insight to such a finding that classrooms went from being quiet and teacher-fronted to being interactive and participative in nature. For example, in the beginning of the school semester, even when the NEST proposed games or competitions, no obvious excitement was observed on learners. However, at the end of the term, learners began showing much excitement through clapping and counting down with the NEST. Furthermore, one of the learners stated that:

“聽不懂就用猜的啊！反正會有人聽得懂，他就會跟我們說老師說什麼。老師教的課都很有趣，我喜歡上老師的課。我覺得我英文進步了！”

“I'll guess when I don't understand! Someone will understand so we just wait for her to tell us what the teacher says. I like attending the teacher's class, because it is always very interesting. I think my English improves!”

It seems that with better involvement of the students in the English class and the presence of the NESTs with their friendliness and perfect linguistic models, students were more likely to achieve higher learning satisfaction and thus have a better learning outcome (Zandvilet & Fraser, 2005).

Some other previous studies found that students performed better with the use of modified listening passages when taking the exam, these studies either tended to have a smaller number of participants or have grown-up participants, who might have better test-taking skills. In this study, we explored the listening comprehension ability of younger age students and extended the number of the participants to a larger scale, including students around Taiwan. We found that students with more years of NESTs' assistance did perform better in terms of listening comprehension tests. It seems that exposure to authentic input, namely the NESTs' oral instructions and teaching, is beneficial for listening comprehension and preferred by L2 learners as previous studies have stated (Vandergrift, 2007; Yen, 2016). The findings of the present study also extended those of Wu (2015) and Lin's (2017) studies, confirming that NESTs do influence learners' listening comprehension. In fact, the longer the exposure to NESTs, the more students show improvement (Wu, 2015; Lin, 2017). In addition, the improvements of the students' listening comprehension noted in the present study were unrelated to any of the specific co-teaching models, because the participants included

in the present study were randomly selected from different programs implemented in Taiwan which applied a variety of co-teaching models.

When comparing the listening performance of the participants across five areas (see *Table 8*), the differences among the areas became much smaller ( $F=3.42$ ,  $p<.05$ ) with the assistance of NESTs for more than three years than with less-than-a-year NESTs assisting ( $F=4.65$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Although the difference is still statistically significant, the difference was a much smaller value, suggesting that listening achievement differences could be narrowed by more years of NESTs' assistance. This narrowing of the achievement gap in terms of listening is an encouraging finding because as there is much discussion (e.g., Bensimon, 2005; Flores, 2007; Haycok, 2001) on solving achievement gaps in education, not many have found a satisfactory answer to this gap (Billings, 2006). This might indicate that the benefits of having longer interaction with NESTs may lead to higher listening comprehension. In other words, the assistance of NESTs may represent a new approach to mitigate the problem of wide differences between the English abilities of children from affluent families and those from poor rural areas in Taiwan (Chang, 2007). As a result, after seeing the encouraging result of narrowing of the achievement gap in different areas in this study, it will be worthwhile in future studies to investigate more specifically how NESTs reduce the achievement differences for these EFL learners.

*Table 8* Participants' Listening Test Scores among Different Areas with Less-than-a-year NESTs Assistance and More-than-three-year NESTs Assistance

Area	North	Middle	South	East	Offshore Island	F	Significance
Less-than-a-year NESTs Assistance	56.95	66.71	65.34	51.94	64.39	4.65	0.000***
More-than-three-year NESTs Assistance	73.30	67.00	75.19	66.36	64.73	3.42	0.005*

\* $P < .05$ , \*\*\* $P < .001$

When looking at the result from the gender aspect, the listening performance of both genders improves significantly with the assistance of NESTs for more than three years (male:  $t=-4.8$ ,  $p<.000$ ; female:  $t=-3.26$ ,  $p<.01$ ). *Table 9* shows how participants performed remarkably different in terms of the listening comprehension tests between the less-than-a-year NESTs-assisting group and more-than-three-year-NESTs-assisting group. As we can see from *Table 9*, the impact of NESTs on male participants is particularly worth noticing because the mean score for male participants who received more than three years of NESTs assistance (mean=68.84) perform significantly better than those with less than a year of NESTs' assistance (mean=58.99). This result might suggest that NESTs might not only had a great effect on raising male learners' attitude

towards English learning, but also had an effect on improving their English listening performance as previous studies (e.g., Gardner, 2008; Green & Oxford, 1995; Wu, 2005) had explored.

*Table 9* Male and female student' listening test scores with one-year and/or less NEST instruction and three-years and/or more NEST instruction

	Mean Score (Less-than-a-year NEST Assistances Group)	Mean Score (More-than-three-year NESTs Assistance Group)	T score	Significance
Male	58.99	68.84	-4.8	0.000***
Female	62.38	68.95	-3.26	0.001**

\*\*P < .01, \*\*\*P < .001

Green and Oxford (1995) pointed out that males and females hold different motivations, attitudes, and learning styles to language learning. Furthermore, female learners were more often identified as global learners than male learners. That is, females performed better in terms of language learning than males because females were more capable of utilizing global strategies, such as identifying the main idea and understand the author's perspective, and were better at managing new languages. However, the finding of the present study shows that with more years of NESTs' assistance, the improvement of the male learners was significantly different from their female counterparts in terms of their listening comprehension. This might be the result of their constant interaction with the NESTs which expands the results of existing

studies such as Lin (2017), Yen (2016), and Wu (2015). The qualitative analysis of the reports provides insight to such a result. For example, learners stated that:

“我覺得有外國老師的英文課比較好玩也比較有趣。”

“I feel that classes with foreign teachers are more interesting and fun.”

“我可以聽得懂外國老師說的話。”

“I can understand the foreign teacher’s words.”

“我可以輕鬆的與老師用英語交談。”

“I can talk to my teacher in English easily.”

These showed that learners had fun and enjoyed the English class more with the assistance of NESTs in the language learning classroom. In addition, there seemed to be the tendency that the learners became more accustomed to listening and speaking English and felt even more comfortable using English to interact with NESTs. With higher motivation, lower learning anxiety and more confidence and chance in using English when interacting with NESTs (Ho, 2013; Huang, 2011; Yen, 2016), it is thus not surprising to find that learners can perform better in their listening comprehension after more years of NESTs’ assistance, especially male learners, as the result shown in the present study. Although many other factors should be taken into consideration, such as the individual differences of the participants including their family social status, personal characteristics, the large sample size of this study might be sufficient to provide a general pattern of learners’ listening performance (Faulkner, 2003).

The finding of this research question therefore indicates that the benefits gained from the assistance of NESTs, especially in terms of improving learner's listening comprehension skills, may address that such assistance in whichever co-teaching model is beneficial to students in Taiwan (Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Carless & Walker, 2006; Chang, 2007; Storey et al., 2001).

## **4.2 Influence of the Assistance from NESTs on Students' Different Listening**

### **Comprehension Skills**

*Question 2: Do the effects of having NESTs as English Teaching Assistants vary by different listening comprehension skills?*

On the whole, participants with more than three years of NESTs' assistance perform better throughout the entire test. That is, the average scores participants with more than three years of NESTs' assistance received in every part of the test were fairly higher than those with less than a year NESTs' assistance. *Table 10* illustrates the findings of the descriptive statistic of less-than-a-year NESTs' assisting group and more-than-three-year NESTs' assisting group in each test part. The statistically significant differences of the listening comprehension performance in each part between less than a year of NESTs assistance group and more than three of NESTs assistance group were reported in *Table 11*. The differences between the groups in Part One is slightly smaller than the other parts; however, it has almost reached statistically

significant differences ( $t=-1.95, p<.051$ ).

*Table 10.* Descriptive Statistic of Less-than-a-year NESTs Assistance Group and More-than-three-year NESTs Assistant Group in Each Test Part

<b>Part</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>
Part One	Less-than-a-year NESTs Assistance	278	4.25	1.20	0	5
	More-than-three-year NESTs Assistance	304	4.43	1.10	0	5
Part Two	Less-than-a-year NESTs Assistance	278	2.88	1.71	0	5
	More-than-three-year NESTs Assistance	304	3.46	1.60	0	5

Part Three	Less-than-a- year NESTs Assistance	278	3.94	1.18	0	5
	More-than- three-year NESTs Assistance	304	4.31	1.03	1	5
Part Four	Less-than-a- year NESTs Assistance	278	3.24	1.66	0	5
	More-than- three-year NESTs Assistance	304	3.83	1.53	0	5
Part Five	Less-than-a- year NESTs Assistance	278	3.12	1.34	0	5
	More-than- three-year NESTs Assistance	304	3.63	1.04	1	5

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Part Six	Less-than-a- year NESTs Assistance	278	1.58	1.67	0	5
	More-than- three-year NESTs Assistance	304	2.18	1.77	0	5

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*Table 11. Difference of Less-than-a-year NESTs Assistance Group and More-than-three-year NESTs Assistant Group in Each Test Part*

Part	Mean	S.D.	t score	p-value
	Difference (1-year group- 3-year-group)			
Part One	-0.186	0.095	-1.95	0.051
Part Two	-0.580	0.138	-4.21	0.000***
Part Three	-0.377	0.092	-4.09	0.000***
Part Four	-0.588	0.133	-4.42	0.000***
Part Five	-0.513	0.100	-5.11	0.000***
Part Six	-0.609	0.143	-4.27	0.000***

\*P<.05, \*\*P<.01, \*\*\*P<.001

Generally speaking, the listening competence that participants should perform throughout the present communicative test matches the two major communicative listening sub-skills that were proposed by Weir (1993) in the taxonomy of communicative listening sub-skills, including (1) direct meaning comprehension, such as listening for the main idea(s) or important information, being able to distinguish from supporting detail, or being able to listen for specifics, and being able to include a recall of important details, and (2) inferred meaning comprehension, such as deducing the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items from context, recognizing the communicative function of utterances, relating utterances to their social and situational contexts.

In Part One, according to the rubric of the listening test, participants should be able to deduct the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items from context (Weir, 1993). Once the students heard the keywords such as lion, monkey, dog, they could draw lines from the names of the children to the corresponding figures on the picture. Most of the keywords for the correct answers were already learned by the participants and the directions to the right answers are rather straightforward. It should, however, be noted that even though the listening comprehension test used in the present study was adapted from standardized tests and the vocabulary had been tailored into elementary level following the elementary vocabulary list proposed by the MOE, some of the keywords to the correct answers remained unchanged such as “crocodile” and “lizard” in order to reflect the authenticity of communicating in English. After all, one cannot expect to understand every single word in an authentic conversation or listening passage (Morrow, 1979).

Participants with the more years of NESTs’ assistance achieved higher mean scores in Part One than their counterparts. In order to get the correct answer, participants should be able to perform inferred meaning comprehension, namely deducting the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items from context (Weir, 1993). For example, they should be able to know the boy who was drawing a crocodile is next to the girl who is drawing a monkey. Even though the participants might not know the word “crocodile,” the participants should be able to understand the context that “the boy *is next to* the girl.”

When analyzing the classroom observation reports, we also found that NESTs would use English to give instructions such as “Turn in your paper,” and “Time’s up,” or “Markers down,” and so on. Although students might not understand the exact meaning, they were able to infer from the context (Buck, 2001). In the class observation report, students also pointed out that when they did not understand what the NESTs were talking about, they would just make a guess based on the task they were doing. When they took the correct action, the NESTs would smile and praise. As a result, NESTs seemed to be good at getting learners to participate and arouse their willingness to illicit or guess meaning from the context (Benke & Medgyes, 2005). It seems that NESTs do facilitate L2 learners to comprehend the target language in real-life situations (Rogers & Medley, 1988) for they had built up the ability to deduce the meaning judging from the given context or situation.

In Part Three, participants should also be able to perform inferring meaning comprehension. To be more specific, Part Three required test-takers to relate utterances to their social and situational contexts (Weir, 1993). Once the participants heard the question words such as *what*, *how many*, *which*, they should choose the correct answer judging from the given situational context in the listening test. The data showed the participants with more-than-three-year of NESTs’ assistance had done better on this part than the participants with less-than-a-year of NESTs’ assistance. This might

address that participants from more-than-three-year of NESTs' assistance group had gradually developed the tendency of listening carefully as soon as the NESTs started asking questions, for it was important to hear the very first word of a question due to the longer length of interacting with the NESTs than their counterparts. Some researchers also found that NESTs focused more on listening and speaking (Lin, 2008; Medgyes, 1999). Such finding is in consistent with the results of the present study and classroom observation. As the classroom observation reports stated, NESTs usually started the class with greetings and daily routine questions. The NEST asked the students about the day and a student replied but not in the way the NEST wanted. The teacher corrected the student by restating the correct answer. Upon hearing the NEST's answer, the students laughed. Although the laughter was a small gesture, it showed that the students were becoming aware of the NEST's expected answers. The NEST did not correct the student by pointing out the misunderstanding of the question, neither did the NEST ask the student to refer to the textbook for what they have already learned. The NEST we observed was being friendly and encouraging to get learners to speak, which is in line with the finding of the previous study (Benke & Medgyes, 2005). The students were experiencing the language which is used for real communication by native speakers (Rogers & Medley, 1988). Therefore, students with more years of NESTs were better at performing inferred meaning in the listening test as they had more chances to

practice with the NESTs class.

In Part Two, Four, Five and Six, although most of the keywords were learned (foods, color, etc.), participants could not get the correct answer before listening to the entire conversation which takes time and patience. Participants were expected to: (1) listen for specifics, including a recall of important details in Part Two (2) listen for the main idea(s) or important information; and identification of supporting detail or examples in Part Four and Six (3) determine a speaker's attitude or intention towards a listener or a topic in Part Five base on the rubric of the listening test (Weir, 1993). The results showed the participants with more-than-three-year of NESTs' assistance had done better on all the above-mentioned parts than the participants with less-than-a-year of NESTs' assistance. It might suggest that with the presence of the NESTs, students have more opportunities to encounter authentic English in real life such as listening to class instructions and listening to longer spoken content (Benke & Medgyes, 2005).

During the classroom observation analysis, we found that participants with fewer years of NESTs' assistance tended to be quieter and less active; they were not interested nor participative in the activities or games that the NESTs prepared. Most of the participants sat quietly and listened with hardly any facial expression. Furthermore, they only spoke when they were asked to. When they did speak, they usually spoke very quietly and uttered very simple answers. They relied more on the translation of the

NNESTs as they were more aware of the learning difficulties and needs of the students (Florence Ma, 2012). On the other hand, participants with more years of NESTs' assistance seemed much more involved in the classroom. There were more responses from the participants to NESTs while engaging in classroom tasks. For example, some participants would respond to the NEST and also help with classroom management. And the participants would all keep quiet and pay attention to the instructions. In addition, NESTs often took time to have small chats with the students and showed their care. From the learners' response, it was observed that the students were very happy to share and tell the NEST about themselves. For example, one NEST asked about the learners' dance performance and congratulated them on their good work before she began her class. There were many other small chats during the class time where the NESTs would ask learners about their tests, performances and school life in general. It seemed that NEST would make an effort to become more interactive with the students by asking about their lives and provide supports such as words in English when needed (Florence Ma, 2012; Poon & Higginbottom, 2000). The learners, on the other hand, were not shy to respond and report about their current situation in English.

Previous studies have found that learners that had been previously taught by NNESTs showed more positive attitudes towards NNESTs (Moussu, 2010). According to Moussu (2010), variables such as teacher-contact time, students' first language, class

subject, and teachers' countries of origin significantly affected learners' attitude towards their teachers; thus, learners' preference influences their relationship with the NESTs. Contrary to the studies that have found in the past on how NESTs were more distant from the learners than the local teachers, this study found that the NESTs made efforts in becoming closer to learners by chatting more with them. From the learners' responses, it seemed that the strategy was quite effective as the learners were found to appreciate the time interacting with NESTs even though they could not understand fully what the NESTs were talking about but they would try hard to get the main idea from the context by making a guess or discussing with other learners. It is believed that NESTs do facilitate L2 learners to comprehend the target language in real life situations (Rogers & Medley, 1988) and improve learners' listening comprehension by providing both top-down, such as training learners to get the key message of a given task in the classroom, and bottom-up process opportunities, such as providing vocabulary supports when interacting with them. In short, it seems that participants with more years of NESTs' assistance were more likely to develop a tolerance for long unknown information, which is similar to the types of conversations participants encountered in the present communicative listening test. This might be the reason why participants with more-than-three-year of NESTs' assistance performed significantly better than their counterparts did in different Parts of the listening test in this study. Through

continuous exposure to listening training, NESTs might have helped training students' ability to concentrate and tolerate unfamiliar words and sentences in English learning especially listening comprehension (Buck, 1995; Field, 2010; Goh, 2002; Rubin, 2004; Vandergrift, 2007).



## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

#### 5.1 Summary and Implication of the Findings

The present study mainly examined the effectiveness of NESTs' input on younger learners in Taiwan by applying a communicative listening test. The participants were recruited from different parts of Taiwan including the North, the East, the Middle, the South, and the offshore islands in order to reflect the overall picture in Taiwan. The scores of the listening test were collected and analyzed statistically.

In general, NESTs had a positive effect on students' English listening ability, which was shown in the improvement of participants' listening comprehension test scores throughout the six areas investigated in the present study. Such result is in line with the previously reviewed studies that having NESTs and NNESTs to co-teach can make a better learning environment thus improves students' English learning. It seems that the benefits gained from the assistance of NESTs, especially in terms of improving learner's listening comprehension skills, may address that such assistance in whichever co-teaching model is beneficial to students in Taiwan. Furthermore, the participants with three years or more years of NESTs assistance not only showed improvement in the mean scores of the entire listening test, but also outperformed their counterparts in every part of the listening test. Such finding might suggest that NESTs facilitate L2

learners to comprehend the target language in real-life situations and help trained students' ability to concentrate and tolerate unfamiliar words and sentences in English learning. Bearing the findings of the annual reports presented by the co-teaching programs, and studies conducted by researchers (e.g. Herbert & Wu, 2009; Lin, 2017; Tsai, 2005; Wu, 2015) and the present study in mind, it seems that NESTs not only motivated students (Gardner, 1985; Dörnyei, 2005), lessened their learning anxiety, but also improved their listening abilities (Wu, 2015). Thus, the impact NESTs make on the learning of English for Taiwanese students cannot be neglected.

## **5.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study**

Although the present study has shown findings with a positive effect on students' listening comprehension with the assistance of NESTs, especially for those with more than three years of instruction of NESTs, there are limitations that should be considered. First of all, we cannot ignore other potential factors that might also affect students' listening comprehension achievement, such as test-taker variables (Farhady, 1982) including their experience with test types, their weak and strong areas in language skills, different resources and exposure of English in urban and rural areas (Chang, 2007). However, since the goal of the present study is to gain a general understanding of the students' listening ability under the guidance of NESTs in a co-teaching module, the large sample size of this study and the statistical analysis of the data might be sufficient

to provide a general pattern of students' listening performance regardless of other possible influential factors. Second, the main focus of the present study is analyzed quantitatively. Although statistical data could provide a general picture of how NESTs help improve students' listening ability in English, qualitative data, such as interviews, classroom observations, questionnaires, might give us a more holistic view of the impact of the NESTs.

Considering the limitations of the present study, suggestions for future research are addressed as follows. First of all, the listening test could be shortened in order to rule out the potential attention span issue. For example, the instruction of the tests could be either in just Chinese or English. Even though the actual testing parts took up around 20 minutes, the participants were still under the pressure of "taking a test" when listening to the instruction. In order to exclude the potential attention span issue, it is suggested that we should take as many test-taker variables as possible into consideration when administering a test. Secondly, qualitative data should be collected in each of the areas through interviews and classroom observations to explore how specifically NESTs influence students in terms of improving their English listening ability. Last but not least, observations on NESTs themselves could be explored including their gender, characteristics, and their beliefs of education so that more can

be understood in terms of the type of NESTs that contribute most to English learning in Taiwan. In other words, ETAs could be the subject of future study.



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