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# A Study on the Effectiveness of the Strategy of ‘Looking for Key Words’ to Enhance Listening Comprehension in the ESL Classroom

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**Abstract** - Listening is an important skill that must be developed to participate in successful communication. Despite in recognizing the importance of addressing all four skills in the ESL classroom, less attention is paid to develop listening skills compared to others. Given that, the present study intended to find out how the strategy of ‘looking for keywords’ can effectively be used in the ESL classroom to enhance listening comprehension of the ESL learners. There are many listening strategies, out of which the strategy of ‘looking for keywords’ was selected for grade 9 students at a government school considering their age and competence level. The sample was selected under purposive sampling which consisted of 20 intermediate level students who have obtained marks ranging from 45-65 at the first term English test conducted by the school. The selected students whose first language is Sinhala were of the age 13 to 14. The study used a mixed method research approach in which the attitudes towards the listening strategy were evaluated qualitatively while the proficiency and the background knowledge of the learners were tested quantitatively. Thus, the study was conducted in two parts; four listening activities which were developed from two texts to test the performance of the students and a questionnaire was given to collect data in terms of their responses towards the strategy. Furthermore, each lesson focused on two listening activities, of which the tasks were performed in the order of pre-listening, while listening and post-listening activities. According to the findings, which were analyzed through the coding process and SPSS, for open and close-ended questions respectively; 75% of the students claimed to have grasped the summary of the text using keywords. This convinced that the strategy is more efficient in comprehending a text or a lesson. While all the students mentioned that the lesson

improved their interest in listening activities, 95% claimed that the lessons conducted were more interesting than their usual English lessons, resulting a positive attitude towards the strategy. Moreover, 80% of the participants claimed that they re-use expressions and words which they hear in listening activities for further ESL usage. Therefore, it can be concluded that the strategy of 'looking for keywords' can be incorporated in the ESL classroom to develop vocabulary in second language while enhancing the listening comprehension of the students.

**Keywords:** listening strategies, looking for keywords, ESL classrooms, listening comprehension.