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Genre Analysis in Blended Learning: Empowering English Majors' Critical Listening Skills: Case of Faculty of Education, Minia University, Egypt

Nagwa Mohammed Khallaf, Amin Rasti-Behbahani, Mohammed Abdulgalil Abugohar [*] [iD]

Centre for Preparatory Studies, Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman

ABSTRACT

Critical listening is a vital learning skill. Enhancing critical thinking skills through classroom activities is an important responsibility of teachers. Critical listening involves comprehending spoken information, evaluating it, and forming judgments and opinions based on what is heard. The current study was carried out at the Faculty of Education, Minia University, Egypt, to examine the effectiveness of a blended learning program utilizing genre analysis on enhancing critical listening skills among English majors. The current study used quasi-experimental research in an explanatory mixed methods design, with data collected across three phases. During the first phase, inventory was done with quantitative data aided by qualitative ones. During the second and third phases, sixty students of third-year English majors were randomly assigned to two groups: a treatment and a comparison one, containing 30 students each. The treatment group was trained in a blended learning program based on genre analysis, whereas the comparison group was taught the same content in a "Genre Analysis" course through the conventional method of teaching. The treatment group significantly outperformed the comparison group on the post-tests of the acquisition and use of critical listening skills. This research emphasizes the importance of the use of both blended learning programs and genre analysis in developing critical listening skills. Developing critical listening skills requires the learners to be skilful analysts as they need to analyze, judge, and evaluate what is said. The learner can have a better understanding and training on mastering these skills through practicing genre analysis. The improvement of listening comprehension affected the development of critical listening skills. The findings are discussed, and recommendations

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Mohammed Abdulgalil Abugohar, Centre for Preparatory Studies, Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman; Email: mabugohar@du.edu.om

along with suggestions for further research are presented.

Keywords: Blended Learning; Genre Analysis; Critical Listening; English Majors

1. Introduction

Language proficiency encompasses a range of skills: speaking, comprehending, listening, reading, and writing. Each of these skills involves specific receptive or active abilities, such as vocabulary knowledge, mastery of grammatical structures, and understanding of the cultural contexts in which the language is used. Therefore, diverse language practice is beneficial. Moreover, these skills do not exist in isolation. Enhancing proficiency in one area can also foster improvement in other aspects of language learning [1]. Critical listening is a core skill in English learning, essential for enhancing the overall quality of English majors. This study aims to explore the role of a blended learning program utilizing genre analysis in enhancing critical listening skills among English majors.

Blended learning in higher education holds great potential for addressing challenges like access, cost, efficiency, and timely degree completion. Additionally, it influences various aspects of academia, including faculty development and rewards, student retention, the structure of colleges and departments, and the concept of lifelong learning. Even at the periphery of its impact, blended learning acts as a transformational force. Blended learning allows for the maintenance of accreditation and high standards while offering the flexibility that students need. If higher education aims to meet the evolving needs of students, post-secondary institutions should consider adopting this teaching methodology [2, 3]. Blended learning is a combination of traditional learning and computer-based training contemporary online or web-based E-Learning. Blended learning provides social benefits through classroom training, emphasizing areas that benefit most from face-to-face interaction [4, 5]. It also offers the individualization advantages of self-paced online learning for content requiring minimal interaction, providing greater flexibility to accommodate the diverse learning styles and levels of the audience. Blended learning allows faculty and students to engage in various teaching and learning modalities, potentially enhancing instructional effectiveness [6]. Implementing blended instruction in specific subjects at community colleges or technical schools allows adult students to enjoy the 'best of both worlds' with this approach, offering the flexibility of online learning alongside the social interaction and instructor support found in traditional face-to-face classes.

Genre analysis involves examining a category of communicative events that share common communicative purposes [7]. This is acknowledged by members of the professional or academic community where the genre exists, forming the basis for the genre's rationale. Additionally, genre analysis serves as a tool to build genre awareness and understand the conventions of new writing contexts. This understanding enables you to make effective communication choices and appropriately address your audience and rhetorical situation.

Listening serves as the foundation for action, with critical listening being indispensable in the learning process. Critical listening involves not only understanding what is communicated, but also evaluating, judging, and forming opinions based on the message [8, 9]. Active listening surpasses mere hearing by actively processing and striving to grasp the deeper meaning and intentions behind spoken words [10]. It demands mindfulness and focused engagement in the communication exchange, often requiring the listener to infer the speaker's intended message. Texts are inherently influenced by the speaker's values and beliefs, highlighting the importance of developing critical thinking skills in listening [11]. This progression allows listeners to evaluate the speaker's objectives, assess the validity and reliability of information, discern any biases, and become adept at critical listening. As listeners advance, they move from basic comprehension skills to more sophisticated abilities such as reflection, analysis, and evaluation [12].

In summary, genre analysis and critical listening skills are deeply interconnected and crucial for empowering students' learning and research capabilities. By understanding different genres of spoken texts, students can develop a framework for recognizing key information and nuances in various contexts. This ability is essential in the information age, where navigating complex sources requires a keen ear and analytical mindset. Effective use of critical listening skills

involves following specific steps, such as identifying patterns in discourse, evaluating arguments, and extracting essential information. Therefore, there is a pressing need for teachable techniques that enable students to apply genre analysis in developing their critical listening abilities. This integration allows students not only to comprehend but also to critically engage with spoken texts, ultimately fostering a deeper understanding and synthesis of information, especially in navigating the complexities of the information age. Motivated by this need, researchers conducted a study to assess how a blended learning program, integrating both online and traditional classroom methods, centered on genre analysis, could effectively enhance the critical listening skills of English majors. By combining interactive online modules with in-person discussions and practical exercises, the program aimed to provide students with a comprehensive approach to analyzing and interpreting various spoken genres. By bridging genre analysis with critical listening skills, educators can empower students to navigate the complexities of the information age more effectively. This interconnected approach not only enriches learning experiences but also equips students with valuable skills for academic and professional success.

1.1. Research Questions

The present study seeks to address the following question:

How effective would a blended learning program that utilizes genre analysis be in enhancing critical listening skills among English majors?

This question can be branched out into the following sub-questions:

1. How effective would a blended learning program that utilizes genre analysis be in enhancing English majors' acquisition of the cognitive aspects of critical listening skills?
2. To what extent does a blended learning program incorporating genre analysis improve English majors' use of critical listening skills?

1.2. Literature Review

Blended learning environments leverage both online platforms and traditional classroom settings to create interactive and engaging learning experiences. Research indicates that this approach offers several advantages in developing listening skills. In light of the difficulties facing higher education, the transformative potential of blended learning amid the challenges faced by higher education was explored [13]. They discussed how blended learning could support deep and significant learning by integrating both online and face-to-face components. Their analysis highlighted the need to rethink and restructure learning experiences to harness this potential. They emphasized that blended learning offers learners access to a range of multimedia resources, including audio and video, which are available anytime and anywhere. This accessibility facilitates continuous practice and exposure to authentic listening contexts, thereby enhancing comprehension and retention. Ultimately, they concluded that blended learning aligns with the values of traditional higher education institutions and has demonstrated the capability of improving both the efficacy and efficiency of significant learning experiences.

Additionally, the integration of multimedia resources such as podcasts, interactive simulations, and online discussions enriches the learning experience [14]. These tools not only engage learners but also simulate real-world listening scenarios, encouraging active participation and critical analysis of content. By combining self-paced online activities with in-person interactions, blended learning caters to diverse learning styles and preferences. Students can progress through listening exercises at their own pace, receiving immediate feedback and guidance from instructors during face-to-face sessions [15].

An experimental study was carried out to evaluate a blended learning (BL) approach for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in China [16]. The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of this approach in enhancing students' listening and speaking skills. The experimental group consisted of 59 students from Huazhong University of Science and Technology (HUST), while the control group included 59 students from Wuhan Institute of Physical Education (WIPE). Over two years, data from four standardized English language exams were collected and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 17.0). The findings revealed significant improvements in students' listening and speaking skills with the blended learning approach. This method was shown to effectively integrate the

strengths of face-to-face and online learning, promoting both teacher and student initiative and fostering greater learner autonomy.

Listening, as a key English skill, requires more than just hearing; it involves understanding and interpreting the meaning of spoken content. To enhance students' engagement and comprehension, a blended learning approach was employed in this research[17]. His study aimed to evaluate how blended learning could be applied to teaching listening. This qualitative research focused on a single class of 28 students, including 9 males and 19 females. Data were gathered through interviews with the listening lecturer, classroom observations, and student questionnaires. The findings indicated that implementing blended learning in teaching listening significantly improved students' listening skills. Overall, the study demonstrated that blended learning not only made the teaching process more effective but also yielded positive outcomes for students.

The integration and effectiveness of blended learning for developing and assessing listening skills in a second language were explored[18]. In 2014, a set of online listening quizzes in two beginner Italian courses was introduced. The objective was to provide engaging and flexible practice and assessment for listening comprehension, aiming to enhance students' learning experience, increase their motivation, and make more effective use of in-class instruction. By viewing listening as a process rather than a mere product, the researchers designed tasks to teach students how to listen, rather than just testing their comprehension. The validity of these quizzes as tools for both skill development and assessment was evaluated through an online student survey. The data collected showed that the quizzes significantly contributed to the development of listening skills and were preferred over traditional in-class assessments.

The impact of a blended learning program on improving listening comprehension skills among second-year prep school students was examined[19]. Using a quasi-experimental design with pretest and post-test measures, the study involved sixty students from Nasser Experimental School in Menia ElKamh. The participants were randomly divided into two groups: a treatment group (N = 30) and a non-treatment group (N = 30). The study utilized a pre-post EFL listening comprehension test to assess students' listening skills before and after the implementation of the blended learning program. Data analysis was performed using *t*-tests. The results indicated that students in the treatment group showed significant improvements in their listening comprehension skills, suggesting that the blended learning program was effective in enhancing these skills for second-year prep school students.

An investigation was made to see whether a blended learning method could enhance students' achievement and motivation in learning listening[20]. Using an Action Research design, the study focused on third-semester students from the English Department at the Faculty of Letters, University of Sawerigading Makassar. The research employed Classroom Action Research, consisting of two cycles, each involving planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Data were collected through observations and tests and analyzed descriptively in a comparative manner. The results showed that the blended learning method significantly improved students' listening achievement, with average scores increasing from 42.07 initially, to 61.59 after the first cycle, and reaching 68.11 after the second cycle. Additionally, the method also boosted students' learning motivation.

Research was conducted to evaluate the effects of tactics based on genre and schema strategies on students' listening skills and to investigate how students' Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) affects their listening comprehension[21]. The research utilized goal-directed sampling to select two colleges —Arts and Science—and employed simple random sampling to choose four sections from each college, resulting in a total of ninety-four participants. The study used a pre-test, post-test, and control group in a quasi-experimental design, comprising three experimental groups and one control group each receiving different treatments over six weeks. Data collection involved pre - post-tests administered during lectures, along with intervention materials for treatment sessions. ANCOVA was employed for inferential statistical analysis. The findings indicated that both schema and genre-based strategies significantly enhanced students' listening comprehension. Based on these results, Onotere recommended that instructors integrate schema and genre-based strategies into their teaching practices to enhance students' listening skills. Furthermore, fostering student motivation and interest in employing these strategies was emphasized as beneficial for improving overall listening comprehension in educational settings.

An analysis was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of a blended learning model aimed at improving teaching listening skills, utilizing a top-down approach grounded in Cognitive Load Theory[22]. The top-down approach supported students by providing background knowledge of the audio, including context, situation, and key phrases.

An analysis was conducted to assess the effectiveness of a blended learning model designed to enhance teaching listening skills, employing a top-down approach informed by Cognitive Load Theory[22]. This approach supported the participants by providing essential background knowledge about the audio material, such as context, situation, and key phrases. In their blended version, teachers used a learning management system (LMS) to guide students in processing their listening input. The study employed an experimental design where the experimental group received training with the top-down approach using LMS support, while the control group received the same listening material but through traditional teaching methods. The primary goal was to demonstrate the statistically significant impact of integrating technology into language classrooms for teaching listening skills. The findings indicated that students in the experimental group were able to effectively discern relevant and non-relevant information from the audio, grasp the conceptual content of the audio, and make predictions based on the information provided beforehand.

A blended learning approach was introduced at the University of Montenegro's Faculty of Maritime Studies in Kotor, which combined conventional teaching methods with genre and discourse knowledge, augmented by digital and internet tools[23]. The study aimed to demonstrate the advantages of applying genre- and linguistics-based knowledge within a technical and digital environment for students enrolled in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. The research argued that incorporating a corpus- and genre-based approach into the teaching of professional genres enriches ESP classes, particularly benefiting the instruction of technical and engineering genres. The emphasis on language precision was highlighted as crucial for developing effective language competence among students. Various approaches to teaching listening by using genre-based instruction with an experimental group (EG) of seventeen English as a Foreign Language (EFL) undergraduates were investigated[24]. The instruction began with a guided analysis of the context, language, variations, and organization of second language (L2) oral texts about movies, gradually progressing to an independent reconstruction of a similar text. Data were gathered through pre- and post-listening tasks, stimulated recalls (SR), and semi-structured interviews (SSI). The results indicated that the identification of linguistic elements in the EG's post-tasks positively impacted participants' comprehension of the structural rhetoric of oral texts. The analysis of linguistic elements facilitated the recognition of the narrator's accent, text type, and organization. Overall, the findings suggest that understanding listening texts involves an interplay of cognitive processes, metacognitive strategies for text reconstruction, and socio-affective strategies. While these results cannot be generalized due to the small sample size, they contribute valuable insights into teaching listening through a Genre-Based Approach.

Critical listening goes beyond comprehension to involve analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information from spoken discourse. Blended learning supports the development of critical listening skills through providing analytical frameworks, collaborative learning opportunities, and delivering immediate feedback and reflection. Online platforms facilitate collaborative activities such as peer reviews, group discussions, and debates[25]. These activities encourage students to engage critically with diverse perspectives and viewpoints, fostering deeper understanding and interpretation of spoken content. Likewise, blended learning programs can incorporate genre analysis and discourse analysis frameworks to help students recognize patterns and structures in spoken texts[26]. This analytical approach enhances students' ability to discern key information, evaluate arguments, and detect nuances in communication. Moreover, blended learning environments promote ongoing feedback and self-reflection, essential for refining listening and critical listening skills. Through online assessments and reflective exercises, students can identify areas for improvement and apply strategies to enhance their listening competence[27].

The effectiveness of using Procedural Strategies to enhance EFL students' critical listening skills was investigated[28]. She followed the pre-post, quasi-experimental design. The participants were 35 second-year secondary school students. To distinguish the key EFL critical listening skills needed by participants, a list was created and justified by a panel of EFL experts. Both pre - and post-tests for EFL

critical listening skills were created to assess students' initial abilities and measure their progress after training. Students were pre-tested to establish their baseline critical listening skills, and then received training in Procedural Strategies aimed at enhancing these skills. The post-test was administered to evaluate improvements. The research findings indicated a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on the post-test, with the experimental group showing greater progress.

Critical listening is an active process for EFL students involving several key skills: 1) identifying the speaker's central claim, 2) inferring the speaker's intended meaning, 3) detecting objectivity or bias, 4) identifying tone, 5) discriminating between fact and opinion, 6) assessing the evidence presented, 7) identifying generalizations, 8) comparing existing knowledge with new information, 9) spotting inconsistencies, and 10) identifying ambiguity[29].

CL skills development is important because it uses scientific and effective methods to motivate and develop thinking. Along with language skills like speaking, reading, and writing, since they are all inextricably linked to listening[30]. Critical listening calls for increased focus and rapid comprehension. When listening, one should take a number of things into account. For listeners to better understand what speakers are saying, context, body language, and facial expressions are crucial[31].

An examination of how to use activities based on audiobooks to enhance the critical listening abilities and attitudes of female EFL secondary-stage students[32]. A critical listening skills questionnaire was used as the research tool to identify the most crucial critical listening abilities suitable for first-year secondary school pupils. The research findings reveal a statistically significant increase in the mean scores of the experimental group students on the critical listening test from before to after the intervention, indicating better performance in the post-administration phase. A crucial component is that critical listeners must possess distinctive characteristics that set them apart from regular listeners. As they wait for the speaker to finish speaking before responding or drawing a conclusion, they should be attentive and engaged in understanding the message. Critical listeners should have the ability to think systematically and to be perceptive and capable of methodical, analytical thought[33, 34]. A critical

listener is not merely a listener. In other words, he or she notices, deciphers, evaluates, and reacts to the assertions put out, the arguments put forth, and the comparisons and illustrations offered[29].

Blended learning, with its integration of online resources and face-to-face interaction, significantly enhances the development of critical listening skills through genre analysis. By incorporating diverse digital tools and platforms, students engage in a multifaceted exploration of various genres, allowing them to discern nuances in content, style, and context[35]. This approach not only promotes active listening but also encourages learners to analyze how different genres organize information and convey meaning. Through both online modules and in-class discussions, students can practice discerning the unique features of different genres, thereby honing their ability to critically evaluate information, understand diverse perspectives, and make informed judgments. Blended learning thus emerges as a powerful facilitator in fostering the comprehensive skills necessary for effective critical listening in today's information-rich environment.

In conclusion, the literature discussed earlier indicated that blended learning has demonstrated effectiveness in developing listening and critical listening skills. By leveraging technology and combining it with traditional instructional methods, educators can create dynamic learning environments that support continuous skill development and prepare students for academic and professional success in an increasingly digital and interconnected world, but it was noted that there is a gap in integrating blended learning, genre analysis, and critical listening skills into a single study. Further research is needed to explore specific instructional strategies, technological tools, and pedagogical approaches that optimize the effectiveness of genre analysis in blended learning in fostering listening skills, particularly critical listening, across diverse educational settings. Therefore, the current study aimed to address and fill this gap.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Context

The swift evolution of technology and the corresponding shift from traditional instructional methods to new technology-driven teaching and learning paradigms present significant challenges to higher education institutions[36].

Because of the accumulation of knowledge, the world of higher education is moving vastly towards paperless and digital media[37]. This is observable through the conversion of most modern universities to electronic infrastructures, administration, and courseware. This requires each educational institution to prepare its students to cope with these challenges.

It has been noted that many English major students lack essential skills in genre analysis. Students demonstrate difficulty in identifying, analyzing, or evaluating most texts. The participants are both males and females, third-year English major students at Faculty of Education, Minia University, Egypt. They studied English for eleven years, their ages ranged between 19.3 and 20.3 years old. It was observed by the researchers that they were unable to identify either the form or the function of a text. The same was asserted by genre analysis instructors through informal interviews as they mentioned that their students were unable to acquire or use the skills of genre analysis. Their students were unable to identify the genre of most given texts or their contexts; analyze a text to its roots, nor judge or evaluate it. Lacking such skills may hinder students' abilities in developing their critical listening skills. In our study, understanding students' proficiency in genre analysis is crucial as it directly influences their critical listening skills development. Previous studies have highlighted that without adequate genre analysis skills, students may struggle to decipher and interpret the underlying messages in spoken discourse, thereby hindering their ability to critically engage with audio materials in educational contexts[23, 24, 38]. By addressing this gap in the literature, our research aims to further explore the relationship between genre analysis proficiency and enhanced critical listening abilities among English majors. The students themselves complained about the difficulty of the course. From what is mentioned above and through the researchers' observations and the informal interviews with both EFL instructors and learners, it became obvious that English majors of the Faculty of Education, Minia University, Egypt lack genre analysis skills and listening comprehension skills as well as their critical ability. In addition, there is a consensus among researchers that most Egyptian teacher education programs do not cater to developing these target skills. Similarly, it has been observed that listening skills in general, and critical listening skills specifically, do not seem to receive significant attention in our language classes. In the absence of these skills, students are unable to achieve the great benefits of their learning and are unable to listen critically.

This led the researchers to think about a study which tries to examine the effectiveness of a blended learning program utilizing genre analysis in enhancing Faculty of Education, (Minia University, Egypt) English majors' critical listening skills.

2.2. Quasi-Experimental Design

The current study utilized a quasi-experimental approach within an explanatory mixed methods design (a design involving a pre-test and post-test control group) since the main bulk of data was quantitative, obtained from the pre-test-post-test results and supported by qualitative data collected in the first phase for in-depth investigation of the baseline of the study population's critical listening levels. Both the treatment group and comparison group participated in pre-post data collection. Only the treatment group exclusively received instruction and training through a blended learning program based on genre analysis. Due to the difficulty of running a true experimental approach in humanities, this research opted for the quasi-experimental one.

2.3. Participants of the Study

The participants in the study were sampled from the target population who were then divided into two groups. The selection of students in each group was done using a simple random allocation technique. In both groups, participants had studied English for eleven years; from elementary four till the study year. Their ages ranged between 19.3 and 20.3 years old, with approximately equal numbers in each group. The study employed simple random sampling techniques:

2.3.1. Treatment Group

The treatment group participants, consisting of 30 male and female students selected randomly from third-year English majors, Faculty of Education, Minia University, Egypt received instruction and training in critical listening skills aimed at enhancing their acquisition of cognitive aspects and use of these skills. This training was conducted through the "Genre Analysis Course," which was formally included in

the curriculum for the second semester. This course was specifically chosen for its focus on teaching critical listening skills, forming the foundation for the current program designed to develop students' proficiency in this area.

2.3.2. Comparison Group

Comparison group participants, comprising 30 male and female students, were instructed using traditional teaching methods in the "Genre Analysis Course."

2.3.3. Data Collection Instruments

- A Blended Learning Program Based on Genre Analysis.
- A Test of the Acquisition of the Cognitive Aspects of Critical Listening Skills.
- A Test of the Use of Critical Listening Skills.
- Control Variables

2.3.4. A Blended Learning Program Based on Genre Analysis

The researchers designed a blended learning program based on genre analysis to enhance and empower the acquisition of the cognitive aspects and use of critical listening skills among third-year English majors. This involved reviewing the literature on critical listening skills, blended learning, and genre analysis to identify necessary competencies. A pilot study with tailored questionnaires pinpointed specific listening skills crucial for these students, followed by consultations with EFL experts to refine the identified skills. Validation through expert juries ensured the appropriateness of skill selections. Clear general and specific program objectives were set, alongside behavioral objectives for each lesson. A program framework was developed and rigorously evaluated by EFL specialists to ensure alignment with content, activities, presentation methods, and assessment tools. After refinement based on expert feedback, the program, including instructor manuals and student materials, was finalized and further evaluated by a diverse jury of EFL experts. Subsequently, a website was constructed using Moodle as the LMS and its content and structure were validated by IT experts to ensure suitability and alignment with program goals. This meticulous process ensured the effectiveness and relevance of the blended learning program in fostering critical listening skills among third-year English majors.

2.3.5. A Test of the Acquisition of the Cognitive Aspects of Critical Listening Skills

The test objectives are to evaluate third-year English majors' acquisition of the cognitive aspects of critical listening skills and to measure the improvement in performance among participants in both the treatment and the comparison groups. The test comprises two parts with a total of 14 items, focusing on the key objectives emphasized in the program. The validity of the test was established based on the specific training program objectives and was reviewed by a panel of EFL specialists. The reliability of the test was assessed using internal consistency, calculated via the Pearson correlation formula, yielding a coefficient of 0.665 which is considered at a moderate level [39], and approaching a strong one. Additionally, the test's reliability was confirmed through the test-retest method. The testing duration for the entire assessment is 30 minutes.

2.3.6. A Test of the Use of Critical Listening

The aim of the test is to evaluate third-year English majors' utilization of critical listening skills and to assess how much participants' performance improved in both the treatment and the comparison groups. It comprises 31 items divided into three parts, focusing on the primary objectives highlighted in the program. The maximum score achievable on the test is 62 points. The validity of the test was established based on the specific training program objectives and was reviewed by a panel of eleven EFL specialists. The reliability of the test was assessed using internal consistency, calculated using the Pearson correlation formula, resulting in a reliability coefficient of 0.944. Additionally, the test's reliability was confirmed through the test-retest method. The total testing time for the assessment is 150 minutes.

2.3.7. Controlling Affective Variables

To ensure homogeneity and comparability between the treatment and the comparison groups, the researchers used the English Proficiency Examination for Egypt (EPEE) form (B), presented by the Center for Developing English Language Teaching (CDELT) in 1982. This test was used to assess and equalize the initial proficiency levels of participants in both groups. The EPEE consists of 100 items divided into four parts and aims to evaluate students' English proficiency. Its validity, calculated by CDELT, is reported to be 0.83. The reliability of the test, as calculated by CDELT,

was 0.80 initially and 0.91 by the researchers due to updates over time.

Additionally, in both groups, participants had studied English for eleven years, from elementary four through to the present year. The age range of third-year English majors was between 19.3 and 20.3 years old, with a roughly equal distribution between the treatment and the comparison groups.

2.4. Procedures of the Study

The current study commenced by assessing students' needs through administering two questionnaires to third-year English majors and EFL instructors. Subsequently, a literature review was conducted to identify blended learning techniques, genre analysis skills, and critical listening skills, which informed the design of a blended learning program. The next step involved designing the framework and content of the program based on genre analysis for teaching critical listening skills. Tests were then constructed and validated by EFL experts, followed by a pilot study to estimate test validity and reliability. The website hosting the program was designed, constructed, evaluated by IT experts, and subsequently launched. A sample of third-year English majors from the Faculty of Education, Minia University, Egypt, was selected, and pre-tests were administered to ensure equivalence between the treatment and the comparison groups. The researchers then implemented the program, followed by

administering post-tests to assess its impact.

Statistical methods such as *t*-tests, Point Biserial Correlation Coefficient, Pearson Correlation, and Eta-Squared were applied to analyze students' test scores. The final stage involved discussing the results, drawing conclusions, and providing recommendations and contributions based on the findings.

3. Results

Analyzing data collected during the study went through three different phases as the following:

3.1. Phase 1: Pilot Study

During Phase 1, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to observe target learners' critical listening skills through observation checklists, informal interviews and questionnaires. Then, the results of the questionnaires and the informal interviews the researchers administered to third-year English majors and to the instructors of genre analysis, and listening courses showed that third-year students needed to acquire and use the following skills: genre analysis skills, and critical listening skills. All observation noted remarks and questionnaires results were polled together as depicted in the inventory **Table 1**. These data were collected during the inventory in the pilot study which represents the first cycle of data collection, attempting to investigate the current status.

Table 1. Inventory (1) instructors' and students' frequency of responses to questionnaires items.

Skill	Respondents	Responses	Frequency	%
Genre Analysis Skills	Instructors	Rarely used	10	100%
	Students	Rarely used	30	100%
Critical Listening Skills	Instructors	Rarely used	10	100%
	Students	Rarely used	30	100%

3.2. Phase 2: Pre-Testing

Pretesting of the Acquisition of the Cognitive Aspects of Critical Listening Skills revealed that the mean scores of the treatment and the comparison groups on the test measuring the acquisition of cognitive aspects of critical listening skills were very close with no significant difference, as indicated by a non-significant *t*-value of 1.205 at the 0.05 level.

Thus, both groups performed at a similar level in this aspect (**Table 2**).

3.3. Pretesting of the Use of Critical Listening Skills

Pretesting of the use of critical listening Skills revealed that the mean scores of the treatment and the comparison

groups on the test measuring the use of critical listening skills were very close with no significant difference, as indicated by a non-significant *t*-value of 0.405 at the 0.05 level. Thus, both groups performed at a similar level in this aspect (**Table 3**).

3.4. Phase 3: Post Testing

After the implementation of the experiment, post-testing was conducted on both groups to compare the treatment and the comparison groups in the acquisition of the cognitive aspects of critical listening skills and use of critical listening skills.

In order to answer the research questions, the researchers collected quantitative data and used *t*-test, Point Biserial Correlation Coefficient, Pearson Correlation, and Eta-Squared formula for analyzing the obtained data on the acquisition of the cognitive aspects and use tests of critical listening skills.

3.4.1. Data Analysis Related to Research Question 1

Table 4 provides a summary of the data analysis from the post-test, comparing the cognitive aspects of critical listening skills between the treatment and comparison groups.

Obtained data was analyzed using a *t*–test reveals that participants in the treatment group demonstrated a significantly greater improvement in the cognitive aspects of critical listening skills compared to those in the comparison group, as indicated by a *t*-value of 17.430, which is significant at the 0.01 level.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the blended learning program utilizing genre analysis in achieving its prescribed objectives, the Eta-Squared formula was applied, and **Table 4** displays a highly significant Eta-Squared value of 0.932. Eta-Squared value (η^2) below 0.1 indicates weak significance, between 0.1 and 0.6 suggests medium significance, and above 0.6 indicates high significance[40, 41].

3.4.2. Comparison of the Treatment and the Comparison -Treatment Groups' Performance in the Pre –Post Test of Acquisition of the Cognitive Aspects of Critical Listening Skills

Table 5 summarizes the analysis of data collected from the pre- and post-performance tests of both the treatment and comparison groups, focusing on the acquisition of cognitive aspects of critical listening skills.

Table 2. *t*-value of scores obtained on the pre-test of the acquisition of the cognitive aspects of critical listening skills of both the treatment and the comparison groups.

Group	No.	Means	Std. D	D.F.	*t*-Value
Pre exp.	30	5.6000	1.2484	58	1.205
Pre cont.	30	5.2333	1.1043		

Not significant at 0.05 level; Total score of the test is = 14 points.

Table 3. *t*-value of scores obtained on the pre-test of the use of critical listening skills of both the treatment and the comparison groups.

Group	No.	Means	Std. D	D.F.	*t*-Value
Pre exp.	30	23.2000	6.5094	58	0.405
Pre cont.	30	22.4667	7.4959		

Not significant at 0.05 level; Total score of the test is = 62 points.

Table 4. Mean scores *t*-value attained on the post - test of the acquisition of the cognitive aspects of critical listening skills of both the treatment and the comparison groups.

Group	No.	Means	Std. D	D.F.	*t*-Value	Eta- Squared
Exp.	30	12.4333	1.1351	58	*17.430	**0.916
Cont.	30	6.6333	1.4259			

* Significant at 0.01 level; ** Significant; Total score of the test = 14 points.

Table 5. Mean scores *t*-value attained on the pre-post test of the acquisition of the cognitive aspects of critical listening skills of both the treatment and the comparison groups.

Group	No.	Means	Std. D	D.F.	*t*-Value
Pre/Exp.	30	5.6000	1.2484	29	**21.713
Pre/Exp.	30	12.4333	1.1351		
Pre/Cont.	30	5.2333	1.1043	29	*3.782
Pre/Cont.	30	6.6333	1.4259		

** Significant at 0.01 level; * Significant at 0.05 level.

Comparing the pre- and post-test results for the treatment group indicates a significant improvement in the cognitive aspects of critical listening skills. The *t*-value of (21.713), which is significant at the (0.01) level, highlights this substantial progress, as detailed in **Table 4**.

The comparison group also showed significant improvements, though to a lesser extent than the treatment group, with a *t*-value of (3.782), which is significant at the 0.05 level **.

In order to show that the blended learning program has achieved its objectives in developing students' acquisition of the cognitive aspects of the main critical listening skills, the following table shows these results.

Table 6 summarizes the analysis of post-test data for both the treatment and comparison groups, highlighting the critical listening skills measured by the acquisition test of cognitive aspects.

3.4.3. Data Analysis Related to Research Question 2

Table 7 summarizes the post-test data analysis for both the treatment and comparison groups of their use of critical listening skills.

Analysis of data obtained using the *t*-test shows that participants of the treatment group achieved a higher degree of improvement than those of the comparison group on the use test of critical listening skills since *t*-value (19.715) is significant at (0.01) level.

Data Analysis using the *t*-test reveals that participants in the treatment group showed a significantly greater improvement in the use of critical listening skills compared to the comparison group, with a *t*-value of (19.715), significant at the (0.01) level.

To guarantee the effectiveness of the blended learning program utilizing genre analysis in achieving its prescribed objectives, the Eta-Squared formula was applied, and Table 4 displays a highly significant Eta-Squared value of 0.932. Eta-squared value (η^2) below 0.1 indicates weak significance, between 0.1 and 0.6 suggests medium significance, and above 0.6 indicates high significance[40, 41].

3.4.4. Comparing the Treatment and the Comparison Groups' Performance in the Pre – Post Test of Use of Critical Listening Skills

Table 8 summarizes the analysis of pre- and post-test data for both the treatment and comparison groups on the use of the critical listening skills test.

Table 6. The *t*-value acquired for the mean scores of the treatment and the comparison groups in the post testing of the main critical listening skills measured by the test of the acquisition of the cognitive aspects of these skills.

Group		No.	Means	Std. D	D.F.	*t*-Value
Total	Exp.	30	12.4333	1.1351	58	*17.430
	Cont.	30	6.6333	1.4259		
Genre Analysis Skills	Exp.	30	3.5333	0.6814	58	*7.594
	Cont.	30	2.0000	0.8709		
Critical Listening Introductory	Exp.	30	1.8333	0.3790	58	*6.113
	Cont.	30	1.0000	0.6432		
Analyzing & Reflecting Skills	Exp.	30	7.0667	1.0148	58	*11.127
	Cont.	30	3.6333	1.3514		

* Significant at 0.01 level.

Table 7. *t*-value of mean scores obtained on the post - test of the use of critical listening skills of both the treatment and the comparison groups.

Group	No.	Means	Std. D	D.F.	*t*-Value	Eta- Squared
Exp.	30	52.6667	3.6514	58	*19.715	**0.932
Cont.	30	31.2000	4.7153			

* Significant at 0.01 level; ** Significant; Total score of the test = 62 points.

Table 8. *t*-value of mean scores obtained on the pre-post test of the use of critical listening skills of both the treatment and the comparison groups.

Group	No.	Means	Std. D	D.F.	*t*-Value
Pre/Exp.	30	23.2000	6.5094	29	**19.838
Pre/Exp.	30	52.6667	3.6514		
Pre/Cont.	30	22.4667	7.4959	29	*4.987
Pre/Cont.	30	31.2000	4.7153		

** Significant at 0.01 level; * Significant at 0.05 level.

A comparison of the treatment group's pre- and post-test results on the use of critical listening skills indicates a significant improvement in post-testing compared to pre-testing. The *t*-value of (19.838), which is significant at the 0.01 level and beyond, is detailed in **Table 7**.

However, the comparison group also demonstrated significant development, but to a lesser extent compared to the treatment group, with a *t*-value of 4.987, which is significant at the 0.05 level.

To show that the blended learning program has achieved its objectives in developing students' use of the main critical listening skills, the following table shows these results.

Table 9 summarizes the analysis of post-test data for both the treatment and comparison groups, focusing on their performance in the main critical listening skills as assessed by the use test.

Table 9. The attained mean scores of *t*-value for the treatment and comparison groups on the post-test of main critical listening skills, as measured by the use test of these skills.

Group		No.	Means	Std. D	D.F.	*t*-Value
Total	Exp.	30	52.6667	3.6514	58	*19.715
	Cont.	30	31.2000	4.7153		
Contextualizing Skills	Exp.	30	12.2667	2.0833	58	*8.566
	Cont.	30	7.3333	2.3683		
Previewing	Exp.	30	7.2000	1.1264	58	*8.376
	Cont.	30	4.2000	1.6060		
Skimming, Scanning, and Annotating	Exp.	30	8.8667	1.6344	58	*7.458
	Cont.	30	5.2000	2.1399		
Analyzing & Reflecting Skills	Exp.	30	20.8000	2.7088	58	*11.770
	Cont.	30	12.6667	2.6435		
Summarizing and Outlining	Exp.	30	3.5333	1.0080	58	*6.014
	Cont.	30	1.8000	1.2148		

* Significant at 0.01 level.

4. Discussion

The researchers' observations from the qualitative data obtained during the first phase asserted that some teachers demonstrate reasonable skill in teaching students how to identify and recognize words, yet they often neglect to emphasize comprehension skills. Teachers generally use texts primarily to convey grammatical points, vocabulary, and content knowledge and rarely to enable students to listen and question a text's obvious and taken-for-granted informa-

tion[38]. Reviewing the literature, the researchers found that manipulating critical listening skills is essential for English majors as they will be prospective teachers.

Unlike previous research, which primarily examines traditional teaching methods, this study innovatively combines Blended learning, Genre analysis, and Critical Listening Skills. This integration is significant because it introduces a modern educational approach that leverages technology and analytical techniques to enhance students' ability to critically engage with and interpret information from various genres.

Results from Phases 1 and 2 of the pre-test-post-test assessments on the acquisition and use of critical listening skills reveal differences that are significant in statistical terms variations in favor of the treatment group. The observed improvements highlight the students' enhanced abilities in both acquiring and utilizing the targeted critical listening skills, including Critical Listening Introductory, Genre Analysis Skills, Contextualizing Skills, Previewing, Skimming, Scanning, Annotating, Analyzing & Reflecting Skills, and Summarizing and Outlining. Therefore, the study's research questions are affirmed and validated.

However, this study diverges from the existing literature in several aspects. It specifically investigates the effectiveness of a Blended learning program utilizing genre analysis in developing the acquisition and use of critical listening skills among English majors. This unique approach integrates Blended learning, Genre analysis, and Critical Listening Skills, which have not been explored comprehensively in previous research. Furthermore, the study focuses on a sample of third-year English majors from the Faculty of Education at Minia University, Egypt. This demographic context adds a distinctive element to the study, offering insights specific to this group of students. Finally, the study measures two key dependent variables: the level of performance in acquiring critical listening skills and the level of performance in using critical listening skills. This dual focus provides a comprehensive assessment of how well students develop and apply critical listening abilities within the study's framework. These findings not only validate the study's research questions but also underscore the effectiveness of the blended learning approach in enhancing students' cognitive engagement and critical thinking capacities. The study thus contributes to the existing literature by demon-

strating practical strategies for integrating technology and genre-based analysis into language education to foster deeper comprehension and analytical skills.

Surprisingly, the alignment of this study's findings with prior research adds credibility and reinforces its conclusions. Blended learning effectively improved students' both listening and speaking abilities[16]. This approach seemed to integrate the strengths of both face-to-face and online learning, fostering greater initiative from both teachers and students and enhancing learner autonomy. The blended learning program was effective in developing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) listening comprehension skills among second-year preparatory school students[19]. Using blended learning to teach listening at a university might enhance students' listening abilities[17]. He disclosed that the implementation of blended learning in the instruction of listening provided avenues for instructors to enhance their efficacy in the process of teaching and learning, while also yielding favorable results for the pupils. Listening comprehension, critical listening, and critical thinking skills all exhibited a high positive significant association[43]. The use of online quizzes was crucial for the improvement of listening skills, and it was evident that this mode of delivery was favored over in-class evaluation in addition to meeting students' learning needs[18].

The study clarifies that critical listening is an active listening process. A critical listener is not merely a listener. In other words, he or she notices, deciphers, evaluates, and reacts to the assertions put out, the arguments put forth, and the comparisons and illustrations offered[29].

The researchers reached that critical listening is a vital skill for students' success. CL skills development is important because it uses scientific and effective methods to motivate and develop thinking. Along with language skills like speaking, reading, and writing, since they are all inextricably linked to listening[30]. The same assumptions mentioned that critical listening calls for increased focus and rapid comprehension. When listening, one should take a number of things into account. For listeners to better understand what speakers are saying, context, body language, and facial expressions are crucial[31].

In conclusion, this study not only advances theoretical understanding but also provides practical implications for educators seeking to enhance students' critical listening abili-

ties through innovative pedagogical approaches. By focusing on both the acquisition and application of critical listening skills, it offers a comprehensive framework for improving educational practices aimed at developing well-rounded English majors capable of critical analysis and interpretation across various texts and genres.

5. Conclusions

Throughout this study, the primary aim was to examine the effectiveness of a blended learning program utilizing genre analysis in enhancing critical listening skills among English majors. Based on the findings, there is a strong rationale for emphasizing the use of blended learning in English language instruction at the university level, as it enhances and has a positive impact on all language skills. This approach not only fosters improved listening comprehension but also enhances skills such as genre analysis, contextualization, annotation, and critical evaluation. Moreover, English language teaching objectives should underscore critical listening skills for acquiring, interpreting, evaluating, and applying information. Blended learning can also be beneficial for teaching other language courses such as phonology, morphology, semantics, contrastive analysis, and syntax. It is crucial for instructors to recognize that listening is an active rather than passive skill, presenting more complex challenges. Lastly, teacher preparation programs in Egypt are encouraged to integrate critical listening skills into listening courses for English majors and pre-service English teachers. These programs should focus on training students in using genre analysis and critical genre analysis techniques effectively.

The substantial improvements seen in the treatment group on post-assessment measures can be credited to the blended learning training program, which is designed to enhance critical listening skills.

Specifically, skills like Critical Listening Introductory, Genre Analysis Skills, Contextualizing Skills, Previewing Skills, Skimming, Scanning, Annotating Skills, Analyzing & Reflecting Skills, Comparing and Contrasting Skills, and Summarizing and Outlining Skills. Such skills were honed through interactive activities on a dedicated website designed specifically to present a program based on genre analysis skills.

Furthermore, this active engagement in learning reinforces the understanding that listening is a dynamic skill requiring analytical thinking and active participation. During the implementation of the blended learning program, it became evident that enhanced listening comprehension directly contributed to the development of critical listening skills. As students improved their ability to listen attentively, they gained confidence, which in turn enabled them to engage in critical listening effectively.

It is noteworthy to mention here the impact of genre analysis on the development of critical listening skills. Genre analysis plays a pivotal role in linguistic and pedagogical domains, as its main concern is to investigate and analyze "language in use". By systematically analyzing various text genres, learners develop a deeper understanding of language use, form, function, and sociolinguistic and socio-cultural contexts. This happens according to a set of standardized pedagogical steps. Developing these skills requires on the part of the learner to be a skilful analyst as she/he needs to analyze, judge, and evaluate what is said. The learner can have a better understanding and better training on mastering these skills through practicing genre analysis. This analytical approach not only enhances linguistic proficiency but also cultivates critical thinking skills essential for academic and professional contexts.

Moving forward, integrating critical listening skills and genre analysis into teacher preparation programs in Egypt is recommended. By equipping future educators with these advanced pedagogical techniques, universities can better prepare English majors and pre-service teachers to meet the evolving demands of language education.

Author Contributions

N.K., A.R. and M.A.A. conceptualized the manuscript's focus, proposed the aims, edited and prepared the draft manuscript, and wrote all the sections. N.K. collected the data, N.K., A.R. and M.A.A. analyzed, and interpreted the data. N.K., A.R. and M.A.A. were major contributors to writing and proofreading the manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

Throughout all stages and procedures of the current research, guidelines and regulations of the 1963 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments were considered and followed. The Ethical Committee of the English Language Department at Minia University, Egypt has approved that this study meets the ethics criteria and approved means and methods of data collection.

Informed Consent Statement

All participants' consent was obtained at the onset of data collection while maintaining their full liberty whether to participate or not and the option to withdraw and exclude their responses at any stage of research. Participants' identities were kept confidential and anonymous without fail.

Data Availability Statement

All data and material are included in the manuscript. We do not have any other data available somewhere else.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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