

The Impact of Directed Listening Thinking Activity (DLTA) on Developing University Students' Listening Competencies

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Abstract: *The study aimed at investigating the impact of Directed Listening Thinking Activity (DLTA) on Developing. The participants were from English department. The total number of participants at first stage (group A & B), was 51 students. They were assigned to an treatment group and to a control group. The researcher used two instruments to collect the data: short story (Novella), and classroom observation check list to elicit answers to the following questions of the study " Is there an impact on the use of Directed Listening Thinking Activity to improve the Listening proficiency of the first grade students at University?" And, "Are there any statistical significance differences ($\alpha \leq 0, 05$) in the first grade students' listening proficiencies due to the teaching method (DLTA)?" Based on the results of the current study, the researcher presented some recommendations in this paper.*

Keywords: *Directed Listening Thinking Activity (DLTA), Novella, short-story, Listening Competencies.*

Introduction

From the researcher's experience the Directed Listening-Thinking Activity (DLTA) builds on what students already know, and shows them how to apply this prior knowledge to new situations. The DLTA is very similar to the DRTA except the teacher reads aloud at the highest level students can understand. This is an important difference because we know that students' reading levels lag several years behind listening comprehension; thus a DLTA can involve all students in a critical thinking, content rich, and whole group lesson.

To the researcher best knowledge, the researches that conducted to measure the levels of listening proficiency among the Iraqi students, and even the methods of teaching listening skills,

specially at the level of university students, are very rare. The researcher hope that this paper will contribute to reveal the effect of teaching "Novella" to the first year English language university students via Directed Listening-Thinking Activity (DLTA), and to show the effect of this method on developing students' listening proficiencies.

The Effectiveness of DLTA

While the DLTA is an effective technique for activating prior knowledge and engaging the whole class, it is not meant to supplant instruction where students are reading on their appropriate level. The DLTA provides teachers with a structure for introducing and discussing stories read aloud to students while supplying the students with a generalizable framework for listening to these stories (Reutzel, 1992).

Listening is more than merely hearing words. Listening is an active process by which students receive, construct meaning from, and respond to spoken and or nonverbal messages. As such, it forms an integral part of the communication process and should not be separated from the other language arts. Listening comprehension complements reading comprehension. Verbally clarifying the spoken message before, during, and after a presentation enhances listening comprehension. Writing, in turn, clarifies and documents the spoken message. Teachers can help students become effective listeners by making them aware of the different kinds of listening, the different purposes for listening, and the qualities of good listeners. (Emmert, 1994)

Wolvin and Coakley (1992) identify four different kinds of listening:

- 1- Comprehensive (Informational) Listening: Students listen for the content of the message.
- 2- Critical (Evaluative) Listening :Students judge the message
- 3- Appreciative (Aesthetic) Listening: Students listen for enjoyment.
- 4- Therapeutic (Empathetic) Listening: Students listen to support others but not judge them

The teacher can build a rich conceptual background in a number of different ways:

1. Letting the students share related experiences

2. Telling of his/her own experiences
3. Using visual aids such as pictures, slides, maps, objects
4. Relating new material to current happenings in room, city, nation, etc.
5. Oral reading, or telling of related material by teacher
6. Locating the setting of the story
7. Identifying the characters
8. Anticipating incidents
9. Predicting outcomes.

DLTA Cycle Components:

- A. Students set purposes, make predictions
- B. Silent listening.
- C. Students verify predictions, prove set purposes.

Currently in Iraq, it is notable that the Ministry of High Education and Scientific Research had adopted certain plans to improve the teaching of English in the universities. The use of modern teaching methods have become a priority. To attain this goal, the Ministry of High Education encourages teachers and instructors to be enrolled in teaching training sessions. It is expected that this study will add a foundation stone to the efforts that aim to construct a reasonable and flexible listening teaching method, which may help in developing learners' achievement integrating the four language skills when learning and teaching English.

Statement of the Problem

From the researcher's experiences in teaching university students, he noticed that in most English language classrooms, listening comprehension assumes far greater importance in learning than reading comprehension, yet we seldom address this essential ability, nor do we teach students how to develop and monitor their own listening comprehension. In fact, most of

the EFL Iraqi instructors rarely, if never, consider and/ or adopt the comprehension that is require of all successful listeners. Thus, the researcher noticed that in the Iraqi universities we have students who are worst listener and bad note taker. This may due that they have little education on how to listen, and may due to the fact that most EFL instructors neglect the listening skill. Students do not have an innate understanding of what effective listeners do. This lack of education derived from the fact that bad habits can be difficult to change. It is important for the instructors to provide numerous opportunities for students to practice listening skills and to become actively engaged in the listening process.

The purpose of this experimental study is to help the EFL students to improve their listening comprehension by using Directed Listening Activity in literature lecture.

Objective of the Study

This study aims at investigating the Effect of Directed Listening Thinking Activity (DLTA) to improve students' listening comprehension in teaching 1st graders at the English department at Cihan University. It will also measure if there is an effect in using Directed Listening Thinking Activity to develop students' ability to predict positively.

Questions of the study

The study is trying to answer the following questions:

- 1- Is there an impact on the use of Directed Listening Thinking Activity to improve the Listening proficiency of the first grade students at University?
- 2- Are there any statistical significance differences ($\alpha \leq 0, 05$) in the first grade students' listening proficiencies due to the teaching method (DLTA)?

Significance of the Study

The importance of this study stems from DLTA activities. If these activities can improve students' listening ability, it will be marvelous that all EFL teachers to have an excellent listener, and students will be able to achieve the following:

1. Students will predict outcomes in professional way.
2. Students will follow a story line when presented orally.
3. Students will develop an awareness and appreciation of characterization.
4. Students will practice strong and effective writing.
5. Students will improve their listening comprehension and prediction skills by participating in a Directed Listening–Thinking Activity (DLTA)
6. Students will respond to literature read in class by either writing an essay of comprehension.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations of this study. The researcher may summarize these limitations in the following points:

- 1- The sample of this study is only first grade students at English department.
- 2- The results of the study are limited by the time limit for the period in which the study was conducted.

Literature Review

Many studies on how to present the DLTA lesson have planned, and most of them have suggested the same steps to be followed in planning DLTA classes.

Anderson, Mason, and Shirey (1984) (cited in Reutzler and Robert, 1992) show that young students can internalize the DLTA and transfer its use to new stories read aloud.

Morrow (1985) has shown that using DLTA significantly increases students's listening comprehension of a story with frequent use.

Harmer (2007) presents his strategy in preparing DRTA. He mentions that the teacher should select points at which to pause, so that the students can make predictions. These predications should be recorded on chart paper. He suggests putting student's name beside each prediction.

Reutzler, and Robert (1992) suggest the following basic steps of DLTA

- Students make Predictions about the text

- Teacher sets Purpose for Reading (only 1 or 2)
- Students read silently - each student must have their own copy of the book/text - to find the answers to the "purpose" and to confirm/negate predictions (with a partner, individually if the print is at an independent level, with an adult helper in the classroom, with students in another grade level, with a book on tape, on the computer, etc.). In a DLTA the teachers sets a purpose for listening and then either reads aloud, plays a portion of the book on video/audio/computer generated, etc.
- Confirm or Revise predictions - revisit the predictions chart to see if any modifications need to be made. Check to see who can find the answer to the PURPOSE set - the "answer" is usually read aloud by a student so that all might hear the words as they are in the text. Other conversation with students at this point should focus on open-ended Socratic questions that prompt THINKING and synthesizing of information. The cycle of predictions and setting purposes begins again until the end of the text.

Wang (2010) presented instructional activity to teach students how to listen to stories and other materials read to them. It involves predicting what will happen, talking about what happened, and talking about how they know what is happening. As the teacher reads aloud, s/he communicates the message by adding intonation and gestures to facilitate understanding.

Nazzaro (1998) discussed a story entitled Fish is Fish; he discussed the author and illustrator of the book by Leo Lionni. He showed the book to the class and asked questions based on the cover. Orally read the title and ask them to predict who the story will be about, what will take place, and where and when the setting will be. Finally he told them to listen to the story carefully to see if their predictions matched (5 min.).

Warcholik (1999) presented how the DLTA lesson could be planed. The researcher suggested the following activities: The students previously discussed a story. Another teacher brought in students to present a lesson on the story. After the presentation, the class discussed other mythical characters similar to leprechauns that bring luck and treasures to people. The teacher reads the students a story and the lucky things that may come from them. The discussion is about

5 minutes. A good example of implementing DLTA is through the following main Activities which long for 20 min.:

1 . The teacher reads the story aloud. Dramatization is achieved by using multiple voices, expressive intonation, and moderately exaggerated body and facial expressions. The teacher shows selected book pages and pictures to the students and briefly discusses or comments about them.

2. At selected intervals, the teacher stops reading and asks the students to speculate and predict certain outcomes. These will include for example:

Page 23 What caught Dicky's attention?

Page 24 What might Dicky bring up from the soil?

Page 25 What other animals could Dicky hear and see now?

Page 27 Who was calling Dicky?

Page 28 How did the pixies know Dicky had the scarf?

Page 29 What might the pixies give Dicky in exchange for the scarf?

Page 31 What might the pixie marbles really be?

Summarizing Activities

The teacher asks the students the following key questions: (5 min.)

1. What was your favorite part of the story? Why?
2. What would you like the pixies to give you if you were Dicky?
3. Why was Dicky's grandmother happy that Dicky had received pixie marbles?

4. Why do you think Dicky kept one of the marbles?

In order to provide more examples of utilizing DLTA inside classroom, Stauffer (2005) suggested the following activities:

1. The teacher chooses a story in advance, one with a clear plot structure and attractive illustrations.
2. The teacher becomes familiar with the story, and plans to stop reading at least 2-4 times at predetermined points where she can ask the students to summarize what has happened so far, and predict what may happen next.
3. Before reading to the students, or having them read silently (DRTA), the teacher draws attention to the cover of the book by reading the title and looking at its illustration. The teacher asks the students to make predictions as to what the story may be about. The teacher accepts all predictions.
4. The teacher records the predictions on the board, and asks, "Why do you think so?"
5. The teacher reads the story to the class (DLTA), or has the students read silently to a predetermined stopping point (DRTA). At each of the stopping points, the teacher asks for the students' summaries of what has happened so far, and what they predict will happen next.
6. The class reexamines the predictions on the board, discusses which predictions are no longer viable, and which need to be adjusted or refined. New predictions are then formulated.
7. Continue reading aloud (DLTA), or silently (DRTA) to the next stopping point. Repeat step 6.

The results of these steps revealed their significance in developing students' listening proficiencies.

Roberts (2007) presented number of authentic listening experiences are outlined and discussed. A set of sample classroom activities is then presented, in which authentic texts are exploited. The aim of each activity is to replicate authentic listening experiences and outputs while taking pedagogic constraints into account.

David, and Blacklock (2008) suggested the following procedures to teach DLTA and as following:

Procedures:

1. Select the story and estimate the number of days needed to complete the preparation for reading and follow-up extension activities.
2. Choose the vocabulary words to be presented, and prepare materials for presentation (sentence strips for pocket chart, duplicated handout, sentences written on board, etc.).
3. Determine the purpose-setting question or statement. (Use or adapt the one from the teacher's guide.)
4. Decide what comprehension questions to use. (Choose from those in the teacher's guide or write your own.)
5. Identify skills to be developed and activities for developing those skills, and prepare materials or equipment necessary for activities. (Choose from activities in the teacher's guide or develop your own.)
6. Determine extension and follow-up activities. (Choose or adapt from the teacher's guide.)
7. Prepare any handouts, materials, or equipment needed.

The results of his suggestions improve that students' listening proficiencies have been developed via using the suggested strategies.

The above researchers present how to plan the DLTA lesson. The researcher in this study presents activities which fit the Arab students in general and Iraqi students in particular in teaching listening skill. Most of the instructional items of the activities adopted from different activities which were suggested by the researchers above with some amendment that fit the Iraqi situation.

To sum up, the researcher reveals that DLTA is a good method to teach listening lesson. It is used with a group from five to twelve students who have the same fundamental listening abilities, and who read the same "fresh" material at the same time. The teacher directs the activity so that the students have a question to be answered or a doubt to be satisfied. In fact, in

reality, the students are listening to satisfy the purposes they set individually (i.e., to answer the question(s) raised).

In doing so, each student tests and retests ideas, orders and reorders purposes, reasons and judges in an effort to answer questions, insuring active participation in the reading and thus increasing comprehension (Cameron, 2001).

Directed Listening Activities (DLTA) and Directed Reading Activities (DRTA) are two activities that have the students either listening (DLTA) or reading (DRTA) stories actively and critically. Throughout the activity the students are to summarize and make predictions about the story content. It is important to avoid terms such as, "right" or "wrong." Instead use terms like "might happen," "likely" or "possible." Predicting is not so much guessing right, but rather coming up with possible alternatives (Stauffer, 2005).

Participants of the Study

The study was conducted at Cihan University, in Sulaymaniyah province in the Kurdistan of Iraq. The participants were from English department. The total number of participants at first stage (group A & B), was 51 students. The participants were chosen purposefully because the regulations of the university do not allow to mix the groups and choose randomly sample. The researcher divided the participants into two groups, experimental (treatment) and control. The control group composed of 25 students who were at group A. The treatment group consisted of 26 students who were at group B. The experimental group taught via DLTA, whereas the control group taught via traditional method (Communicative Language Teaching Approach)

Research Instruments

The researcher used two instruments to collect the data: short story (Novella), and classroom observation check list to elicit answers to the questions of the study. Since there are no ready – made instruments that suit the purpose of this study, the observation checklist instrument were built by the researcher, and the Novellas were ready – made.

Validity of the observation checklist

The validity of the observation checklist was obtained by giving it to a group of specialists working in some Jordanian and Iraqi universities; they are specialized in measurement and evaluation and curriculum and instruction. Modifications have been done according to their suggestions.

In addition, to examine the construct validity of the observation checklist (the scale), it has been implemented on a pilot sample which consisted of 15 students from first grade evening class. The correlation coefficient was computed between the items, and between the scale and its items.

Reliability of the observation checklist

To examine the internal consistency reliability, the test-retest method was used within a two-week period. Cronbach Alpha was used to compute the internal consistency reliability of the scale and its items; Pearson coefficient was used to compute the reliability of the scale and its items.

Variable of the Study

The dependent variable is the use of Directed Listening Thinking Activity.

The independent variable of this study is: The listening proficiency

Methods and Procedures

This section describes the population and the sample of the study, the instruments of the researcher, the methods that followed to collect the data, and analyze the data.

Design of the Study

Since the sample of the study was purposefully chosen, the design is a quasi- experimental one for the non equivalent groups. It is difficult to achieve full randomization as the students who in group A are not equal to those who in group B. For the researcher to control the student variable

and avoid the influence of any outside variables, he conducted a short test on students at the end of each unit then he compared the results of both groups. The results were very close for the both groups (A&B).

Procedures of the study

The researcher followed the following procedures to conduct this study:

1. Reviewing some of the available related literature to establish a theoretical background.
2. Preparing the instruments of the study, and then establishing their validity and reliability.
3. Obtaining permission from the English language head department to conduct the study on sample which was purposefully selected from the Cihan university.
4. Designing and validating an instructional method.
5. Identifying the participants of the study, and assigning the teacher (instructor: Ms. Jinan Khadum) who taught both the experimental and control groups.
6. Conducting observation checklist on the participants of the study and computing its results.
7. Training the teacher (Ms. Jinan Khadum) on how to apply DLTA method.
8. Conducting the study.
9. Analyzing the results and writing the research.

Data collection

This study has been carried out according to the following sequential procedures over the first month of the first semester for the academic years 2014-2015:

1. The researcher chooses a simple short story (Novella) and hand it to the instructor (Ms. Jinan) to read it every day to the students in the classroom. Each day 15 minutes and for 15 days.
2. The instructor (Ms. Jinan) tells the chosen novella and the researcher observed the class's activities.

3. The observation checklist items were analyzed manually by the researcher.
4. After collecting the data the researcher began to analyze them in order to answer the questions of the study.

Procedures of applying the DLTA

This study was carried out during the first semester of the academic year 2014/2015. The researcher follows the following procedures:

The researcher visited the class that was chosen, administers the study, and explain the aim of the study to the participants and the teacher who taught the students..

The classroom procedures were conducted as following:

Step 1 (5 minutes): Introducing the Novella and Predicting.

The instructor (Ms. Jinan) introduced a novella, showing the students the cover of the book and read the title. After discussing the title, the cover, and some of the pictures, the instructor asked the students to make a prediction about the story. The instructor (Ms. Jinan) asked a series of questions such as:

- What do you think this story may be about?
- What do you think might happen in this story?
- Do the pictures give you any clues about what might happen?

The instructor (Ms. Jinan) read the first few paragraphs of the story (Novella) to provide students with enough information to make reasonable predictions. Following an initial discussion, students decide which of the predictions they wish to accept. instructor facilitated this process by asking questions such as:

- Which of the ideas about how the story will turn out do you think is most likely correct?
- Have you ever wished that you could live somewhere else?
- Have you ever thought some of your friends have a better life than you do?

Relating questions to the real-life experiences of the students helps them make vital connections with their background knowledge and experience to guide their predictions.

Step 2 (5 minutes): Listening, Thinking, and Predicting

Once students commit to a prediction, they have in effect set their own purpose for listening as the researcher read the novella aloud. As the novella unfolds during the reading, students begin to confirm, reject, or modify their predictions. The instructor (Ms. Jinan) usually stops at key points in the story and asks students more questions. These questions are meant to involve students in confirming, rejecting, or modifying their predictions using the new information they have heard. The instructor asked questions such as:

- Have you changed your original predictions about how the story will turn out?
- What do you think will happen next?
- If ... happens, how will that change your ideas? (some questions are translated into Arabic language in order to be understood)

The instructor continues reading the story of the novella aloud, stopping at key points in the story to repeat this procedure until the end of the story is reached.

Step 3 (5 minutes): Supporting with Evidence

During the final part of the DLTA, the instructor (Ms. Jinan) asked student/s to remember information from the story to support their predictions. Also, asked students to recall which information in the story caused students to change their predictions. Again, the instructor used questioning to invite students to respond to the story. Examples of such questions as following:

- Can you remember how many times your predictions changed?
- What happened in the story that caused you to change your predictions?

Instructional Material

The instructional material is three Novella (short simple story) for students (age between 18-25 years) which includes 18 stories, but the instructor covers only 10 novellas during the application period. The novellas were selected randomly from different sources.

Empirical Definitions

Directed Listening and Thinking Activity (DLTA): the researcher defines (DLTA) as a strategy that is used with early childhood students, or with students who are not yet successful independent learner. The students at first grade are regarded as independent English learners.

Listening Proficiency: the researcher defines student's listening proficiency as the ability of learner to seek clarification in English when failing to comprehend the English that he hears.

Statistical analyses

To answer the study questions, descriptive methods (means and standard deviations) were used for posttest for English language listening test for both the experimental and control groups.

Findings and Discussion of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of using DLTA for teaching listening on primary first year students' achievements at English department at Cihan university. The researcher followed the equivalent post test two group designs. Therefore, the means, standard deviations and one-Way ANOVA analysis of variance were used to analyze data. The results are displayed based on the questions of the research.

Table 1:

The means and standard deviations of the achievement of groups on the post observation

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental	89.78	7.894
Control	78.79	11.121

The researcher also conducted a one-way analysis of variance to analyze the post observation scores of the two groups.

Table 2:**One-way analysis of variance of the achievement of the control and the experimental groups on the post-observation**

Source	Sum	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Group	1911.224	1	1911.224	21.199	.000
Error	10398.442	116	89.642		
Total	12309.66	117			

To answer the first question: Is there an impact on the use of Directed Listening Thinking Activity to improve the Listening proficiency of the first grade students at University?

Table 2 shows that the level of significance is .000 which is statistically significant at $\alpha \leq 0, 05$ on favor of the experimental group.

To sum up, the researcher believes that the difference in the achievement of the first year students was attributed to the using of DLTA for teaching English listening via (Novella) short story. The experimental group students managed to significantly improve English listening. The improvement achieved by the control group students, however, was not statistically significant. By comparing the results achieved by the two groups, the researcher concluded that the improvement achieved by the experimental group may have been attributed to the way they rendered instruction; teaching listening accompanied with Novella - short story. This result consists with the study of Harwayne (2001); Routman (2003); Gasparro and Falletta (2004); and Walter (2006) who prove that teaching listening via DLTA has a significance effect on developing listening proficiency.

To answer the second question of the study " Are there any statistical significance differences ($\alpha \leq 0, 05$) in the first grade students' listening proficiencies due to the teaching method (DLTA)?

The researcher computes manually the means and the standard deviation of the items of the observation checklist as seen in Table 3.

Table 3:**The mean scores and standard deviations of each item of the observed checklist**

Rank	No.	Items	Mean	SD
1	18	Students improve their listening comprehension and prediction skills by participating in a Directed Listening–Thinking Activity (DLTA).	4.94	.32
2	8	Students can predict what will happen next in the story	4.94	.32
3	7	Students interact positively during the story telling	4.85	.36
4	3	Students begin to confirm, reject, or modify their predictions	4.83	.43
5	10	Students can remember information from the story.	4.83	.52
6	12	Students change their prediction several times.	4.77	.73
7	14	Students are able to respond successfully to the predictive questions during the read aloud.	4.68	.59
8	17	Students improve their listening comprehension and prediction skills by participating in a Directed Listening–Thinking Activity (DLTA)	4.64	.53
9	2	Students do reasonable predictions about the events of the story	4.47	.62
10	15	Students are able to respond successfully to the key questions after the read aloud.	4.47	.91
11	6	The teacher stops at key points in the story and asks Students questions.	4.21	.59
12	9	At the end of the story students change their idea about their previous prediction.	4.19	.54
13	11	Students can recall the main information in the story.	3.83	1.46
14	16	Students express enthusiasm for the story.	3.77	.81
15	13	Students find answer to their questions.	2.57	.80
16	5	In DLTA teacher is the centered of the EFL classes	2.51	1.20
17	4	Students listen to the teacher only rather than other materials.	2.21	.51
18	1	Students begin to confirm the teachers' reading.	1.98	.97
19	19	Students respond to story read in class by asking oral questions	1.96	.72

It can be noticed from table 3 that the highest mean scores is for the item entitled " Students improve their listening comprehension and prediction skills by participating in a Directed Listening–Thinking Activity (DLTA). (4.94)", then in the second rank came the item entitled " Students can predict what will happen next in the story (4.93)", then followed the other items

ranked in descending order and finally came the item entitled : Students listen to the teacher only rather than other materials (1.96) since there is video tape and cassette recorder.

The findings revealed that comprehension derives not only from situational and subject matter knowledge, but from increasing control of the language. Texts at this level include descriptions and narrations such as simple short stories, bibliographical information, social notices, personal correspondence, and simple technical material written for the general reader.

Conclusion

Learning English via DLTA is an easy method for students who are studying English as a foreign language. So, it was found that using DLTA has helped students to comprehend a text and enjoy analyzing it. The final outcome and the production of the test show that DLTA via story for teaching listening comprehension has enhanced students to listen with entertainment. Moreover, it improves their level in literature as they gain the skills of analysis and criticism in general.

On other hand, while there is an agreement that teaching via story (should be authentic material) is important at any level in learning English. The study shows that story is an excellent tool for implementing standards, as well as providing ample opportunity to promote higher level of thinking.

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Appendix 1**The classroom observation checklist**

No.	Items	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	never
1	Students begin to confirm the teachers' reading.					
2	Students do reasonable predictions about the events of the story					
3	Students begin to confirm, reject, or modify their predictions					
4	Students listen to the teacher only rather than other materials.					
5	In DLTA teacher is the centered of the EFL classes.					
6	The teacher stops at key points in the story and asks Students questions.					
7	Students interact positively during the story telling					
8	Students can predict what will happen next in the story					
9	At the end of the story students change their idea about their previous prediction.					
10	Students can remember information from the story.					
11	Students can recall the main information in the story.					
12	Students change their prediction several times.					
13	Students find answer to their questions.					
14	Students are able to respond successfully to the predictive questions during the read aloud.					
15	Students are able to respond successfully to the key questions after the read aloud.					
16	Students express enthusiasm for the story.					
17	Students improve their listening comprehension and prediction skills by participating in a Directed Listening–Thinking Activity (DLTA)					
18	Students improve their listening comprehension and prediction skills by participating in a Directed Listening–Thinking Activity (DLTA)					
19	Students respond to story read in class by asking oral questions					