

Refocusing on Listening Skills and Note-Taking: Imperative Skills for University Students' Learning in an L2 Environment

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Abstract—Listening as the foremost language skill remains an indispensable language skill in human communication, language teaching, and learning. Its indispensability lies in its being the pillar upon which other language skills are built (Obiweluo & Melefa, 2013). Note-taking as a post-listening activity is a very crucial step for remembering what has been captured through listening since information retention lasts shortly. Irrespective of the glaring importance of listening skills and note-taking strategies to language learning, university students from very common observations have continued to neglect these skills, hence the poor performance in other language skills and other learning activities. For this reason, this paper is set to investigate the importance of listening skills for effective language teaching and learning of university students, examine to what extent listening skills have been neglected/overlooked by university students, and explore the positive effects of note-taking strategies on listening skills as well as language learning. The data for this study will be elicited from first-year undergraduates of University of Nigeria, Nsukka using a well-structured questionnaire with 31 questionnaire items based on the aspects of listening skills and note-taking strategies. The paper shall be descriptively analysed and findings exposed with proper recommendations.

Index Terms—listening skill, note-taking, language learning, university students

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, listening has been seen from different perspectives depending on the prevailing understanding of it at different times. Rost (2002) opines in the 1960s that listening was part of the listeners' experiences or peculiarities adopted to understand the intention of the speaker. In the 1970s, it was perceived as the cultural significance of speech behaviour. In the 1980s and 1990s, listening was seen as a "parallel processing of input" (p.1). In a more recent time, Vandergrift (1999) from a more comprehensive approach defines listening as an active complex process whereby the listener is able to distinguish between sounds, understand vocabulary as well as grammatical structures. It includes also interpretation of stress and intonation, retention of what was apprehended above and a sociocultural context interpretation of the utterance within both immediate and larger sphere (p.68). From the above, it is obvious that before the 1980s, listening was notionally a passive activity and speaking much more active. That has remained obsolete and could not be sustained since according to Vennum, the decoding of the message calls for active participation in the communication between the participants. This notion of passivity on listening skills may be obviously tied to the neglect of this all-important and fundamental skill (cited in Sheth & Chauhan, 2015, p. 223). Speaking further on the issue they added, "Although listening is an imperative key to language success, unfortunately, it has been thrown on the back seat for teaching reading and writing in the classroom" (p. 225).

The relevance of listening skills both in a classroom setting and in daily life cannot be underestimated. Stressing the importance of listening skills, Anderson and Lynch state that listening skills are as important as speaking skills since communication cannot take place without the development of the two skills. They further reiterate that "we only become aware of what remarkable feats of listening we achieve when we are in an unfamiliar listening environment, such as listening to a language in which we have limited proficiency" (cited in Yildirim & Yildirim, 2016, p.2097). In the same vein, Wallace et al. (2004) maintain that listening skills are also very important in the learning process because they help the students to achieve a successful and effective communication through the acquisition of information and

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insights (p.13). To this point, listening is not doubt a very important element which should not be neglected in every formal learning environment especially in ESL classrooms.

However, most people erroneously think that the mastery of second language is only based on the ability to read and write not knowing that without efficient listening skills, it will be quite impossible to communicate effectively. There is no doubt that listening skill is a fundamental skill in language learning and has continued to dominate human activity. Nunan explains that explains that in a second or foreign language learning students devote over 50% of their time functioning in listening (cited in Yildirim & Yildirim, 2012, p. 2097). Rivers and Terpenley (1978) in the same vein state how adult spend their whole time in language communication activities thus: 45 percent for listening, 30 percent for speaking, 16 percent for reading and only 9 percent for writing (p.42)." Bird (1953) stated that female college students spent 42 percent of their time listening, 25 percent speaking, 15 percent reading, and 18 percent writing (cited in Yousofia et al., 2014, p.1946). In a study carried out by Feyten, it was reveal that in a working day, about 70% is spent on verbal communication while about 45% out of this is spent on listening (cited in Yii, 2008). Despite that listening is the most frequently used language skill and for its indispensability in the entire learning activities, numerous problems bothering to poor attention, non-adoption of necessary skills and strategies, etc. have continued to manifest negatively, hence this investigation.

A. *Research Questions*

1. What is the importance of listening skills in the learning situations of university students as well as the place of listening skills amid other language skills?
2. What is the level of application of listening strategies by university students?
3. What is the effect of note-taking strategies on listening skills?
4. What are the possible causes of poor listening situations among university students?

B. *The Objectives of the Study*

1. To establish the imperative importance of listening skills in the learning situations of university students and the crucial place of listening skills to other language skills.
2. To ascertain the level of application of listening strategies by university students.
3. To explore the effect of note-taking strategies on listening skills.
4. To identify the possible causes of poor listening situations among university students.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Difference between Listening and Hearing*

Part of the passivity perception` of listening skills in the past has to do with the poor concept of the word ‘listening’. Many incline listening to mean hearing when they are obviously different. In drawing a clear difference between listening and hearing, Kline points out that the knowledge of the difference between hearing and listening is an important feature for effective learning and teaching of listening. He avers that hearing is more of sound reception while listening goes with attachment of meaning to the sound. This implies that hearing is passive and listening active (cited in Yildirim & Yildirim, 2016, p. 2096). From a similar perspective, Rost explains that hearing is a form of perception while listening is an active and intentional process (cited in Yildirim & Yildirim, 2016, p.2095). Even though both involve sound perception, listening has more as regards the degree of attention and intention. It is clear that the perception of listening as a passive skill is drawn from the concept of hearing.

B. *Listening as the Most Fundamental Language Skill and Facilitator to Other Language Skills*

In language acquisition, listening skill remains an outstanding fundamental skill, especially, with the indispensable role it plays in communication and in people’s daily lives. Oxford (1993), in support of this, affirms that listening is perhaps the most fundamental language skill (p. 205). Rost (2001) aligning with the above explains that listening plays a key role in language learning and points out that the major difference between successful and less successful learners depends largely on their ability to adopt listening as a means of acquisition (p. 94). Simply put, listening is the foremost skill for language learning and also a necessity in the development of other language skills. Succinctly, Guo and Wills (2006) capture many roles of listening thus: it is a means people gain information, education, understanding of the world as relates to human affairs, ideals and values (p.3). There is no doubt that without understanding the speakers’ message learners cannot respond appropriately. It is for this reason that listening can facilitate other communication skills (Vandergrift, 1999, p. 169).Listening skills are crucial to the development of speaking skill such that it helps second language learners to develop their pronunciation and fluency in English.

For most foreign and second language learners, the key reason for learning a language is to be able to communicate in social contexts (Vandergrift, 1999). It can also be stated that when learners have good communication skills they are said to be effective users of the language (Yildiz & Albay, 2015, p. 4), and yet Dunkel et al. affirm that listening skill is more important than speaking skill because communication cannot take place except the listener understands the speakers’ message before there can be a response (cited in Yildiz & Albay, 2015, p.4). Through listening, listeners are equipped with necessary inputs that enable language learning to take place (Rost, 1994). Words acquired in a listening

context are better understood and retained for appropriate use because of the sensual activeness involved in listening. To this point, the important of teaching listening comprehension is like that of listening lessons which are a channel for teaching elements of grammatical structure and allowing new vocabulary items to be contextualized within a body of communicative discourse Morley (cited in Yildirim & Yildirim, 2016, p. 2099).

C. Problems English Language Learners Encounter in Listening

Many problems abound among learners of the English language in the course of listening. These problems constitute serious setback to effective listening giving rise to very poor dividends expected from successful listening. One of the major problems that continuously rear its ugly head is unfamiliar sounds that appear in English but are not in the learners' native language. The case of understanding intonation and stress as well manifests along this line, especially, with the fact that they are not always given much attention during teaching and learning. From a more detailed perspective, Ur (2007) outlines the following main potential problems learners need intensive practice while listening: "hearing sounds, understanding intonation, and stress, coping with redundancy and noise, predicting, understanding colloquial vocabulary, fatigue, understanding different accents, using visual and aural environmental clues" (p.10). Underwood (1989) similarly enumerates the common obstacles students experience in the course of listening as: speed of delivery, inability to repeat words, limited vocabulary, failing to follow transitional signals, lack of contextual knowledge, inability to concentrate, and the habits of trying to comprehend every word heard (p.43). These situations obviously lead to some comprehension difficulty. In a closely related manner, Hayati and Jalilifar (2009) reveal that the further problem listeners encounter often is how to address the rapid disappearance of the content of what they have listened to (p. 101). Also, Rixon (1986) notes that the problems in listening arise because spoken words are not retained to be ruminated on or contemplated like that of written words (p. 26). Many language learners acknowledge that they can always follow the speakers with ease but remain at a loss after some time as they cannot remember what was said again. Imperatively, the issue of research on retention should be given serious attention (Hayati & Jalilifar, 2009, p.101). A possible solution to this problem can be found by exposing learners to various post-listening activities like note-taking which is a key term for later discussion in this paper.

In another study that explored Arabic learners' perceptions and beliefs about their listening comprehension problems in English, ineffective usage of listening strategies, the listening text itself, the speaker, the listening tasks and activities, the message, and listeners' attitudes were found to be the sources of their listening comprehension problems. When students were asked to list their listening problems, the most common answers were poor classroom conditions, not having visual aids, unfamiliar vocabulary, unclear pronunciation, speech rate, boring topics, and being exposed to longer texts (Hasan, 2000).

Also similar to the above study, Graham (2006) examined learners' perspectives of listening comprehension problems and investigated learners' views on the reasons behind their success. The participants used for the research were a group of high school students studying French as a foreign language. The data were accessed through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The study revealed some of the problems reported by learners on how to deal with the delivery of the spoken text, to hear and understand the individual words (Yildirim & Yildirim, 2016). The speed of delivery and the language used by the speaker stand out in this case. Notably, these situations are beyond the control of the learner, hence his inability to keep abreast with the speaker and his failure to grasp the whole meaning of the text. Most learners stated that their low listening ability and not being aware of effective listening strategies were the factors that affected their success.

One of the current studies specifically on listening comprehension problems encountered by Saudi Students in the EL listening classrooms was conducted by Hamouda (2013). The results revealed that the students' major listening comprehension problems encountered by EFL Saudi learners were accent, pronunciation, speed of speech, lack of vocabulary, different speakers' accent, poor concentration, anxiety, and bad recording quality (p.113). In line with these, distractions in and outside the classrooms and the tendency to understand everything in the listening text by the listener constitute a bulk of learners' listening problems (Lee, 1986).

D. Challenges of Teaching/Learning Listening Skill

Teaching listening has also been a challenge for language teachers for several reasons. Mendelson outlines reasons why listening was poorly taught. First, listening for a long time was not considered as a separate skill hence was not taught explicitly. Supporters of the view averred that language learners would improve their listening skills on their own while listening to the teacher during formal classes (cited in Yildirim & Yildirim, 2016, p. 2099).

The traditional materials for language teaching were not efficient enough to teach listening. Such materials are authentic and inauthentic materials. Authentic material are teaching and learning material specifically designed for native users in its original and unaltered form while inauthentic material according to Field (2008) are materials that have been specifically designed for ESL/EFL purposes. In this case, the intended audience is learners, and the language of the material is created and modelled specifically for an L2 audience (p. 6). They are further seen as 'purpose-written materials' which are scripted (performed in a studio) and graded (simplified material designed to suit a specific learner level). The absence of such an important learning instrument obviously constitutes a serious barrier to teaching listening skills in the present circumstances.

Many tertiary students find it difficult to understand and retain what they listened in lectures because listening to a lecture is different from everyday conversational listening. For such conversational listening, they only need to bring in their general knowledge while they listen but they need to have specific background knowledge when they listen in the lecture settings. Similarly, students may also find listening to lectures a challenge because they do not apply their usual conversational turn-taking conventions in the lecture setting as the turn-taking in lectures will only be allowed when students are allowed to ask questions or questions come from the lecturer. More so, for some other personal factors, most students find it very difficult to ask questions even when they have such opportunities thereby foreclosing the chances of interactional sessions.

Aside the difficulty experienced because of the difference between conversational and lecture settings, undergraduate students also find it difficult to understand lectures since their role in listening deviates from the conventional straightforward 'chalk and talk' method that is usually the practice in the classroom setting. This 'chalk and talk' method in the school setting involves the teacher writing on the board to be followed by a detailed explanation from the teacher. It should be noted that there is entirely a mental shift in the sensory disposition to receptivity. That is to say that the role of instructional material which the chalkboard serves, in a swift contrast, remains side-lined. Learners most often lose their focus on active learning because of the associated sensual intangibility, hence the need for the application of listening strategies that will cater for the possible slack. More details are to be taken in the subsequent section.

Besides, Carter et al. opines that even the best listeners face the challenge of comprehending what they have heard and that is why the exploration of listening problems is seen to be relevant in assisting students' comprehension (cited in Yii 2008, p. 5). This is capable of providing some useful insights for the teaching and learning of listening comprehension skills (cited in Yii, 2008, p. 6). There is no doubt that most second language learners, most times, learn/listen to lectures amid these underlying problems without any observation. That is why successful listening is rarely achieved. Common knowledge of these inherent problems of listening gives way to the adoption of strategies that can enhance listening skills.

E. Listening Strategies

When you have a reason to listen, you listen actively. So, it is important that students listening in the classroom should have a reason for listening. With this, students should also imbibe the spirit of active listening which according to Brent and Anderson incorporates these observable external signs:

physically displaying emotion, cooperating with members of the group of listeners, physically expressing approval or disapproval of what is said, exhibiting behaviours directed toward listening, asking questions about what is being said, and contributing appropriate explanations and comments. (cited in Canpolat et al., 2015, p.166)

These signs have a serious binding force among learners as well as teachers that is capable of arousing students' interest and attention.

On the other hand, it can be seen from the view of Brown that prediction is a vital process in comprehending spoken language. Learners' ability to predict entails that they do not have to pay attention as well as actively process every phoneme, syllable, word, phrase, or even the very tone of the message (cited in Chung & Ahn, 2005, p. 4). This is possible because of the listeners' ability to exploit the relationship between listening and understanding which has to do with the connection between the existing knowledge and what one hears. Anderson and Lynch explicitly state that comprehension does not come by because of what a speaker says rather the listener establishes a link between what s/he hears and what s/he already knows and then attempts comprehending the meaning negotiated by the speaker (cited in Yildirim & Yildirim, 2016, p. 2096, p. 5). Aligning further with this, Akyol posits that active listeners make guesses before listening and continues to renew such guesses as they listen to new information and clues provided by the speaker (cited in Canpolat et al., 2015, p.167). In that case, language teachers always provide useful predictions and provoke relevant concepts and experiences to capture the learners' minds before they listen in class. Visual supports are very useful here and should be provided during listening as visuals can help learners to predict more accurately.

Language teachers should orient and engage the students in what they are going to listen to before proper teaching. Such entails asking students questions on the related area which will help the students learn to pick out key/important words necessary for understanding what is being said. This situation increases immensely the interest of the students since they try to find out the answers to the questions while listening. And listening with interest and attention is no doubt an active one.

F. Note-taking Enhancing the Effectiveness of Listening Skill

Note-taking has been a staple activity of academic life, particularly in lecture courses, for decades (DeZure et al., 2001). While we continue to highlight the pivotal role of listening skills in general learning activities, it must also be pointed out that the effectiveness of listening skill depends largely on the application of effective note-taking strategies. Conversely, one cannot in any form be involved in note-taking without listening. In short, note-taking is a post-listening skill that incorporates listening. Most scholars from different disciplines (see Divests & Grey, 1972; Howe, 1970, 1974; Dunkel, 1988 in Scott, 2001) agree that note-taking has two common functions: "external storage" and "encoding" functions. The basic function of external storage is to preserve information for later use while the other function has to

do with “encoding”. This function refers to the actual process required in taking notes which helps that lecture information is properly decoded and encoded into memory (Xie, 2002, p.8).

In the words of Howe (1976), taking notes entail different cognitive processing: listening, coding, integrating, synthesizing, and transforming (p. 285). Obviously, listening and note-taking operate on a symbiotic relationship to bequeath the desired result. That is to say that for a maximal appropriation of the gains accruable from these learning skills, they must not be taken in isolation. Yildiz and Albay, (2015) stressing the same issues opine that high school students being accustomed to smaller classrooms and discussion groups when they come into the university for first time usually adapt to developing new skills of listening, for example, note-taking, and using notes as a cognitive learning strategy (p. 5).

Notably, there is an apparent need for note-taking even when effective listening has taken place because of the problem of retention faced by most learners. As noted above, Hayati and Jalilifar (2009) and Rixon (1986) point out that listeners often face the rapid disappearance of the content of what they listen to even when they can follow the speakers with some ease. Exposing learners to these post-listening activities is a viable option for alleviating this problem.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to be able to examine the role, relationship, and effect of listening skills and their strategies as well as note-taking in the language learning/general education of university students using the University of Nigeria as a reference point. Data was collected through purposive random sampling from six departments; three departments from core science departments- Medical Laboratory Science, Electronics Engineering, Microbiology, and the other three from the Social Sciences and Arts - Social Work, Mass Communication, and English and Literary Studies. This was to ensure that students from different academic backgrounds were captured.

The instrument for data collection was a 31- item questionnaire which was sub-divided into four sections using a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Disagree (DA). Section 1 sought information on students’ perceptions and attitudes to listening skills in relation to other language skills and the general learning situations of university students, and section 2 sought information on problems relating to the effective use of listening strategies. Section 3 sought information on problems associated with students’ ineffective note-taking while section four has to do with information on problems associated with the availability of resources, teaching environment, and teaching aids. The instrument was validated by two senior academics: one from the Use of English Unit and the other from the Department of English and Literary Studies all in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The two academics also have a strong background in measurement and evaluation. They made useful inputs which helped in streamlining properly the questionnaire items.

A total of 510 questionnaires were distributed to respondents i.e. 85 questionnaires for each department but in the end, a total of 502 questionnaires were returned and used for analysis through appropriate data from a statistical package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) as shown in the tables below.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

TABLE 1A
SUMMARY OF THE RESPONSES OF STUDENTS ON THEIR PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDE TO LISTENING SKILLS CONCERNING OTHER LANGUAGE SKILLS AND THEIR GENERAL LEARNING SITUATIONS

S/N	Questionnaire items	N	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	STD
1	Other language skills are considered to be more important than listening skill in teaching and exercises.	502	220	140	80	62	1.97	1.05
2	Teachers believe that using media (TV, Radio ... etc.) is not useful in teaching listening.	502	210	160	69	63	1.97	1.03
3	Most learners believe that listening come naturally and not out of deliberate effort either by the teacher or student.	502	245	170	47	40	1.76	.92
4	Listening as a language skill is not comprehensively taught in the upper secondary classrooms.	502	258	123	81	40	1.8	.98
5	It is believed that strategies relating to listening skill are essential and can enhance our listening skill.	502	222	146	50	84	1.99	1.10

TABLE 1B
CUMULATIVE RESPONSES OF STUDENTS ON THEIR PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS LISTENING SKILLS CONCERNING OTHER LANGUAGE SKILLS AND THEIR GENERAL LEARNING SITUATIONS

S/N	Questionnaire items	N	(SA+A)	(D+SD)	MEAN	STD
1	Other language skills are considered to be more important than listening skills in teaching and exercises.	502	360 (72%)	142 (28%)	1.97	1.05
2	Teachers hardly make use of media (TV, Radio ...etc.) in teaching listening.	502	370 (74%)	132 (26%)	1.97	1.03
3	Most learners believe that listening comes naturally and not out of deliberate effort either by the teacher or student.	502	415 (83%)	87 (17%)	1.76	.92
4	Listening as a language skill is not comprehensively taught in the upper secondary classrooms.	502	381 (76%)	121 (24%)	1.8	.98
5	It is believed that strategies relating to listening skills are essential and can enhance our listening skills.	502	368 (73%)	134 (27%)	1.99	1.10

TABLE 2A
SUMMARY OF THE STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE EFFECTIVE USE OF LISTENING STRATEGIES

S/N	Questionnaire items	N	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	STD
1	There is no intensive teaching on strategies for listening skills.	502	193	186	44	77	1.96	1.00
2	Effective listening strategies can enhance listeners' language learning skills as well as improve their general academic performance.	502	239	185	50	28	1.73	.85
3	Lack of eye contact with the lecturer reduces the students' listening effectiveness.	502	220	191	44	37	1.88	.29
4	Students are always properly engaged and oriented on what they are going to listen to before proper teaching.	502	63	82	92	265	3.1	1.08
5	Listening comprehension is always a problem for students who are not very rich in vocabulary.	502	257	139	43	63	1.8	1.03
6	Sometimes you can listen to a speaker without picking the exact words of the speaker.	502	170	165	108	59	2.19	.99
7	There are occasions listeners can understand words but not the intended message.	502	173	162	102	65	2.2	1.01
8	Listeners are sometimes confused about the key ideas in the message heard.	502	192	144	73	93	2.3	1.29

TABLE 2B
CUMULATIVE STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE EFFECTIVE USE OF LISTENING STRATEGIES

S/N	Questionnaire items	N	(SA+A)	(D+SD)	MEAN	STD
1	There is no intensive teaching on strategies for listening skills.	502	379 (78%)	121 (22%)	1.96	1.00
2	Effective listening strategies can enhance listeners' language learning skills as well as improve their general academic performance.	502	424 (85%)	78 (15%)	1.73	.85
3	Lack of eye contact with the lecturer reduces the students' listening effectiveness.	502	421 (82%)	81 (18%)	1.88	.29
4	Students are always properly engaged and oriented on what they are going to listen to before proper teaching.	502	145 (29%)	357 (71%)	3.1	1.08
5	Listening comprehension is always a problem for students who are not very rich in vocabulary.	502	396 (79%)	106 (21%)	1.8	1.03
6	Sometimes you can listen to a speaker without picking the exact words of the speaker.	502	335 (64%)	167 (36%)	2.19	.99
7	There are occasions listeners can understand words but not the intended message.	502	335 (64%)	167 (36%)	2.2	1.01
8	Listeners are sometimes confused about the key ideas in the message heard.	502	336 (67%)	166 (33%)	2.3	1.29

TABLE 3A
SUMMARY OF THE RESPONSES OF STUDENTS ON PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH NOTE-TAKING AND ITS INEFFECTIVE USE

S/N	Questionnaire items	N	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	STD
1	In most cases, note-taking as a listening strategy is taught passively.	502	221	126	67	88	2.03	1.13
2	Notetaking is not taken seriously by students. They do it their own way rather than follow specified steps.	502	201	123	70	108	2.7	1.17
3	Most often, students experience rapid disappearance of what they heard especially when it is not recorded	502	219	105	92	86	1.99	1.09
4	Most students try to take down every word they hear thereby missing out so many things.	502	197	175	64	66	1.97	1.01
5	The majority of the students do not review their notes until exam period and even the few that attempt such do that after 48 hours.	502	213	169	78	42	1.90	.95

TABLE 3B
CUMULATIVE RESPONSES OF STUDENTS ON PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH NOTE-TAKING AND ITS INEFFECTIVE USE

S/N	Questionnaire items	N	(SA+A)	(D+SD)	MEAN	STD
1	In most cases, note-taking as a listening strategy is taught passively.	502	347 (70%)	155 (30%)	2.03	1.13
2	Note-taking is not taken seriously by students. They do it their own way rather than follow specified steps.	502	324 (65%)	158 (35%)	2.7	1.17
3	Most often, students experience rapid disappearance of what they heard especially when it is not recorded	502	324 (69%)	178 (31%)	1.99	1.09
4	Most students try to take down every word they hear thereby missing out so many things.	502	372 (74%)	130 (26%)	1.97	1.01
5	The majority of the students do not review their notes until exam period and even the few that attempt such do that after 48 hours.	502	382 (76%)	120 (24%)	1.90	.95

TABLE 4A
SUMMARY OF RESPONSES OF STUDENTS ON PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES, TEACHING ENVIRONMENT, AND TEACHING AIDS

S/N	Questionnaire items	N	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	STD
1	Electricity supplies are not always Available	502	208	152	81	61	1.99	1.03
2	Inadequate classroom infrastructures (like seats, desks, etc.) cause much discomfort to students.	502	254	186	30	32	1.65	.82
3	The classroom capacity is smaller than the students' population.	502	248	196	35	23	1.67	.79
4	The students' ratio is far greater than that of the lecturers.	502	221	184	56	41	1.83	.92
5	Visual and auditory distractions are rampant in our classrooms.	502	200	158	70	74	2.09	1.09
6	Students find it difficult to cope with redundancy and noise during listening activities.	502	201	182	69	50	2.02	.84
7	The classrooms are not well-equipped for teaching listening.	502	219	154	76	53	1.90	.99
8	Students lack tools (such as CDs, cassettes, etc.) that are used to activate listening skills.	502	222	190	51	39	1.77	.86
9	Textbooks do not provide a comprehensive framework of activities that are integrated with listening skills.	502	210	173	67	52	1.92	.98
10	Textbooks/course books do not have adequate guides for listening comprehension practice.	502	201	182	71	48	1.90	.94
11	Textbook material that comprehensively cover listening activities are not provided and also do not provide enough listening exercises.	502	186	181	90	45	1.89	.87
12	Authentic listening materials and inauthentic materials are hardly available for teaching listening skills.	502	182	177	95	58	2.02	.98
13	The appearance of unfamiliar English sounds different from the native language affects learners' listening comprehension.	502	183	170	103	66	2.02	.97

TABLE 4B
 CUMULATIVE RESPONSES OF STUDENTS ON PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES, TEACHING ENVIRONMENT AND TEACHING AIDS

S/N	Questionnaire items	N	(SA+A)	(D+SD)	MEAN	STD
1	Electricity supplies are not always Available	502	360 (72%)	142 (28%)	1.99	1.03
2	Inadequate classroom infrastructures (like seats, desks, etc.) cause much discomfort to students.	502	440 (89%)	62 (11%)	1.65	.82
3	The classroom capacity is smaller than the students' population.	502	444 (88%)	58 (12%)	1.67	.79
4	The students' ratio is far greater than that of the lecturers.	502	405 (82)	97 (18%)	1.83	.92
5	Visual and auditory distractions are rampant in our classrooms.	502	358 (69%)	144 (31%)	2.09	1.09
6	Students find it difficult coping with redundancy and noise during listening activity.	502	388 (77%)	114 (23%)	2.02	.84
7	The classrooms are not well-equipped for teaching listening.	502	373 (77%)	129 (23%)	1.90	.99
8	Students lack tools (such as CDs, cassettes, etc.) that are used to activate listening skill.	502	412 (84%)	90 (16%)	1.77	.86
9	Textbooks do not provide a comprehensive framework of activities which are integrated with listening skill.	502	380 (76%)	122 (24%)	1.92	.98
10	Textbooks/course books do not have adequate guides for listening comprehension practice.	502	383 (78%)	119 (22%)	1.90	.94
11	Textbook material that comprehensively cover listening activities are not provided and also do not provide enough listening exercises.	502	367 (77%)	135 (23%)	1.89	.87
12	Authentic listening materials and inauthentic materials are hardly available for teaching listening skills.	502	359 (72%)	153 (28%)	2.02	.98
13	The appearance of unfamiliar English sounds different from the native language affects learners' listening comprehension.	502	253 (70%)	169 (30%)	2.02	.97

V. DISCUSSION

The different questionnaire items in Table 1 depict the imperative importance of listening in the learning of university students. The cumulative percentage responses of 72%, 74%, 83%, 76%, and 73% for strongly agree and agree in the questionnaire items 1-5 show that students' perception and attitude towards listening skills considering other language skills and the general learning situation of university students is very poor. From this, it is obvious that students do not consider listening skills to be very important, especially, when compared to other language skills, hence they do not attach much seriousness or make a deliberate effort to learn listening skills. This case of unseriousness towards listening skills was by observation traced to the secondary school classroom. Although the majority of students attest to the fact that strategies relating to listening skills are essential and can enhance listening skills, no active measures were put in place to actualize this condition.

Table 2 which is indirectly in line with one of the objectives of the study centres generally on problems related to the effective use of listening strategies. The cumulative responses of 78% and 82% by the respondents in numbers one and three respectively show that there is no intensive teaching of listening strategies, and a lack of eye contact with the lecturer which reduces the students' listening effectiveness. Most often, it is only possible to achieve listening effectiveness when listening strategies are adopted, so the fact that listening strategies are not consciously and intensively taught much about listening skills is overlooked by students. The case of a lack of eye contact with the lecturer is typically an obvious example. For the questionnaire item number 2, the cumulative response of 85% denotes that the respondents support that effective listening strategies can enhance listeners' language learning skills as well as improve their general academic performance. Subsequently, the 29% response of students in the questionnaire item number 4 shows that students are not always properly engaged and oriented on what they are going to listen to before proper teaching which clarifies the reason for the position of the respondents in questionnaire item number 2 above. For questionnaire items numbers 5 and 6, the 79% and 64% responses respectively show that poor vocabulary constitutes a serious listening problem and that listeners most times fail to pick the exact words of the speaker. The respondents' response in questionnaire item 7 of 64% shows that students most often can understand words but not the intended message because meaning oftentimes is always contextual, so with a poor listening style of the students meaning cannot flow contextually. Similarly, questionnaire item number 8 with a percentage response of 67% shows that listeners sometimes are confused about the key ideas in the message heard.

Table 3 basically centres on problems associated with students' ineffective note-taking which is a core ancillary to listening skills. Questionnaire items 1 and 2 are closely related as they bother on note-taking. Students' cumulative responses of 70% and 65% in questionnaire items 1 and 2 respectively for strongly agree and agree show that students are passively taught note-taking and that they also do not take it seriously. The neglect of these important ancillaries to listening skills, to a large extent, dwindles the potency of listening effectiveness. For questionnaire item number 3, the

students' response of 69% shows that the possibility of disappearance of what is heard after a while is obvious especially when it is not recorded. It should be noted that students' popular style of looking at their notes when examinations have drawn nearer invalidates largely the effort students make listening to lectures. Questionnaire item number 4 is also a positive affirmation by the response of 74% which shows that students most often take down every word they hear resulting in their missing out of many words. Finally, the last item in this table (item 5) depicts that up to 76% of students hardly review their notes except during the time of exam, and even the few that attempt to do that after 48 hours. For notes to be used effectively, it must be reviewed within 48 hours from the time of note-taking.

Table 4 bothers generally on issues about basic learning facilities, learning environment, the population of students, teaching aids as well as learning and listening material. Questionnaire items 1 and 2 specifically have to do with the issues that are central to basic learning facilities. The cumulative responses of students show 74% and 89% for lack of electricity supply in classrooms and inadequate classroom infrastructures which cause discomfort to students respectively. The absence of electricity most time as well as some basic learning material like projector, public address system, chalkboard, etc. constitutes serious setbacks to listening and general learning. The situation of the classrooms at 7 am and 6 pm in the absence of light is unpalatable as students can hardly see what they are writing. Students feel much discomfort with the prevailing congestion in classrooms under hot weather without a fan or air conditioner. Questionnaire items 3 and 4 focus on the population of students and their learning situation in a particular classroom. The cumulative responses of 88% and 82% by students respectively show that the classroom capacity is adversely inadequate compared to the number of students that use it and also that students' ratio with that of the lecturers is proportionately higher with other attendant devastating setbacks. Questionnaire items 5 and 6 are closely related to items 3 and 4 since they are more of overpopulation effects. The cumulative responses of 69% and 77% for the questionnaire items respectively show that students are in affirmation that they are rampantly distracted visually and auditorily in their classrooms and as well find it difficult to cope with redundancy and noise during listening activities.

Questionnaire items 7 and 8 bother on listening skill teaching aids. The cumulative responses of 77% and 84% respectively show that students are in the affirmative about their classrooms not being well-equipped for teaching listening and they also lack tools capable of enhancing listening skills like CDs, cassettes, etc. Questionnaire items 9, 10, and 11 generally concern provision, adequacy, and comprehensiveness of teaching material. The cumulative responses for each of them are 76%, 78%, and 77% respectively. Specifically, the response of students in questionnaire item 9 shows that there are no textbooks with a comprehensive framework of integrated listening activities. In the same way, the response of respondents in questionnaire item number 10 affirms that textbooks/course books do not have adequate guides for listening comprehension practice. For questionnaire item 11, the response of students follows the same dimension in affirming that textbook material neither comprehensively covers listening activities nor provides enough listening exercises. From the foregoing, it appears listening skill is neglected in virtually all aspects including the provision of textbooks with a comprehensive framework and adequate guides for listening comprehension practice.

Finally, questionnaire items 12 and 13 have to do with the dearth of authentic material and inauthentic material for teaching listening skills as well as the effect of the appearance of unfamiliar English sounds different from the native language on listening comprehension. The students' cumulative responses of 72% and 70% respectively indicate that authentic and inauthentic material are hardly available for teaching listening skills and also that appearance of unfamiliar English sounds different from native language affect the learners' listening comprehension. Authentic material which are teaching and learning material specifically designed for native users in its original and unaltered forms are very necessary in the listening activity for effective sound production. The absence of authentic material affects the learners' listening comprehension, especially, when there are unfamiliar sounds different from the native language.

Surprisingly, even the inauthentic material which has to do with teaching and learning material designed for EFL/ESL users are also not provided. This has not only affected the oral production of learners of English but has distorted listening effectiveness especially when there are unfamiliar English sounds.

VI. CONCLUSION

The data in Table 1 show that university students have poor perceptions and attitudes towards listening skills compared to other language skills. Irrespective of the more time given to listening than any other language skill, it still receives very little attention. Scholars like Nunan (1998) and Rivers and Ternperley (1978) as noted above attest that students spend over 50% functioning in a foreign or second language, yet it is seen as neglected because of the poor attitude and perceptions of the students. Students believe that listening more often come naturally rather than through effort; hence the less attention paid by teachers in the teaching of listening skill; so teachers are noted for non-use of media resources that improve the teaching and learning of listening comprehension.

In Table two, the data show that listening strategies are not effectively used by students in language and general learning activities. There is no intensive teaching of listening strategies which implies that students do whatever they like and sometimes have no strategies at all. By implication, they cannot maintain eye contact with the lecturer since they have no orientation on what they listen to and cannot make effort to enrich their vocabulary. Most times, students cannot pick the exact words of the speaker or even when they understand the words cannot understand the intended message of the speaker because of the non-use of the listening strategies.

The data on Table 3 centrally show that note-taking is not effectively adopted; hence the inability of students to maximally benefit from the repository gains in effective note-taking, especially, when accompanied by effective listening skills. Note-taking can play a very indispensable role in the life of every learner which most students do not seem to appreciate. For this reason, students have not taken it seriously; they try to take down everything they hear, and as well do not review their notes. Consequently, they do it in their own way and end up achieving very little from the rich effects of effective note-taking. While listening skill focuses on comprehension of what the speaker has said, note-taking is concerned with retention thus acting as a bridge between understanding and retention.

Table 4 data show the level of poor availability of special teaching aids, poor teaching/learning environment, lack of textbooks with adequate practice guides, no provision of authentic and inauthentic learning material, etc. Students are in these situations disposed to an uncondusive learning environment arising from inadequate classroom infrastructures, lack of electric supply, and no provision of relevant textbooks. With this situation, listening skill is hampered greatly and that, in turn, affects our learning generally. Distractions, noise, unseriousness, weariness, etc. then form the backbone of the students listening habits leading to a high level of ineffective listening.

Recommendations

1. Listening as a fundamental skill and note-taking should be given a special place in the secondary school curriculum to provide a very solid foundation for the student's successful learning when they enter the university.

2. Listening skills and note-taking contents should be enlarged and made the very first topics to be taught to newly admitted students.

3. Since effective listening and effective note-taking largely determine students' successful learning, they should be properly drilled in these areas to ensure their mastery of them.

4. There should be a provision of specific listening and learning material like CD, audio-visual equipment, authentic and inauthentic material, etc. for effective teaching of listening skills.

5. There should be a provision of alternative power supply, adequate seats, and desks to accommodate the increasing number of admitted students.

6. There should be a provision of elaborate and comprehensive textbooks with practice guides on listening and note-taking.

7. Efforts should be made to avoid noise, loitering, distractions, crowding, etc., around students' classrooms.

8. Students should be made to have at their fingertips all about listening strategies to enhance their effectiveness in listening.

This study has brought to the limelight the situation of university students making efforts to acquire the second language/general education amid many underlying problems which are hinged on listening and note-taking. Giving serious attention to the above recommendations will go a long way in improving the general learning situation of university students.

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