



Challenges on Listening Comprehension of Grade 7 Learners: Basis for Intervention in the Classroom

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Introduction

Effective communication abilities are essential for a student to succeed academically and personally in the fast-developing educational environment. One of the essential elements of communication, listening, is of greatest importance for promoting comprehension and learning. Rebecca Oxford (2019) emphasizes the crucial role of listening in effective communication and learning. However, although playing a vital role in education, listening skills have received little attention in study, particularly when it comes to Filipino students.

The Philippine, with its diverse culture and rich islands of different individual languages offers a distinctive background for researching listening issues among students in grade 7. It is critical to investigate the perceived listening difficulties experienced by these young people as this formative period of a student's academic journey marks a crucial moment for language development. On Bayram's (2019) research he takes a unique approach by examining listening problems at three distinct stages: pre-listening, during listening, and post-listening. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges learners face and potential solutions.

Hong Kong, C. (2018), mentioned that not only young learners experience difficulties on listening some college students as well. There are different reasons involving lengthy texts, poor audio quality, lack of vocabulary, unfamiliar accents, changing topics, lack of confidence and rapid speech. The results showed a significant positive correlation between listening skills and academic achievement, indicating that students with better listening skills tend to perform better in their studies. Mathumathi, P. et. Al (2024), reported different factors that affect students listening comprehension that includes: Student-related factors, Teacher-related factors, Classroom environment, Curriculum, and Lack of target language exposure.

Manalo, M. T. A. (2016), explores the factors that hinder young learners' ability to understand spoken English. The findings reveal that the learners' limited vocabulary, lack of background knowledge, and difficulties with unfamiliar accents and dialects are significant challenges, the importance of creating a supportive and engaging learning environment to enhance listening comprehension skills.

Additionally, a study by Su, L., & Lin, C. (2020), revealed that students with and without hearing impairments experienced various listening difficulties. Addressing these listening difficulties is crucial for promoting academic success in inclusive classrooms.

The ability to listen attentively and comprehend spoken language greatly impacts a student's academic performance and social interactions. Similarly, Cruz, R. A. (2020), investigated the relationship between listening skills and academic performance among elementary school students in the Philippines, the results showed a significant positive correlation between listening skills and academic achievement, indicating that students with better listening skills tend to perform better in their studies. Listening comprehension is also a crucial predictor of academic success. The relationship between listening comprehension and academic achievement is stronger in certain domains, such as reading and writing, compared to others, like mathematics. Huang, H.-M., Chang, W.-C., & Chen, M.-C. (2023) explores on the impact of listening comprehension on academic achievement, providing strong evidence for the importance of developing listening comprehension skills in young students to support their overall academic achievement.

Listening difficulties can have in-depth consequences, leading to academic underachievement, reduced self-esteem, and communication failures. Therefore, understanding the specific encounters faced by grade 7 Filipino learners in this concern becomes essential for the improvement of educational practices and support systems.

This research aims to examine the perceived listening difficulties of grade 7 learners within public schools. By examining the factors influencing these challenges and their potential impact on academic performance and overall learning experiences, this study seeks to shed light on the complex dynamics of listening skills development in this particular context.

The research will use qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive data. Through purposive sampling, a diverse group of grade 7 students will be selected to participate in the study. The researcher will give valuable insights into the observations and experiences regarding the listening abilities of these learners.

The findings of this research hold immense potential to inform education sector, teachers, and parents about the listening difficulties faced by grade 7 learners. The inferences from this study can provide evidence-based interventions and strategies that promote effective listening skill development contributing to the holistic growth and academic success of these young individuals.

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative research design employing case study. This method focuses on understanding the meaning and interpretation of data, focuses on obtaining data through open-ended and conversational communication. Also, this method focuses on the “why” rather than the “what” people think about you. Case study design examines episodic events in a definable framework, develops in-depth analyses of single or multiple cases, and generally explains “how”.

A purposive sampling technique was conducted where interviews was distributed to 30 selected samples of Grade 7 students. A listening test and interview questionnaire was developed, consisting of close-ended questions. The participants' responses were collected and analyzed to identify patterns and themes related to listening difficulties.

To ensure the validity of the research instruments, interview and listening test will be piloted with a small group of students. Additionally, member checking will be employed throughout the research process. This involves sharing interview transcripts and listening test results with participants to verify the accuracy of their experiences and interpretations.

Prior to data collection, informed consent will be obtained from both students and their parents/guardians. The researcher will also establish rapport with the participants by introducing themselves and explaining the study's purpose and procedures. The individual interviews and listening test will be audio-recorded and transcribed with the participants' consent. The researcher will ask close-ended questions and actively listen to responses. After each interview and listening test, the researcher will take detailed notes to capture key points and nonverbal cues. Participants will also be offered an opportunity to ask questions or provide additional information.

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were paramount. All participants were anonymized, and the confidentiality of their responses was strictly maintained. Participants was informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. Additionally, parental consent was obtained for all participants under the age of 18.

Results and Discussion

1. Research Findings

A. Data Analysis from the Listening Test

There were two questionnaires that were given to the students. The first questionnaire consists of 5 questions about the listening material. Second is the interview consisting of 4 questions about the student's listening difficulty and its factors.

The data gathered concerning this matter indicates that students faced four primary challenges when it comes to listening. These challenges include poor listening material, environment, lack of background knowledge and listening fatigue.

1. Challenges on Listening Comprehension

1.1 Poor Listening Material

Based on the interviews conducted, it was observed that students encounter difficulty in listening the material. A significant number of respondents reported difficulties in comprehension due to unfamiliar accents. This suggests that accent diversity can significantly impact listener understanding, especially when the listener's native language or dialect differs significantly from the speaker's.

The data collected also suggested that poor audio quality, such as low volume can hinder listening comprehension. This emphasized the importance of ensuring optimal audio quality in learning materials.

Also, rapid speech rates can overwhelm listeners, particularly those with lower language proficiency or auditory processing difficulties. This suggests a need for adjusting speech rates to accommodate diverse learner needs.

The data obtained from the students' interviews was supported by these statements.

R1: “Nahirapan po akong intindihin dahil iba po ang accent ng nagsasalita.”

“I have difficulty understanding because the speaker has a different accent.”

R7: “Medyo mahina po ang sound nung pinakinggan ko po. Hindi ko po marinig at maintindihan ng ayos.”

“The sound of what I listened to was a bit low. I couldn't hear or understand it properly.”

R5: “Mabilis po ang pagsasalita nung speaker kaya nahahirapan po akong makasunod.”

"The speaker was talking too fast, so I had a hard time following."

1.2 Environment

These findings suggest that the listening environment plays a crucial role in comprehension. Based on the data collected from the students, the learning environment emerges as a primary factor contributing to listening difficulties. The presence of classmates and peers appears to play a significant role in these challenges.

Background noise, such as conversations or electronic devices, can interfere with the listener's ability to focus on the intended audio content. Environmental factors, like excessive heat, can reduce cognitive capacity and make it difficult to concentrate on auditory stimuli.

This analysis was supported by the following statements from the Grade 7 students.

R10: "Maingay po yung katabi ko kaya 'di ko na po naintindihan yung sinabi."

"My seatmate was noisy so I couldn't understand what was being said."

R6: "Sobrang init po sa loob ng classroom kaya 'di po ako makapag-focus sa pinakikinggan ko."

"It was too hot inside the classroom so I couldn't focus on what I was listening to."

R4: "Yung katabi ko po ay nagce-cellphone. Mas malakas pa po yung sound ng cellphone niya kaysa sa pinapakinggan ko kaya di ko po marinig ng ayos."

"My seatmate was using their cellphone. The sound of their phone was louder than what I was listening to, so I couldn't hear properly."

1.3 Lack of Background Knowledge

During the interviews, it was evident that there was minimal exposure to the English language. The use of complex or unfamiliar words can hinder understanding, especially for learners with limited language proficiency. When the language of instruction differs from the learner's native language, comprehension can be significantly challenged.

A lack of prior knowledge about a topic can make it difficult to follow the discourse and draw inferences. Misinterpretations can arise from various factors, including cultural differences, accents, or simply a lack of clarity in the message.

These statements align with the findings from the student interviews.

R2: "Ang lalim po nung mga salita na sinasabi tapos English pa po kaya wala po akong naintindihan."

"The words being used were too advanced, and they were in English, so I couldn't understand anything."

R9: "Hindi po ako pamilyar sa topic nung sa listening test po."

"I was unfamiliar with the topic of the listening test."

R12: "Iba po pala ang ibig sabihin nung pinakinggan ko sa pagkakaintindi ko dati."

"It turns out that the meaning of what I heard was different from what I previously understood."

1.4 Listening Fatigue

Based on the interviews, a lack of vocal variation or a consistently dull tone can lead to decreased attention and increased fatigue. Prolonged listening can be mentally taxing, especially if the content is not engaging.

In addition, overwhelming listeners with too much information at once can hinder comprehension and retention.

The following statements from Grade 7 students provide evidence to support this analysis.

R8: "Inaantok po ako dun sa boses nung nagsasalita."

"The speaker's voice was making me sleepy."

R3: "Ang dami pong sinasabi, tapos sobrang haba po, hindi na po pumasok sa isip ko."

"There was too much information, and it was too long. I couldn't process it anymore."

R11: "Pagod na po ako making, naaririndi na po ako."

"I was tired of listening. It was starting to annoy me."

B. Data Analysis from the Listening Tests

There were 12 learners that had been admitted for the listening test. there was a listening material given to the students incorporated with assessment.

Below is the table showing the responses and result of the given listening test.

TABLE 1

No.	Types of Challenges	Kinds of Challenges	Participants/Respondents			
			Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1.	Topic	Unfamiliar word	2	2	5	3
		Long listening text	0	1	5	6
		Clarity of content	0	0	2	10
2.	Speaker	Speed of speech	1	1	8	2
		Variety of accents	0	0	5	7
3.	Listener	Less focus	2	2	3	5
		Lack in vocabulary	0	0	4	8
		Inability to understand the meaning	1	3	4	4
		Inability to recognize familiar word	0	0	4	8
4.	Environment	Background noises	3	2	2	5
		Physical distraction	2	3	3	4
TOTAL			11	14	45	62

The data collected from Grade 7 students highlights several key challenges they encounter while listening to English audio content. These challenges can be broadly categorized into three areas: speaker-related, listener-related, and environmental factors.

A significant number of students found the rapid pace of speech to be a major hurdle. This suggests that speakers should consider adjusting their pace to accommodate different listening abilities.

The diversity of accents among speakers posed a challenge for many students. This implies the need for exposure to various accents to enhance listening comprehension.

A lack of vocabulary was identified as a primary obstacle. This highlights the importance of building vocabulary through explicit instruction and exposure to diverse language contexts.

Difficulty in maintaining focus and understanding the meaning of the content were common issues. This suggests the need for active listening strategies, such as note-taking and summarizing.

Background noise and physical distractions were identified as significant barriers to listening comprehension. This underscores the importance of creating quiet and conducive learning environments.

Conclusion:

This research study highlighted the perceived listening difficulties of Grade 7 learners, pointing out the factors of listening difficulties and the areas that require attention and improvement. By addressing these challenges and implementing effective teaching strategies, educators can enhance listening comprehension instruction, leading to better language learning outcomes for students. Future research could explore deeper into the effectiveness of specific interventions in improving listening skills among Grade 7 learners.

To address these challenges, educators and curriculum developers can consider the following intervention like incorporating engaging activities that expose students to diverse vocabulary and sentence structures can improve their listening comprehension and overall language proficiency. Utilizing a range of audio materials with different speeds, accents, and content can help learners adapt to various listening situations and develop their ability to comprehend spoken language. Lastly, schools and educational institutions should strive to create noise-free classrooms and provide suitable listening equipment to minimize external distractions during listening exercises.

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