



Analysis of Listening Comprehension Performance of Senior Secondary School Students in Abeokuta, Nigeria

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Received: 13-10-2021 Revised: 24-12-2022 Accepted: 13-1-2022

Published: 15-3-2022

DOI: [10.21608/MISJ.2022.102526.1031](https://doi.org/10.21608/MISJ.2022.102526.1031)

https://misj.journals.ekb.eg/article_220451.html

Bello, Y., Lawal, R. A., & Nicholas, M. E. (2022). Analysis of Listening Comprehension Performance of Senior Secondary School Students in Abeokuta, Nigeria. *Misriqiya*, 2(1), 17-32. doi:

10.21608/misj.2022.102526.1031

Abstract

Listening is an important tool of learning as it involves devoting time and attention to the acquisition of knowledge competence on an academic subject in education. Most students regard listening as a complex interactive process which involves a dynamic process of construction of meaning. As a result of this, students at the secondary school level exhibit poor listening habit, and their performance has not been encouraging in English Language. Hence, this paper sought the analysis of listening comprehension performance of senior secondary school students at the discriminative, informative, and critical levels of listening. The study was a descriptive survey research. The population for the study consisted of all the senior secondary schools in Abeokuta, Nigeria. Random sampling technique was used to select 315 SSII students which served as the sample for this study. The instrument used for the study was a Listening Comprehension Test. Percentage and ANOVA were used to answer the research questions raised and analyse the hypotheses generated at 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study showed that the general level of listening comprehension performance of senior secondary school students in Abeokuta was high. There was a significant difference in the senior secondary school students' performance in listening at the discriminative, informative, and critical levels on account of subject combination. It was concluded that the general level of listening comprehension of secondary school students was high. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that greater premium should be placed on the teaching of listening comprehension in public schools. Curriculum planners and policy makers are to readdress the issue of listening skills in secondary schools.

Keywords: *Listening Comprehension, Performance, Discriminative, Informative, Critical Levels, Subject Combination*



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Introduction

Communication is a way of disseminating information among people. This may involve the use of a language or any other conventional means. In other words, for an individual to relate his or her ideas to an individual or a group of people, communication must take place. Language, which is a tool for communication has a great input on the cognitive development of man. Through language, man is able to express his thoughts, views and also perform a lot of speech acts. However, this can only be successful when the appropriate language is being used, that is, a language that is both familiar and well understood by both parties either through listening, speaking, reading or writing. The degree of one's proficiency in these skills determines one's achievement in education.

Communication is also the basic component of the process of learning and comprehension for every human being (Lin, Abdul & Muhammad, 2013). They identified listening to be one of the four basic language arts: speaking and writing known as 'expressive' or 'productive'. Also, listening and reading are known as 'interpretative' or 'receptive' skills. As a skill that aids understanding, listening helps the hearer or learner to receive and understand the message of the speaker. It also helps the learner in the accomplishment of any task related to auditory function (Brownell, 2005).

On the other hand, listening involves devoting time and attention to the acquisition of knowledge and competence on an academic subject in education. Lack of listening can affect performance, as Binta (2013) affirmed that, for an

excellent performance, there is need for the student to form good listening habit. The need to help the individual build his academic potential requires training in the development of listening habit. Effective listening habit can be enhanced when the student or learner deeply understands the motive behind listening. Understanding among other strategies enhances positive attitude towards listening.

It is an information-receptive skill which is based on the selection of significant sound and message from numerous sounds captured by the ear. Listening is a vital component of oral communication; it involves a conscious effort in following and recognising the essential points of what is spoken and ensuring their understanding. This requires concentration which is the essence of effective listening. It is an active curricular process that involves the recognition, selection and comprehension of the significant items in a spoken discourse (Oloruntoba-Oju & Alebiosun, 1998).

Therefore, the process of listening helps to decode and comprehend a message fully. For instance, when a listener listens attentively and correlates the newly received information with the already saved information in the Long-term Memory (LTM), then the level of comprehension increases gradually (Lundsteen, 1971). Researchers in the field of reading have made the meaning of “reading” clear and definite. Such is not the case with ‘listening’. Still, various terms are being used to explain the mental processes involved in the reception of verbal sounds and linguistic behaviour attached to it. Different terms such as ‘listening comprehension’, ‘aural comprehension’, ‘auditing’ and ‘auditory comprehension’ are used. Out of all these terminologies, ‘listening comprehension’ is commonly used (Modi, 1991).

The importance of listening skills in English language learning cannot be denied because it is important in the acquisition of a language (Hamouda, 2013). Thus, language acquisition is achieved mainly through receiving understandable input and listening ability is the critical component in achieving understandable language input. Without understanding inputs at the right level, any kind of learning simply cannot occur. As a result of this, listening is a fundamental language skill, which should be given prominence among the four skill areas for language students. As Hassan (2000) pointed out, “listening comprehension provides the right conditions for language acquisition and

development of other language skills”. Listening, therefore, is essential not only as a receptive skill but also to the development of spoken language proficiency. Rost (2002) also indicated that developing proficiency in listening is the key to achieving proficiency in speaking.

However, Huy (2015) noted that students from kindergarten through high school were expected to listen 65-90 percent of the time. And concluded that, both in and out of the classroom, listening consumes more of daily communication time than other forms of verbal communication. Listening is central to the lives of students throughout all levels of their educational development. Listening is the most frequently used language skill in the classroom. Both instructors and students acknowledge the importance of listening comprehension for success in academic settings. Numerous studies indicated that efficient listening skills were more important than reading skills as a factor contributing to academic success (Huy, 2015). Nevertheless, it is evident that listening is more important for the lives of students since listening is used as a primary medium of learning at all stages of education. As regards the students’ ability in listening, understanding the text at secondary school level, different factors that influence listening comprehension matter a lot. Listening is a complex mental process that involves perception, attention, cognition, and memory retention.

The effectiveness with which a student receives, stores and retrieves all the information relevant to his academic work enables one to measure his scholarship and indeed his performance (Babatunde, 2013). Both success and failure of a student hinges on effective information processing, reception, storage and retrieval (Oliyide, 2013). Effective reception involves definite strategies such as note making, outline and summary. The aforementioned information reception techniques can also be regarded as information storing strategies.

According to the National Teachers Institute (2012); Yusuf (2015) there are different categories of listening: discriminative, attitudinal, informational, appreciative, aesthetic, and critical listening. Training in listening can be tailored to achieve competence in each of them. The type of materials selected for use and the type of activities carried out during the lesson will determine the

focus. For the purpose of this study; discriminative, informational, and critical listening would be discussed.

However, listening comprehension is regarded as a complex interactive process in which listeners are involved in a dynamic process of construction of meaning; modulating listening action since we do not listen with the same level of concentration to all information and at all times, our attentions depend on our purpose of listening. Sound discrimination enables listeners to understand the oral input, poor knowledge of vocabulary, grammatical structure, stress and intonation as well as other use of linguistic, paralinguistic, or even non-linguistic clues in contextual utterance (Rost, 2002). An individual who cannot listen effectively cannot perform well in English language as well as other subjects. Three of the variables that are likely to affect listening comprehension performance of senior secondary school student's subject combination (Science, Art and Commercial).

The choice of school subjects determines the trace line of individual student. These subjects deal with the psychology of the students and have great impact on their listening comprehension performance for academic achievement (Okon, 2014). It is generally believed that students in the Art class read more books and novels which would in turn contribute to their understanding of spoken texts. Likewise, students in the Science class are believed to be serious and good in listening and speaking more than their counterparts in Arts and Commercial classes. This also has great influence on students' academic performance and can also affect their listening comprehension performance in school.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, the language of instruction has been a barrier to effective listening skill being the second language to the learners. Many students find it difficult in perception and could not comprehend the information that is being passed to them in teaching learning situations. Hence, this has led to poor performance and drop out for students who could not cope with learning in this situation. In effect, students with poor listening skill cannot contribute effectively to national development (Osada, 2004). This study analyses the need to consider effective listening skill as an important tool for good academic

performance of students at the senior secondary schools in Abeokuta and the nation at large.

Also, Huy (2015) investigated the listening strategies of English as a foreign language student at a high school in Mekong Delta. The researcher used a questionnaire and a listening comprehension test to collect the data for the study. The study found that students used the memory cognitive, effective comprehension, metacognitive and social strategies respectively. As observed by Hamouda (2013), learners have serious problems in English listening comprehension due to the fact that schools pay more attention to English grammar, reading and vocabulary. Listening and speaking skills are not important parts of many course books or curricula and teachers do not seem to pay attention to these skills while designing their lessons. Most teachers take it for granted and believe that it will develop naturally within the process of language learning. In other words, they assume listening is synonymous to breathing-automatic (Thomas & Dyer, 2007).

This present research tries to address these challenges by analysing the listening comprehension performance of senior secondary school students in Abeokuta and to determine the level in which students are performing better in order to bring out the best level of listening suitable for teaching and learning processes. It is evident that none of the previous studies focused on the analysis of listening comprehension performance of senior secondary school students in Abeokuta, Nigeria. This has thus created a gap in knowledge, part of which this study seeks to fill.

Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. The general level of listening comprehension performance of the senior secondary school students in Abeokuta, Nigeria.
2. The influence of subject combination on the senior secondary school students' listening comprehension performance at the discriminative level.
3. The influence of subject combination on the senior secondary school students' listening comprehension performance at the informative level.
4. The influence of subject combination on the senior secondary school students' listening comprehension performance at the critical level.

Research Questions

1. What is the general level of listening comprehension performance of the senior secondary school students in Abeokuta, Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of subject combination on the senior secondary school students' listening comprehension performance at the discriminative level?
3. What is the influence of subject combination on the senior secondary school students' listening comprehension performance at the informative level?
4. What is the influence of subject combination on the senior secondary school students' listening comprehension performance at the critical level?

Research Hypotheses

- Ho₁:** No significant difference exists in the subject combination of the senior secondary school students and their performance in listening comprehension at the discriminative level.
- Ho₂:** There is no significant difference in the subject combination of the senior secondary school students and their performance in listening comprehension at the informative level.
- Ho₃:** No significant difference exists in the subject combination of the senior secondary school students and their performance in listening comprehension at the critical level.

Research Methodology

This study focused on the analysis of listening comprehension performance of the senior secondary school students in Abeokuta metropolis, Nigeria. The population for the study were all the senior secondary school students, in both private and public schools in Abeokuta metropolis. Abeokuta consists of two Local Government Areas (Abeokuta South and Abeokuta North) with a total number of 122 senior secondary schools in the two Local Government Areas. For the purpose of this study, 26 senior secondary schools (both public and private) out of 122 senior secondary schools in the two Local Government Areas were randomly selected.

The target population therefore comprised all the senior secondary school students in these 26 schools. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select 315 SSII students drawn from the 26 randomly selected secondary schools. The choice of this class was based on the knowledge they have acquired in the earlier classes. A researcher-designed Listening Comprehension Test was used to elicit information from the respondents. The Test had five (5) listening comprehension passages carefully adapted from students' textbooks. Each passage had ten (10) questions; the students' comprehension performance at the discriminative, informative and critical levels were tested. Four (4) questions each were on the discriminative and informative levels, while two (2) questions were focused on the critical level. Two (2) marks were allocated for each test item making a total of 100 marks. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test-retest procedure of 2 week-interval, while, the reliability index stood at 0.67. The data collected were analysed using percentage, and the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 alpha level.

Results

Demographic Description of the Respondents

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Based on Subject Specialization

Subject Specialisation	Frequency	Percentage
Science	109	34.6
Arts	104	33.0
Commercial	102	32.4
Total	315	100

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by subject specialization. The table shows that 34.6% (109) of the respondents were Science students, 33 % (104) of the respondents were Arts students, while 32.4% (102) of the respondents were Commercial students. This shows that the Science students participated most in the study, followed by Arts then by Commercial students.

Research Question 1: *What is the general level of listening comprehension performance of*

the senior secondary school students in Abeokuta, Nigeria?

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Senior Secondary Schools in Abeokuta, Nigeria

based on General Level of Listening Comprehension Performance

General Level of Listening Comprehension Performance	Frequency	Percentage
High	180	57.1
Average	64	20.3
Low	71	22.5
Total	315	100

Table 2 presents the percentage analysis of the general level of listening comprehension performance among senior secondary school students in Abeokuta, Nigeria. The table indicates that 57.1% (180) of the respondents had a high general level of listening comprehension performance, 20.3% (64) of the respondents had an average general level of listening comprehension performance, while 22.5% (71) of the respondents had a low general level of listening comprehension performance. This shows that most of the respondents had high performance in the general level of listening comprehension.

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant difference in the subject combination of the senior*

secondary school students and their performance in listening at the discriminative level

Table 3: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Showing the Difference in the Senior Secondary School Students' Performance in Listening at the Discriminative Level based on Subject Combination

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value
Between Groups	109.78	2	54.89	3.59	3.00	.03

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Within Groups	4765.14	312	15.27
Total	4874.92	314	

$\rho < 0.05$

Table 3 shows that calculated F-ratio of 3.59 while the critical F-ratio was 3.00 (.03 < 0.05 level of significance). Since the calculated F-ratio is greater than the critical F-ratio, the null hypotheses which states that there is no significant difference in the subject combination of the senior secondary students and their academic performance in listening at the discriminative level was rejected, and restated as there was a significant difference in the subject combination of the senior secondary students and their academic performance in listening at the discriminative level.

Table 4: Scheffe’s post hoc Table for the Difference in the Senior Secondary School Students’ Performance in Listening at the Discriminative Level based on Subject Combination

Subset for alpha = 0.05				
Subject Combination	N	1	2	3
Commercial	102	21.25		
Arts	104		21.95	
Science	109			22.70

Table 4 shows the Scheffe’s post hoc for difference in the subject combination of the senior secondary students and their academic performance in listening at the discriminative level and it was revealed that the three subject groups were significantly different Science had the highest mean score of 22.70 in subset 3, followed by Arts with a mean score of 21.95 in subset 2, while commercial has the least mean score of 21.25 in subset 1. This implies that science students outperform Arts and Commercial students on discriminative listening performance.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant difference in the subject combination of the senior secondary school students and their performance in listening at the informative level.*

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Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Showing the Difference in the Senior Secondary School Students' Performance in Listening at the Informative Level based on Subject Combination

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	ρ -value
Between Groups	289.98	2	144.99	3.62	3.00	.03
Within Groups	12498.12	312	40.06			
Total	12788.08	314				

$\rho < 0.05$

Table 5 shows that calculated F-ratio of 3.62 while the critical F-ratio was 3.00 ($.03 < 0.05$ level of significance). Since the calculated F-ratio is greater than the critical F-ratio, the null hypotheses which states that there is no significant difference in the senior secondary school students' performance in listening at the informative level was rejected based on subject combination, and was restated as there was a significant difference in the senior secondary school students' performance in listening at the informative level was not rejected based on subject combination.

Table 6: Scheffe's post hoc Table for the Difference in the Senior Secondary School Students' Performance in Listening at the Informative Level based on Subject Combination

Subset for alpha = 0.05				
Subject Combination	N	1	2	3
Commercial	102	20.25		
Arts	104		20.47	
Science	109			22.37

Table 6 shows the Scheffe's post hoc for difference in the subject combination of the senior secondary students and their academic performance in listening at the informative level and it was revealed that the three subject groups were significantly different Science had the highest mean score of 22.37 in subset 3, followed by Arts with a mean score of 20.47 in subset 2, while commercial has the least mean score of 20.25 in subset 1. This implies that

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science students outperform Arts and Commercial students on informative listening performance.

Hypothesis Three: *There is no significant difference in the subject combination of the senior secondary school students and their performance in listening at the critical level*

Table 7: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing the Difference in the Senior Secondary School Students' Performance in Listening at the Critical Level based on Subject Combination

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value
Between Groups	168.76	2	84.38	5.66	3.00	.00
Within Groups	4652.38	312	14.91			
Total	4821.13	314				

$p < 0.05$

Table 7 shows that calculated F-ratio of 5.66 while the critical F-ratio was 3.00 ($.00 < 0.05$ level of significance). Since the calculated F-ratio is greater than the critical F-ratio, the null hypotheses which states that there is no significant difference in the senior secondary students' performance in listening at the critical level based on subject combination was rejected and was restated that there was a significant difference in the senior secondary students' performance in listening at the critical level based on subject combination.

Table 8: Scheffe's post hoc Table for the Difference in the Senior Secondary School Students' Performance in Listening at the Critical Level based on Subject Combination

Subset for alpha = 0.05

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Students in Abeokuta, Nigeria**

Subject Combination	N	1	2	3
Arts	104	11.85		
Commercial	102		12.57	
Science	109			13.61

Table 8 shows the Scheffe's post hoc for difference in the subject combination of the senior secondary students and their academic performance in listening at the critical level and it was revealed that the three subject groups were significantly different Science had the highest mean score of 13.61 in subset 3, followed by commercial with a mean score of 12.57 in subset 2, while commercial has the least mean score of 11.85 in subset 1. This implies that science students outperform Commercial and Arts students on critical listening performance.

Discussion of the Findings

The finding revealed that the general level of listening comprehension performance of senior secondary students in Abeokuta, Nigeria was high. The outcome of this finding could be as a result of the fact that qualified teachers are been employed in Ogun State to teach English Language. This was in line with Ibrahim (2013) stated that the standard techniques and procedures used for listening instruction are pre-listening, listening and post-listening activities.

The finding revealed that there was a significant difference in the students' performance in listening at the discriminative level based on subject combination, with all the three groups recording high performance. This finding is not consistent with the view of Okon (2014) who posited that students in Art classes read more books than students of other subject combinations. There is therefore the need for further studies in this area.

The finding revealed that there was a significant difference in the senior secondary school students' performance in listening at the informative level based on subject combination, with all the three groups recording high performance. This finding seems to be as a result of the fact that the focus of informative listening is to get the message delivered, and it occurs in all areas of life and much of our learning comes from it, as opposed to discriminative listening which merely dwells on sounds structures to get the intended meaning of the message. This implies that for students to perform creditably in school,

they need to progress from being discriminative to being informative listeners. This finding again contradicts the view held by Okon (2014) who noted that subject combination influenced the listening comprehension performance of students.

The finding revealed that there was a significant difference in the senior secondary students' performance in listening at the critical level based on subject combination, with all the groups recording high performance. This finding did not support Okon (2014) who reported that students in the Science were more serious and better in listening and speaking than their counterparts in Arts and Commercial classes. The reason for the new finding was probably due to the fact that critical listening is not just passive listening, but one which involves making judgement based on message received, which is a core requirement for survival in all the subject combinations.

Conclusions

This study analyses listening comprehension performance of senior secondary school students in Abeokuta, Nigeria. From the discussions of findings, it was concluded that the general level of listening comprehension performance of senior secondary school students in Abeokuta, Nigeria was high. This might be a result of listening being the means through which every normal human being mostly communicates. Also, there was a significant influence of subject combination on the senior secondary school students' performance in listening at the discriminative, informative and critical levels. However, against the background of the previous related findings, this outcome is not conclusive and further research is therefore required in this area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

It was recommended that curriculum planners and policy makers are to readdress the issue of listening skills in public schools. They should also ensure proper supervision and inspection of public schools to monitor its effectiveness on students' academic performance. Likewise, teachers are to be sensitive to listening because it is quite different from reading. They are to provide activities that will develop and maintain positive listening practice in students; they are advised to always value the differences among learners.

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