

A Case Study on Impediments Hindering Students' Intensive Listening Comprehension Skill: The case of first, second and third year English Language and Literature Department Students in Assosa University, Western Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe and explore the hindering impediments that affect students' intensive listening comprehension practice in the case of first, second and third year English majoring students in Assosa University. A descriptive study with purposive sampling was used based on the nature of study. The targeted population was 118 and the sample size was 30 students from the three batches. Ten samples from first, second, and third year students were considered randomly. Then, the study was highly descriptive in which data were obtained through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Data were collected through structured questionnaire, semi structured interview and focus group discussion. The findings indicated that; impediments identified as hindering factors were that teachers were using unfamiliar words, which were considered as difficult jargons and idioms in the listening text, low comprehension practice by students, the absence of audiovisual aids in the University, teachers' poor language command (wrong pronunciation on some words). The learning class room environment was also found other challenges faced by the students –the listening audio aids were not well furnished. Besides, the complexity of sentences that causes failure to the students to understand the utterance easier mode. Following these hindering factors on students listening comprehension practice, the researchers recommended the following in the respective findings obtained. First, the instructors should explain unfamiliar or new words like idiom and jargon at the first stages before the students start listening the material in pre-listening stages as a brainstorming questions. This would facilitate students learning process and learning outcomes. Secondly, audio-visual aids should be provided at the practice stage in the class. Thirdly, teachers should be models to their students in the class in language command -fluency and accuracy should be there in using English as a target language. The classroom should be well furnished both materially and psychologically. Simple sentences should be used as spoken language to transfer the message and to make the learning easier in the language classes.

Key- words:-Case study, Hindering, Impediments, Intensive listening skills, Comprehension, Practice.

1. Introduction

According to Steinberg (2007), listening skills could be defined as ‘the ability of an individual perceiving others via sense, (specifically aural) organs, assigning a meaning to the message and comprehending it’. However, listening is more complex than merely hearing. “This process consists of three stages: sensing and attending, understanding and interpreting, remembering and responding. The stages occur in sequence, but no one is generally unaware of them ” (Ibid). Thus, it is possible to affirm that listening is a complex ability that needs to be developed from different aspects to have a successful performance in the practice of learning English as a foreign Language(EFL) ,which implies a learners engagement into this process.

Listening plays a vital role in daily lives. People listen for different purposes such as for entertainment, academic purpose or obtaining necessary information. As foreign language learning, listening is of paramount important since it provides the language input, Rost (1994). Without understanding input appropriately, learning simply cannot get improvement. In addition, without listening skill, no learning is taking place only when students absorb enough comprehensible input. The same claim was supported by Rost(1994) who confirmed that listening is vital in language class rooms because it provides input for language learners. It has been claimed that over 50% of the time that students spend functioning in a foreign language will be diverted to listening Nunan,(1991). Despite this, we often take the importance of listening for granted, and it is arguably the least understood and most over looked of the four skills of listening ,speaking, reading and writing language class room. Although listening has such significant roles in communication and second language acquisition, it has long been the neglected skill in research, teaching and class room assessments Renin, (1994) , Richards and Renandaya(2002). Long (1989) says that the detailed explanations of linguistic comprehension, as well as theoretical models and pedagogical activities, have good language listening literature in assisting the learning.

1.1 .Statement of the problem

The main driving force that initiates the researchers to study on this title was that the observation made on students who were majoring English language and literature. The result of the observation implies students’ poor listening result. Following this ineffective performance during intensive listening skill practice triggers the condition to conduct this scientific research on first, second and third year English language and literature department students under the college of social science and Humanities in Assosa University. Therefore, this study was probe on assessing the impediments that hindered students listening comprehension practice skill within

1.2. Objectives of the study

To identify impediments that affected first, second and third year English majoring students' listening comprehension Practice skill, to investigate clearly the hindering factors on listening comprehension practice which were commonly faced by these students and finally, to describe the techniques that teachers utilize to develop students intensive listening skill.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to collect the data which were taken as pertinent or important to run this study. The qualitative data was collected through interview and focus group discussion (FGD) whereas quantitative data was obtained through close-ended questioner that was expressed in terms of five point Liker scale and then followed by the description of number and percentage. Questionnaire with highly structured statements was distributed to thirty students. This information was triangulated by the data collected through interview conducted on five English language teachers who were understood as experienced English language teachers in teaching the listening skill course in the college. Following this, focus group discussion was made with some selected outstanding nine students from the three batches to strengthen the reliability of the data collected through questionnaire and interview.

2.2. Population and Sample size of the Study

The target groups of the study was first, second and third year English major students. The total populations of the study were 118 in which thirty students were taken as sample of the study. Descriptive study with purposive sampling technique was used.

3. Data Analysis and Discussion

This section of the study dealt with data analysis and discussion on questionnaire distributed to the target groups, interviews and focus group discussion made with instructors and some selected outstanding students respectively. The data analysis mainly focused on assessing of impediments affecting students' listening comprehension practice in Assosa University in College of social science on first, second and third year English major students. Under this section, eleven close-ended questions were analyzed and interpreted based on the

specific research objectives and supported by scholars writing, where thirty respondents were found in filling the designed or prepared questionnaires. Consequently, Students' response were based on the five point scale Likert scale and it began from 1=Never, 2=Sometimes, 3=Seldom, 4=Often, 5=Always

3.1. Students Response on the nature of words, Structure and Language related Questions during intensive listening comprehension practice.

NO	Items	Never		Some times		Seldom		often		always	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1	Do unfamiliar words including jargon and idiom hinder during your intensive listening comprehension?	5	16.6%	7	23.3%	3	10%	6	20%	9	30%
2	Is the nature of English language become difficult in learning and practicing for intensive listening skills to understand your listening text in the class?	5	16.6%	4	13.3%	4	13.3%	6	20%	11	30%
3	Is the structure of sentence (grammar) difficult to grasp the message of the text during practicing for intensive listening?	5	16.6%	9	30%	4	13%	7	23.3%	5	16.6%

Items on table 1 question number one shows 5(16.6%)of the respondents replied words like jargon and idioms on the listening task never hinder their comprehension,7(23.3%) of the respondents responded that these jargons and idioms sometimes hinder their listening comprehension, whereas 3(10%) of the respondents also replied that the words could possibly hinder their listening comprehension in seldom ,to the contrary 6(20%)of the respondent's agreed that the appearance of the unfamiliar words like jargon and idiom often hinder students listening

comprehension; Meanwhile, 9(30%) of the respondents agreed that they were always faced a problem to comprehend the listening text have unfamiliar words and idiom. In addition to this, data gathered from the instructors' interview revealed that new words or in familiar words might hinder students' skills of comprehension practice at all. In line with this notion, instructors have also mentioned that students' comprehension practice might depend on the students back ground knowledge or lack of knowledge of vocabulary or new words during listening process.

Following that, items on Question number two reveals that 5(16.6%) of respondents expressed that they never faced a problem resulted from the complexity of the language to their listening comprehension 4(13%) of respondents ticked that the English language has come sometimes complex to understand listening tasks in their listening comprehension, 4(13%) of respondents replied that complexity of English language seldom hinder their comprehension skills, 6(20%) of the respondents agreed on language complexity affected their understanding; moreover 9(30%) of the respondents believed that English language complexity always hinders their listening comprehension practice. Besides, the data gathered from interviewing instructors of English Language (TEFL) shows that complexity of the language is one of the factors that hinder students listening comprehension skill during practicing it in the actual classroom.

Meanwhile, items on Question 3 on the same table portrays that, 5(16.6%) of respondents replied that the structure of sentence never hinders their listening comprehension skill, 9(30%) of respondents reacted that the structure of sentence sometimes impeded the students listening comprehension, unlikely 4 (13%) of the respondents replied that the structure of sentence is seldom difficult during listening, 7(23%) of the respondents answered that the structure of sentence often difficult to their listening comprehension skill and 5(16%) of the respondents replied as they were always affected by the structure of the sentence during their listening comprehension. Generally, it could possibly be concluded that using unfamiliar words including jargons and idioms as well as the complexity language (English) and the structure of the sentence always affected Students listening comprehension skill. According to carrier (1999) when a message contains more information that cannot be stored easily in memory, special listening skill and extra effort are required to understanding and recall the information. In this case therefore if the listener does not possess or use the skills, he/she may fail to understand the information.

Table 3.2. Students' Response on Related to their Instructor

NO	Items	Never		Some times		Seldom		often		always	
		No	%	N	%	No	%	N	%	N	%
4	Do you listen your teacher attentively during the intensive listening learning process in the actual class?	12	40%	4	13%	6	20%	2	6.6%	6	20%
5	Do your teacher use different strategies while teaching the intensive listening skills in the actual class?	14	46%	3	10%	5	23.3%	5	23.6%	3	10%
6	Do your teacher speak fluently in the class while teaching the intensive listening skills?	16	53%	6	20%	5	23.3%	2	6.6%	1	3.3%
7	Is your teacher a good model in speaking skill (is he fluent speaker?) in aiming to teach intensive listening skill?	18	60%	5	23.6%	2	6.6%	2	6.6%	3	10%

On the above table 2, based on students response obtained through questionnaire administrated to the target group 12 (40%) of the respondents ticked on the facts that they were never listening their instructor attentively ,4(13%) of the respondents responded that they sometimes give attention to their teachers, 6(20%)of them replied that they seldom attentively listen to their teachers speech,2(6.6%)of the respondents replied that they often listen attentively listen their instructors during intensive learning process; and 6(20%)of the respondents respond that as they were always listening their instructors attentively. On the other hand, the data obtained through interviewing instructors witness that some students listen carefully where as some of the students did not. Here the instructors added that students' maturity level during practicing for intensive listening highly affects their potential to understand the inputs to their learning box.

In the same manner, items on the same table treated under question-5 reveals that,14(46%) instructors were never used listening session appropriately, 3(10%) respondents also noted that that their teachers use sometimes different listening strategies while they were

doing for listening comprehension practice, and 5(23.3%) respondents replied that their teachers were seldom use listening strategies during teaching lessons on the listening tasks, 5(23.3%) of the respondents also notified that their teachers often use different strategies of listening during teaching process ,and 3(10%)of the respondents replied that their teachers always use listening strategies. Additionally, interview conducted with class room teachers and focus group discussion made with outstanding students from the target group reveals and confirms that the teachers did not use different strategies in teaching process .They said that teachers adopted the same ways of teaching process, which brings failure to support students in making achieving them in learning condition. That means, teachers used the same kinds of teaching methods on different listening lessons despite the fact they came up with new topics or lessons.

Item on question No-6 reads that 16(53%)of the respondents replied that teachers were never speaking fluently in the class while teaching the lesson as the skill 6(20%) of the respondents agreed that their teachers speak sometimes fluently5(22.3%)of the respondents also noticed that their teachers seldom speak fluently 2(6.6%) of the respondents replied that their teachers often speak fluently and 1(3.3%)of the respondents responded as their teachers always speak fluently. The data gathered from the interview shows that instructors were speaking fluently as much possible while delivering some lesson related with listening texts that would enhance student's ability of listening for comprehension though not regularly doing it to support students in improving their listening skills in general and the comprehension practice in particular. Similarly, the data obtained through focus group discussion revealed that teachers sometimes speak fluently in teaching some lessons though not regularly doing it.

Based on the information on the above table label as question no-9, 18(60%)of the respondents believed that the teachers were never being a good model in speaking skill. 5(23%) of them replied as their teachers sometimes performed like a good model in speaking, 2(6.6) of the respondents notified that their teachers were good model in speaking, in seldom, similarly 2(6.6%)of the respondents replied that their instructors were often good models in speaking and 3(10%) of the respondents replied instructors were always models in speaking classes. The data gathered from the interview shows that teachers were good models in speaking fluently despite the facts the results gathered in focus group discussion revealed that as teachers were poor in good models to their students in speaking fluently.

The instructors notified that the presence and lack of English language skills particularly the speaking skill of the instructors would affect the students understanding positively or negatively, because of the presence and absence of students' background knowledge. Hence, students need scaffolding so as to be competent in their learning outcomes and so as to make the interpretation easier and easier during learning process in their common language classes.

To sum up the analysis under this section, based on the data collected procedurally the teachers never used different speaking strategies while they were teaching their students. The way that teachers use language fluently also affected the students listening for comprehension practice. It did not pave the ways to support students learning outcomes in the class. But, the instructor's response during the interview indicates that they were model speakers which enables students to listen the listening activities easier and easier. This idea was disproved by the questionnaires distributed to the students and the data obtained through the focus group discussion. Listening comprehension is the process in which the listener constructs meaning out of the information provided by the speaker. This involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and vocabulary and grasping its meaning (Carrier, 1999).

3.3. The students' Response Related Visual Aids

no	Item	No	%	NO	%	NO	%
8	Do your teacher use visual support to facilitate your intensive listening in class?	25	83.3%	3	10%	2	6.6%

The above table (3) shows that 25(83%) of the respondents replied that their teachers were never used audiovisual support and facilitate students listening comprehension practice, 3(10%) of the respondents said that their teachers sometimes use it, whereas only 2(6.6%) of the respondents replied that their teachers seldom use the media.

Finally, based on the above analysis made and the data collected from focus group discussion one could possibly conclude that audiovisual support was not used in supporting students listening skill at large and the listening comprehension practice at specific objectives. As a result, this constrain comes to be true sense as the sources of the problems that would affect students listening comprehension skill in practicing the learning process and the outcome.

Table 3.4. students Response Related to the Listening text

NO	Item	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	NO	%
9	Do you regularly find the words difficult to comprehend message of the intensive listening text?	5	23.3%	14	46%	3	10%	6	20%	2	6.6%

Table (4), shows that 5(23%) of respondents replied that they were never regularly find words difficult to comprehend the message of the intensive listening while learning for listening skill, 14(46%) of the respondents said that they sometimes find the words difficult, in grabbing the meanings and the contexts delivered and also 3(10%) of the respondents believed that they seldom find the words difficult, on the other way 6(20%) of the respondents replied that they often get the words difficult to comprehend the listening material provided and 2(6.6) of respondents also replied that they always observe the words difficult to comprehend the message of the intensive listening text while learning for listening purpose.

To wind up this parts analysis it could be concluded that the students find sometimes difficult to comprehend the message of intensive listening text. According to carrier (1999) when a message contains more information that cannot be stored easily in memory, special listening skill and extra effort are required to understanding and recall the information. In this case therefore if the listener does not possess or use the skills, he/she may fail to understand the information.

Table 3.5. Students' Response Related in practicing time

No	Item	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
10	Do your teacher provide sufficient time to make you competent during the intensive listening?	20	66.6%	5	23%	2	6.6%	2	6.6%	1	3.3%

Table (5) depicts that, 20(66.6%) of the respondents replied that their teachers never provide sufficient time to make up them very well during the intensive listening session, whereas 5(23.3%) of the respondents responded that their teachers sometimes provide sufficient time, and 2(6.6%) of the participants reflected that their teachers seldom provide sufficient time, meanwhile 2(6.6%) of the respondents mentioned that their teachers often provide sufficient time. But, 1(3.3%) of respondents said that their teachers always provide sufficient time to make them up very well listeners during the intensive listening comprehension practice.

Hence, from the above analysis it could be concluded that the class room teacher had never provided sufficient time to make students effective during the intensive listening process. In this case, the limitation of time in practicing for good listening habit was the realized impediment on the students' intensive listening comprehension practice.

Table 3.6 Students' Response Related to the Physical environment

No	Item	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
11	Facts on physical environment during intensive listening time?	22	73.3%	5	23.3%	2	6.6%	1	3.3%

Table (6) displays that, 22(73.3%), of respondents replied that as the environment was never comfortable in the process of intensive listening time, 5(23%), of the participants agreed that the environment is sometimes comfortable, 2(6.6%) of the respondents ticked that the classroom is seldom comfortable, on the other side 1(3.3%) of the respondents also ticked that the environment is often comfortable in the process of intensive learning listening skill.

As a conclusion, from the above analysis the classroom environment was not comfortable during practicing for intensive listening skill. The interview result confirms that, the environmental was noisy, unorganized and lacked much important conditions including the listening ear phones which later was taken as the hindering factors for loose of students learning outcome achievement in practicing for listening comprehension skill.

4.2. Analysis on Instructor's Interview

According to Selinger and Shohamy (1989) interview is used to collect data for the study that permits a level of in-depth information, free response and flexibility that could not be obtained by other procedures. Hence, the respondents were lectures those who taught the students the listening subject as a course. For this reason, they were selected as the target groups in study and some questions were raised to the interviewee related to the impediments that affected students listening comprehension skill in the case of Assosa University- first, second and third year English majoring students.

In this interview section the respondents explained that as they were not regularly using jargons or idioms commonly in teaching process. On the other side, data obtained from students through structured questionnaire shows that new words including jargons and idioms which were hindering students listening for comprehension skill during the intensive listening time. Despite the fact the results of questionnaire from students angle and the interview made with the instructors differs, but, as a result of the triangulated data, it would be possible to conclude that the teachers used different as well difficult jargons that could create impediments in preventing students in understanding the upcoming listening inputs while practicing for intensive listening skill.

According to the information obtained and realized from interviewee the language ability is one of the factors that hinder students' intensive listening skill. Since the students' English language back ground is observed as poor and poorer they failed to understand the lesson. Basic ground knowledge's called "World knowledge" or "schemata" has an impact on understanding subject that student is going to learn. Learners construct meaning during the comprehension process by segmenting and chunking input (i.e. from which they hear or read) in to meaning full units, actively matching the intake with their linguistic and world knowledge and filling in the gaps with logical guesses. This kind of knowledge learners have before learning a new topic affects how they make sense of new information (Anderson and Lynch 1998). In addition to this, the instructors in one way revealed their opinion related to the sentences that they used during teaching process. Simple and standard sentences and vocabularies are regularly used. On the other way, students claimed that as their students were using difficult sentences and utterances. Following this notion the data gathered from the students show that sometimes the

sentences used by their class room teachers are too complex. This results students' failure in understanding messages of the context during practicing for intensive listening process. Generally, based on the data obtained from students and teachers –students back ground, the effect of the physical environment, difficulty of understanding jargons and some difficult words, were the causes problems to grasp its ideas as easy as possible and hinders the students intensive listening skills. Even, as the information gained from instructors, students sometimes become burden to grab the meanings or contexts though simple words were used. Therefore, the study revealed that these all were happened due to students poor academic back ground and lack of ready ness to compensate it through regular practice in learning intensive listening skill.

In the interview some question were probed related to the students' attention towards their critical listening skills, and hence they replied that some students followed their teachers attentively while others were not. But, it is proved that all most of the students lost their attention in the class due to their personal cases

When we come to the questions related the strategy of the lectures used to cope-up with students were usual and they did not use different strategies during teaching listening task. The interviewee also replied that they did not use different audiovisual aids to support and to facilitate students' comprehension skill. This led to weaken students learning out comes in listening and understanding the listening texts in the actual class room on the listening text. There is shortage of audiovisual aid support in the institution especially in English language department. Following this occasion, the respondents replied for the question related to the listening environment: they never teach in comfortable class room environment-the listening class is not well furnished. Besides, there are no enough chairs in the class; because of this, it lead to disturbances. Besides to moving the chairs from one class to the next, the external noise relate the sounds come from the traveling of motors, Bajaj and buses. Even, the nature of the class itself was not comfortable for learning process, it sometimes become full of dusty. As a result, the above analysis indicates that there were a numbers of impediments that affect students listening comprehension skill as exhaustively discussed above.

4.3. Analysis on Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion was made on the group of students who were cordially invited from first, second and third year students. The researchers gave code of the selection in participating in focused group discussion (FGD) for those who were not taking part in filling the questionnaire initially. Likely, teachers invited in the interview were not considered in this section. Fortunately, the study revealed that the same findings as discussed in interview and questionnaire. The researchers used this tool for triangulating the findings resulted from the above other two mentioned data collecting tool. Focus group discussion (FGD) is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their feeling, where one corrects the other in producing the required information, opinion, perceptions, beliefs and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, advertisement idea or packing ([www.odi.org>publications<5695-focus-](http://www.odi.org/publications/5695-focus-)

4. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

4.1 Summary

The study was aimed at assessing impediments that affecting students' intensive listening comprehension practice at Assosa University, first, second and third year English language and literature department students. Random sampling technique was used to select the participants of the study across the three section. Ten students were taken from the first, second and third year students randomly, and as result 30 participants were taken as sample in filling the provided questionnaire. Data were obtained through different tool; namely, questionnaire for students and interview for instructors. The close-ended questions with five points Likert scales were administrated, tabulated with the help of simple mathematical expressions like percentage quantitatively and the same thematic natured questions were administrated to the class room teachers through interview to triangulate the findings. The data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Based on the discussion made on the data, the following summary was drawn. The overall finding of the study revealed that students faced different impediments that affected students intensive listening comprehension skill and the study reveals that students intensive listening skill outcomes were poor and poor concurrently.

Key-findings

Based on the data analyzed so far, the following conclusions were drawn. Initially, the appearance of unfamiliar words, difficult jargons and idioms in the intensive listening process found

impediments for the students low comprehension skill practice achievement. Secondly, the absence of audiovisual aids were also found to be other factors which created the happenings.

Thirdly, teachers' language command was also assessed as a hindering factors on students learning out come in intensive listening class-teachers poor quality of language command, poor and wrong pronunciation of the words. Besides to these, the learning class room environment was also found other challenges faced by those students. Finally, the study revealed that the complexity of sentences led students' failure to understand the utterance and the contextual meaning of the words, phrases and the sentence as a whole. Students' poor academic back ground

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendation were made First, the instructors should explain unfamiliar or new words like idiom and jargon before the students begin intensive listening process or the material in pre-listening stages as a brainstorming questions. This would facilitate students learning process and learning outcomes better in the intensive listening process. Secondly, Audio-visual aids should be provided at the practice stage in the class. On the other, to reduce the degree of the existing problems, teachers should be models to their students in the class- in terms of fluency and accuracy -linguistic competence should be there in using English as a target language. Additionally, the classroom should be well furnished materially and causes good psychological makeup towards the learning process as input. Finally, .Simple sentences should be used as spoken language to transfer the message and to make the learning easier and easier in the language classes.

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