

Problems in the Listening Abilities of the First Year High School Students of Bulacan Agricultural State College

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Abstract: *The study aimed to identify the problems in listening of the First year High school students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College during the second semester of A.Y 2011- 2012. A descriptive research design was utilized in this study. The study also used the total enumeration of identifying respondents. Results show that the listening abilities of the First year High School students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College could be described as Fair. The study also implied there are three barriers of effective listening namely: Thought Speed, Language Problems and Grandstanding.*

Keyword: Listening ability, Listening skill, Communication, Listening Problems

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

Introduction

Communication is one of the primary means by which people affect one another and in line with communication are four basic skills namely reading, writing, speaking and listening. However, among these four skills, listening is given the least attention in studies since testing and assessing skills in this area is difficult (Demayo, 2011).

People commonly take hearing as synonymous to listening. Although related, these two have a great difference. Hearing is a sensory process. Nerve endings in the ear receive sound waves and transmit them to the brain; the brain receives them, and we become conscious of sound. This is a physiological process. In contrast, Listening is a mental operation. It involves processing the sound waves, interpreting their meaning, and storing the interpretation in memory so that we can recall it, think about it, or act on it (Zarefsky, 2008). Listening is important as to talking to a conversation. Good listening involves encouraging other people to say interesting things, understanding thoughts and being sensitive to feelings (Niolo et.al, 2009).

As said by Gabriel (2009), Listening in classrooms must be an active involved process with students reacting and responding rather than passively receiving only. Active listening goes beyond reception and even retention of words and ideas heard.

According to Robles (1999), People have ears that listen but seldom have they acquired the necessary over-all skills which would allow those ears to be used effectively for what is called listening. One of the reasons for this the serious lack of programs and facilities in schools for the development of this skill. On the other hand, Zarefsky (2008) said that some people try to overcome the difficulties of listening by going to the other extreme. They set the goal of focusing on each and every word the speaker utters. This approach rarely works, however, because attempts to take in everything makes it less likely that you will think about, interpret, and assess what you are hearing. Similarly, students who try to make notes about every word in a professor's lecture often cannot explain what the lecture was about. They are so busy writing that they have little energy or time for thinking. It's a classic case of seeing the trees but missing the forest. Listening without thinking is just as flawed as hearing without listening.

Students who have intentions of pursuing their courses will have to face the fact as early as now that listening is an important communication skill to cultivate in order to be successful in their own professions (Gabriel, 2009). This is because of the misconception that listening is only important for the development of other communication skills. It is believed by many people that a good ability in listening comes with birth and there is no need to develop skills in this area. Such conceptualization hinders students to have the initiative to develop their skills in listening. Furthermore, due to this, problems in listening are not given emphases and thus, we fail to listen which directly affects acquisition of knowledge and the communication process as well (Murcia, 2001).

This unseen yet major problem of most English students must given a clear and stable answer. However, just like any other process, problems are identified before proceeding to the actual conduct of any study. This motivated the researchers to undertake this study focused in describing the listening abilities and identifying problems in listening of

the First year high school students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study aimed to identify the problems in listening of the First year High school students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College during the second semester of A.Y 2011- 2012.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to identify the problems in listening of the First year High school students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College.

Specifically, the researchers sought answers to the following questions:

1. How may the listening ability of the First year High school students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College be described?
2. What are the problems in listening of the First year High school students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

This part of the study presents a number of related literatures and studies upon which this study is based and which have guided the researchers in the conduct of this study.

According to Nida (1999), Listening, along with reading, has been labelled as a passive skill nothing could be further than the truth. There is a false conceptualization of listening as a passive act calling it *a listener as a tape recorder*. He argue that such perspective falls to account for the interpretation which listeners make as they hear a spoken text according to their own purposes for listening and own store for background listening.

As cited by Nielo et. al (2009), there are seven barriers of effective listening. These are:

1. Physical barriers-It includes physical listening disabilities and noisy surroundings. It's also difficult to listen if you are ill, uncomfortable, tired and worried.
2. Psychological Barriers-If other ideas run counter to our pre-conceived thoughts, we tend to tune out of the speaker and this cause our failure to listen.
3. Language Problems-Unfamiliar words can destroy the communication process because they lack meaning from the speaker.
4. Non-Verbal Distractions- Speech mechanism, body movements and unusual hairstyle can cause enough distraction.
5. Thought Speed-It involves speech speed our minds are able to process faster than the speaker can say them.
6. Faking attention- Seriously threaten effective listening because it encourages the mind to flight of unchecked fantasy.
7. Grandstanding-Sometimes, we fail to listen carefully because some are just politely waiting for our chance to speak.

Zarefsky (2008) said that some people try to overcome the difficulties of listening by going to the other extreme. They set the goal of focusing on each and every word the speaker utters. This approach rarely works, however, because attempt to take in everything makes it less likely that you will think about, interpret, and assess what you are hearing. Similarly, students who try to make notes about every word in a professor's lecture often cannot explain what the lecture was about. In relation to this, Dworak (2000) said that there are three top-down processing goals and exercise types for beginning listeners to prevent this on happening namely:

1. Discriminate between emotional reactions
2. Get the gist or the main idea of the passage.

3. Recognize the topic

As cited by Benz (2000), that there are four interactive processing goals are arrived:

1. Use speech figures to decide if the statements are formal or informal.
2. Recognize familiar words to relate it to a category.
3. Compare information in memory with incoming information.
4. Compare information you heard with your experiences.

Skills and studies for proficient listening offer a developmental view of second language listeners at beginning, intermediate and advance levels. It also describes the comprehension process of proficient listeners as having both top-down and bottom-up in nature (Murcia, 2001).

According to Fogiel (2001), listening is one of the most important skills a person could have. There are four reasons why there is a need to listen: To obtain information, understand and for enjoyment and learning. Listening is an analysis of impressions resulting to concentration when an effort of will is acquired. It is also an ability to understand spoken language (Worthington, 2012).

According to Goudy (2003), there are seven ways to improve one's listening ability.

These are:

1. Focus on the speaker and let them know that you are listening.
2. Avoid interrupting
3. Acknowledge other person's feelings
4. Express your point of view.
5. Make an eye contact the speaker
6. Ask questions and try to see other person's point of view.
7. Be patient when you don't understand. Getting upset won't solve any problems. But would create more.

According to the studies of Gabriel (2009), Listening in classrooms must be an active involved process with students reacting and responding rather than passively receiving only. Active listening goes beyond reception and even retention of words and ideas heard. Active listening goes beyond reception and even retention of words and ideas heard. It requires listeners to do something with words and ideas to express themselves in some way. There are three categories of listening:

1. Informative listening (Gathering information)
2. Critical listening (Analyzing and judging)
3. Appreciative listening (Appreciating)

Furthermore, she also stated that English teachers will reinforce to give students additional listening and reading exercise to develop their reading and listening abilities and comprehension skills so that they could understand the problem in various subjects specifically in English and Math subjects. The parents will be satisfied with the performance that their children may have as a result of teachers' improved methodology in teaching and remedial instruction.

Valdez (2009), studied about the common bad habits in listening which are criticizing the speaker's physical appearance and delivery, dismissal of an interesting subject, prejudiced listening, daydreaming, close mindedness, false attention, intellectual despair and memorizing.

Listening is an art, skill and discipline which need self-control. We need to understand what is involved in listening and develop necessary techniques to be silent and to listen (Uy, 2008).

From the studies of Peterson (1999) as cited by Murcia (2001) Knowledge, effective listening process has three characteristics:

1. It should be done selectively since testing is more than hearing. One should select and concentrate on relevant sounds not any of the noises can destruct.
2. It should be done purposefully. Despite all kinds of noises, one should listen for something selective and conscious because listening has a specific purpose.
3. It should be done attentively. Listening selectively and purposefully becomes active if listeners are affected by the words he hears and reacts according to their meaning in his own distinctive way.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

This part of the research mainly focuses on the research methods and schemes used on the conduct of this study entitled *The Problems in the Listening abilities of the First Year High School students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College*.

Research Design

For the study, the researchers made use of the Descriptive method in identifying the problems in listening of the First Year High School Students of Bulacan Agricultural State College.

Data Gathering Techniques

The study was conducted after a written permit from the principal of the Laboratory High School had been signed. Survey questionnaires were used for the study. This questionnaire adopted from *English Macro Skills* by Nielo et.al (2009) contains the most common behaviours and attitudes of the students as listeners in order for the researchers to assess their listening abilities and identify their problems in listening.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were the 29 students of the First Year, first section of the Bulacan Agricultural State College – Laboratory High School.

Sampling Procedures

The study used the total enumeration of identifying respondents. All of the First Year, first section students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College were involved in the study comprising a total of 29 student respondents for the population of the study.

Data Analysis Scheme

For the research, data were gathered, tallied, analyzed and interpreted. In order to solve the problems laid in Chapter I, the following statistical techniques were used to ensure accuracy and reliability in the analysis and interpretation of data.

1. Mean

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

where:

x = \bar{x} mean

\sum = summation

x = value of each item
 n = number of items

2. Grand Mean/ Total Average $\bar{x} = \frac{\sum nx}{\sum n}$

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum nx}{\sum n}$$

where:

\bar{x} = Mean

\sum = summation

x = value of each item
 n = number of items

\bar{x} = grand mean

CHAPTER IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter of the research is focused on the discussion of the results gained through the statistical treatment of data done by the researchers. The said results, likewise, is a prerequisite for the findings presented in the succeeding chapter.

Description of the Listening abilities of the first year high school students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College.

Table 1. Mean of responses per item for each description of listeners

Description	VG	G	F	P	VP
Responses per item	9	13	16	10	10
	8	11	16	8	7
	8	10	15	5	5
	7	7	15	5	5
	7	7	15	4	5
	6	6	14	4	5
	6	5	13	4	4
	5	5	12	2	4
	5	5	12	2	4
	5	4	12	2	4
	4	4	12	1	3
	4	4	11	0	3
	3	4	11	0	3
	3	3	10	0	3
	3	3	8	0	2
	3	2	8	0	1
	1	2	7	0	0
1	2	7	0	0	
Mean/Average	4.9	5.2	11.8	2.7	3.6
Grand Mean	18				

After data from the questionnaires were returned, data analysis took place through the use of the mean/average formula. The responses for each item were first classified and tallied according to their descriptions such as Very Good (VG), Good (G), Fair (F), Poor (P) and Very Poor (VP). After classification, students' responses for each of the items of the survey questionnaire are calculated by means of the mean formula. Abanador (2007) mentioned in his book *Assessment in Learning* that the mean formula is one of the most accurate measures of central tendency which is not only applicable for measurement of students' learning but also for statistical treatment in researches.

After the data analysis, the statistical treatment of data in Table 1 showed that Fair gained the highest average with 11.8. Likewise, a mean of 5.8 for Good, 4.9 for Very Good, 3.6 for Very Poor and 2.5 for Poor, which garnered the lowest mean from all of the five descriptions, were gathered. The Grand mean was gained through this means which garnered 18.

The Problems in Listening of the First Year High School Students of Bulacan Agricultural State College

Table 2. The averages for each of the problems in listening of the First Year High School Students of Bulacan Agricultural State College

Problems		VG	G	F	P	VP
A Physical Barriers	Responses	5	2	12	0	1
		4	6	14	2	3
	Mean	4.5	4	13	1	2.5
B Psychological Barriers	Responses	1	3	15	0	0
		3	4	16	4	2
		8	4	17	5	5
		6	5	12	4	3
	Mean	4.5	6.5	12.5	3.2	2.5
C Language Problems	Responses	6	11	11	2	5
		1	2	3	8	5
	Mean	3.5	6.5	12	5	5

D ThoughtSpeed	Responses	3	5	12	2	7
		3	3	15	4	4
		3	3	8	5	10
	Mean	3	3.7	11.6	3.6	7
E Faking Attention	Responses	7	11	10	0	2
		9	7	11	0	2
		5	10	13	0	2
	Mean	7	9.3	10	0	2
F	Responses	9	2	8	10	5
		8	7	10	0	4
		7	3	15	1	3

Grandstanding	Mean	6.3	4	11	3.6	4
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After the retrieval of the survey questionnaires, items were classified in accordance to the problems based on the Barriers of effective listening stated by Nielo et.al. (2009), the responses for each item were tabulated in accordance to the problem/barrier it represents and the statistical treatment of data using the mean formula was performed.

After the statistical treatment as shown in Table 2, results for Very poor were analyzed in order to identify the respondents' problems in listening. With this, an average of 7 for Thought Speed (D), a mean of 5 for Language Problems (C) and 4 for Grandstanding (F) which gained the three highest means for Very Poor was observed. Likewise, both Physical (A) and Psychological (B) barriers gained an average of 2.5 and the lowest mean was gained Faking attention (E) with 2.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This part of the study dealt with the major findings in answer to the problems stated in Chapter I. The conclusions derived from the findings and the recommendations made through the conclusion.

Findings

This study dealt with the problems in listening of the First Year High School students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College. Using the schemes and procedures described in Chapter III, answer to the problems stated in this study were ascertained and summarized as follows:

1. The listening abilities of the First year High School students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College could be described as Fair.
2. Based on the statistical treatment of data, The study implied that the following are the main problems of the First year High School students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College as based on the barriers of effective listening:
 1. Thought Speed -It involves speech speed the mind was able to process faster than the speaker can say it.
 2. Language Problems- Unfamiliar words can destroy the communication process because it lacks meaning from the speaker.
 3. Grandstanding- People fail to listen carefully because some are just politely waiting for our chance to speak.

Conclusions

Conclusions were derived from the findings of the study. The following are:

1. The listening abilities of the First year High School students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College are fairly given emphasis on the teaching-learning process and by the student himself.
2. The First year High School students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College are becoming inattentive when listening because they are already having thoughts of what the speaker would say next. Furthermore, unfamiliar words and pronunciation directly affects the students' listening abilities which hinder them from getting the gist of the speaker's message. It must also be noted that many of the First year High School students of the Bulacan Agricultural State College are just politely waiting for their chance to speak rather than to comprehensively listen to the speaker.

Recommendations

Based on the preceding conclusions, recommendations were drawn:

1. The teachers and the student himself must give further emphasis to the activities that could improve the students listening abilities from Fair to Good or Very Good.
2. Teachers must think of more attractive and unpredictable listening activities and/or more interesting listening texts and materials to gain students' attention simultaneously. Likewise, when unfamiliar words are involved on the listening activities of the learners; the teachers must give or explain the meaning, correct usage and pronunciation of the words. In addition, the listeners should have an initiative to read the articles ahead of time and raise questions in the discussion. The teachers must frequently prepare listening activities in which students are required to get information from a certain selection.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A



Republic of the Philippines
BULACAN AGRICULTURAL STATE COLLEGE
San Ildefonso, Bulacan

25 January 2012

THELMA C. JIMENEZ

Principal, Laboratory High School Bulacan
Agricultural State College

Madam:

We, the students of English 140 (Language Curriculum for Secondary Schools) have to source out data in writing our study entitled "Problems in the Listening Abilities of the First Year High School Students of Bulacan Agricultural State College". In this regard, may we be allowed to distribute survey questionnaires to the first year high school students.

Your favorable response regarding this matter will be highly appreciated. Respectfully
yours,

CHRISTIAN L. CHUA JOANNE
N. VICMUDO
RAY RUDOLF M. PASTRANA
RHENUEL P. TOLENTINO

Noted:

PRISCILLA V. SAN PEDRO, Ed. D
Instructor, English 140

Approved:

THELMA C. JIMENEZ

Appendix B

THE PROBLEMS IN LISTENING OF THE FIRST YEARHIGH
 SCHOOL STUDENTS OF BULACAN AGRICULTURAL STATE
 COLLEGE

Survey Questionnaire on Students' Attributes Name: ____

Age: _____ Section: _____

How do you assess your listening ability? Kindly put a check in response to your evaluation as regards to your ability to listen well.

	Most of the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Almost never
1. When listening to a speaker, I make eye contact					
2. If I am not sure whether I've grasped a speaker's point correctly, I summarize my understanding of what she has said to confirm that I've got it right.					
3. I fidget (play with watch, pen, etc.) while listening to someone else express his/her thoughts/ideas.					
4. If my interest is not with the speaker, my mind wanders.					
5. I give my full attention if someone is talking to me.					
6. When background noise interferes with my ability to listen, I can block it out.					
7. If I am bored or uninterested to what a speaker says, I look down.					
8. While a speaker is talking, I find myself thinking about what I'm going to say next.					
9. If a speaker mispronounces a word, I immediately correct him/her.					

10. I ask questions to encourage a speaker to elaborate his/her point.					
11. I act impatiently when someone “beats around the bush” rather than getting straight to the point (I tap my feet, look around, check my watch, etc.).					
12. I wait for the speaker to finish his/her point before I make mental judgment in what was said.					
13. If the person feels the need to vent his/her emotion to me, I wait until he/she lets it out before I comment.					
14. I have trouble focusing on the message when the speaker has poor grammar.					
15. I encourage a person to continue speaking with expressions such as “Go on”, “Uh huh”, etc.					
16. I audibly groan or make of disapproving sound when someone states something I disagree with.					
17. When listening, to a speaker, I make sure I’m facing the speaker.					
18. When listening to a speaker, I pay close attention to his/her body language.					

Thank You!
-BSE 3-English