
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Listening Habits of the Undergraduate Level EFL Learners: A Survey

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ABSTRACT

From language acquisition to everyday communication, and from academic contexts to different daily-life aspects, listening plays a substantial role. Unfortunately, the learners seem to be unaware of the importance of listening in language learning. The current study attempted to investigate the listening habits of the learners and found that majority of the learners pay no/less attention to listening. They seem to be ignorant about the value of listening in language learning. The study also found that in spite of having a variety of resources and opportunities, majority of the learners are very reluctant to use them to practice listening and thus couldn't improve their listening habits in their daily lives.

KEYWORDS

Listening skills; listening habits; EFL learners; undergraduate level.

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1. Introduction

Listening is the very first step in second language learning. It is the primary way of receiving language input. Listening develops a language learner's lexical and syntactical knowledge. In fact, a language learner learns new words and expressions of the target language primarily through listening. It helps the learner become familiar not only with the varieties of sentence structures but also with the various ways of using those structures in varieties of situations. Through listening, the learner also gets familiar with the accents, intonations, and different dialects of the target language that in return helps the learner speak the language in more natural way. Yurko and Styfanyshyn (2020) said, "Much language listening is imperative to communicate properly, meaningfully and naturally." According to them, listening is the most frequently used language skill and a very active learning process that helps the learners not only review a lot of language usage but also acquire a lot of new information, and thus contributes to successful and effective communication.

Listening is, indeed, the key to improved communication as it ensures better speaking, reading, and writing ability. Sushmitha (2017) stated, "As we get to understand spoken language by listening, it is easier to improve the other skills and gain confidence." Suri, Zulkarnain, & Rahmawati (2022) said, as Gultom, Utari, & Rahmawati (2023), "Without learning listening first, other language skills and development might not be able to work well." That means, to become a proficient speaker, reader or writer, one needs to become a proficient listener first. Because listening is the first and fundamental skill in communication process. Lundsteen (1979) expressed as cited in Gultom, Utari, & Rahmawati (2023), "Children begin by listening and then begin to speak; they speak first, then read, and finally write after reading; that is why listening is the first language skill to appear among all others." Therefore, it can be said that if listening skill is learned well, all the other skills of language can be achieved well.

On the other hand, Gultom, Utari, & Rahmawati (2023) stated, "Listening is used two times more than speaking, four times more than reading, and five times more than writing." According to Rivers (1981) as in Gilman & Moody (2008), "Adults spend 40-50% of their communication time listening, 25-30% speaking, 11-16% reading, and only about 9% writing." Nabiyev and Idiyev (2022) asserted, "Every study conducted regarding language skills acquisition has proved that when we communicate, we gain 45% of

language competence from listening, 30% from speaking, 15% from reading and 10% from writing." According to them, listening has the maximum proportion of contribution in the interchange of information in fruitful communication. That means, listening is the mostly utilized and practiced skill among the four language skills.

Finally, listening plays a significant role not only in language acquisition but also in different aspects of people's day-to-day lives. Guo and Wills (2006) state as in Yildirim S. & Yildirim O. (2016), "It (listening) is the medium through which people gain a large proportion of their education, their information, their understanding of the world and human affairs, their ideals, sense of values." Again, according to Wallace, Stariha & Walberg (2004) as in Yildirim S. & Yildirim O. (2016), "Listening skills are also important for learning purposes since through listening learners receive information and gain insights."

2. Research Rational

In spite of the importance of listening in both language acquisition and use, learners seem to be not aware of its importance. To most of the learners, being able to speak and write in the target language is the indicator of their knowing the language. They seem to completely ignore the listening skill in their language learning journey, although it serves as the foundation for their total language learning. The main purpose of this research is to find out whether the learners pay any attention to listening skills in their language learning process or not, whether they spend any time practicing listening in the target language or not, and most importantly, whether they give any value to listening in their language learning activities or not. The researcher tries to find out the answers through the listening habits of the learners in their daily lives.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Participants

The total number of participants of the present study was 192. They were undergraduate students of the faculty of Agricultural Economics & Rural Sociology and the faculty of Fisheries at Bangladesh Agricultural University. They were the direct students of the researcher who taught them English as a compulsory subject in the first year of their four-year BSc (honors) course.

3.2 Data Collection

To obtain a holistic view of the participants' opinions, a five-point Likert-scale survey sheet (Appendix-1) was used as a tool to collect data for the present study. The researcher distributed the survey sheets to the participants in their English classes, and asked them to put tick marks on appropriate options. The participants anonymously participated in the survey and depicted a clear picture of their listening habits.

3.3 Data Presentation

	Listening Habits	Always	Very Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1.	Do you use any language learning app for listening purpose?	20 (10.42%)	22 (11.46%)	67 (34.90%)	33 (17.19%)	50 (26.04%)
2.	Do you utilize social media (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) to listen to English?	18 (9.38%)	25 (13.02%)	75 (39.06%)	39 (20.31%)	35 (18.23%)
3.	Do you listen to English news?	6 (3.13%)	22 (11.46%)	70 (36.46%)	50 (26.04%)	44 (22.92%)
4.	Do you listen to discussions/ speeches (social, political, religious, etc.) in English?	15 (7.81%)	18 (9.38%)	71 (36.98%)	46 (23.96%)	42 (21.88%)
5.	Do you attentively listen to commentaries (sports, events, etc.) in English?	58 (30.21%)	62 (32.29%)	45 (23.44%)	15 (7.81%)	12 (6.25%)
6.	Do you listen to English poems, stories, jokes, etc.?	16 (8.33%)	20 (10.42%)	62 (32.29%)	61 (31.77%)	33 (17.19%)

7.	Do you listen to English songs?	57 (29.69%)	56 (29.17%)	44 (22.92%)	17 (8.85%)	18 (9.38%)
8.	Do you watch English movies/documentaries?	40 (20.83%)	42 (21.88%)	65 (33.85%)	30 (15.63%)	15 (7.81%)
9.	Do you like to listen to classroom lectures in English?	25 (13.02%)	26 (13.54%)	65 (33.85%)	41 (21.35%)	35 (18.23%)
10.	Do you like to listen to your teachers/friends/relatives speaking English with you?	20 (10.42%)	22 (11.46%)	68 (35.42%)	50 (26.04%)	32 (16.67%)

4. Results and Discussion

The survey results show that majority of the participants marked 'sometimes' for each question except listening to English songs and commentaries. That means, for most of the learners, listening to English is neither a priority nor something that they do on regular basis. Most of them occasionally listen to English. We see, only a few participants deliberately listen to English for developing their listening skill. Others are not really very serious about listening.

Now-a-days, learners spend a lot of time with their smart phones on Facebook, YouTube, etc. However, the study reveals that most of the learners neither use any language learning apps nor any social media to improve their listening skill. Majority of the participants are also found having no/less interest on listening news or discussions/speeches in English. A great number of participants also do not listen to English literature. However, a huge number of participants are found who attentively listen to commentaries in English, listen to English songs, and watch English movies. This is because, perhaps, the participants do not listen to commentaries and songs, and watch movies solely for listening purpose, but for entertainment purpose.

The study also reveals that most learners do not like to listen to classroom lectures in English, although the medium of instruction at this university is English. This reveals that the learners want to focus more on the understanding of the course content rather than learning a language. They also do not like to listen to their teachers/friends/relatives speaking English with them. This is because, perhaps, they want to ensure an uninterrupted and successful communication between themselves as English is not their mother tongue.

So, from the survey results, we can say that learners' failure to develop their English listening skill is mainly because of their poor listening habits. They have a variety of resources around them to practice listening but they do not utilize them. They have lots of opportunities around them but they do not take them. They seem to be very reluctant to use the available resources and opportunities to practice listening. Hence this reluctance has basically contributed to their poor listening habits.

5. Conclusion

The current study tried to focus on the learners' listening habits in their daily lives and found that in spite of having varieties of resources and opportunities, the learners are very reluctant to utilize them to practice and improve their listening skills which has resulted in the formation of their poor listening habits in return. I believe the findings of the present study will help the learners identify their weak points, develop their listening habits, and thus improve their listening skills. However, the study has some limitations. For example, the study was conducted in a small setting with a limited number of participants. The participants belonged to only two faculties and all of them were the 1st semester 1st year learners with almost same backgrounds. Furthermore, the study couldn't incorporate all the possible listening situations/contexts. Therefore, to get the whole picture of the undergraduate level EFL learners' listening habits, extensive studies should be carried out in large settings with a large number of diverse participants and listening situations/contexts.

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Appendix-1

	Listening Habits	Always	Very Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1.	Do you use any language learning app for listening purpose?					
2.	Do you utilize social media (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) to listen to English?					
3.	Do you listen to English news?					
4.	Do you listen to discussions/ speeches (social, political, religious, etc.) in English?					
5.	Do you attentively listen to commentaries (sports, events, etc.) in English?					
6.	Do you listen to English poems, stories, jokes, etc.?					
7.	Do you listen to English songs?					
8.	Do you watch English movies/documentaries?					
9.	Do you like to listen to classroom lectures in English?					
10.	Do you like to listen to your teachers/friends/ relatives speaking English with you?					