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Listening and Academic Learning: A Survey of Listening Skills among Undergraduates in Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria

Olugbenga Elegbe¹ and Oyinkansola O. Bolaji²

Abstract

Studies have shown that institutions of higher learning in Nigeria pay more attention to reading and writing than listening which has led to undergraduates' experiencing low academic learning. It is against this backdrop that this the study examined the influence of listening skill in student's academic performance. Employing the survey technique and Focus Group Discussions to gather data from a private institution, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria evidence shows students adopting informative listening type for academic study, 76.6% of the respondents affirmed that they adopted the listening skills to understand the general idea of the subject than they do to knowing the detail information which however is not sufficient for thorough academic performance while Pearson Correlation between listening and academic performance was significant ($r=.71, p<.05$) which shows the importance of listening to students' academic performance. There is need for students to combine analytical and critical listening with informative listening to enhance their academic performance.

Keyword: *Listening, Low Academic performance, undergraduates, Lead City University Ibadan, Nigeria*

Introduction

Listening is a complex problem solving skill and it is more than just perception of the sounds. Listening includes comprehension of meaning words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and connected discourse. Listening is one of the fundamental language skills (Arévalo, 2010). According to Arévalo (2010) listening is a creative skill. It means we comprehend the

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sound falling on our ears, and take the raw material of words, arrangements of words, and the rise and fall the voice, and from this material we create significance. He also states that listening skill is listening with comprehension, attention and appreciation. Hamouda (2013, p.115) defines listening as “a complex mental process that involves perception, attention, cognition, and memory”. That is, listening activity is the integration of skills of language, such as pronunciation, vocabulary mastery, writing, speaking, and reading. Listening provides the right conditions for language acquisition and development of other language skills. Hence, listening is essential not only as a receptive skill but also to the development of spoken language proficiency (Hansan, 2000). Rost (2002) further emphasized that the need to develop expertise in listening skill is the foundation to achieving proficiency in speaking.

Ghoneim (2013) however opines that listening is an active skill requiring listeners to deal with a variety of complicated tasks such as discriminating between sounds and interpreting stress and intonation. This means that listening activity goes beyond the integration of skills of language such as pronunciation, vocabulary mastery, writing, speaking, and reading; but also involves variety of mental activities. Listeners use a variety of mental processes to give meaning to the information they listen to. According to Song (2008), these mental steps can be broadly described as listening comprehension strategies. As indicated by Song (2008), listeners often do not handle listening tasks in an effective way. Chamot (2005) pointed out that many students do not have the knowledge needed to select appropriate strategies. Goh (2000) emphasized the importance of these strategies by arguing that learner's awareness is related to effective learning in all learning contexts. Taguchi (2005) draws attention of scholars to the fact that effective use of listening strategies has a direct and positive influence on academic performance. This has thus made some scholars to also say the distinctive features differentiating successful students from unsuccessful ones is their use of listening comprehension strategies (Osada, 2004; Sharma, 2007 cited in Ghoneim, 2013).

The importance of listening skills in any learning process cannot be over emphasized because the key to acquiring knowledge is receiving adequate input (Hamouda, 2013). Krashen, Terrell, Ehrman and Herzog (1984) in an earlier study cited by Hamouda (2013) claim that acquisition of knowledge takes place only when students absorb enough comprehensible input. The same claim was supported by Rost (1990) who confirmed that listening is

vital in the classroom because it provides input for learners.

As an input skill, listening plays a crucial role in students' language development. Hamouda (2013) argues that people acquire knowledge by understanding the linguistic information they hear. Thus, academic success is achieved mainly through receiving understandable knowledge input. Without understanding inputs at the right level, any kind of learning and academic performance simply cannot occur. Thus, listening is a fundamental language skill, and as such it merits a critical priority among the four communication skill for students.

Listening is the primary means by which incoming ideas and information are taken in; hence, it is central to the lives of students throughout all levels of educational development. Students cannot do without effective listening skill for success in academic settings. Efficient listening skills are more important than reading skills as a factor contributing to academic success. Therefore, 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 (Hamouda, 2013).

However, it has been discovered that many students encounter some difficulties listening. Underwood (1990), in an earlier study cited by Arévalo (2010), is of the opinion that some difficulties in listening are directly related to the students themselves – some students have established learning habits to understand everything by listening carefully to teachers who probably speak too slow or too fast. Hence, when they fail to understand every word while listening, they stop listening and lose main essence of the subject. In relation to this problem, Brown (1986) in an earlier study as cited by Hamouda, (2013) viewed that another issue is motivation. Because listening is so challenging, teachers need to strive to make the content interesting in order to make the learning activities successful. This means that the more motivated the students are, the more they will be stimulated and not be frightened or worried when they listen in the classroom, which will thus increase their academic performance.

Thus, both teachers and students need to take listening as an important aspect of academic learning. Hence, the study investigates the influence that listening has on the academic performance of undergraduate students of Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The role that listening plays in communication and learning cannot be undermined despite its importance, many institutions pay more attention to reading and writing while listening and speaking skills are excluded as courses in many curricula and teachers do not seem to pay attention to these skills while designing their lessons (Hamouda, 2013). Most teachers take listening for granted and believe that it will develop naturally as they have also assumed that listening is synonymous to breathing. As a result, listening remains the most neglected and the least understood aspect of language teaching (Hamouda, 2013). Efforts have been made by a number of researchers in the areas of learning and studying, but most of these studies were to identify the difficulties experienced by second and foreign language listeners and how they deal with the difficulties (Goh, 2000; Shang, 2008; Rubin, 2011; Ghoneim, 2013). While Hamouda's (2013) study investigated learners' own perceptions of their listening experience in order to get clues to the sources of difficulties in learning English as a foreign language; Arévalo (2010) studied the use of songs as a tool to work on listening and culture in foreign language (English) learning classes.

Obviously from the foregoing, the influence that listening has on the academic performance of students has received little attention from researchers, and this is the gap this current study wants to fill. This study tends to investigate the influence that the different types of listening; listening barriers and listening habits exhibited by students have on the academic performance of the students.

Research Questions

The study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What type of listening skills do students apply to enhance their academic performance?
2. To what extent do listening habits of students affect their academic performance?
3. *What is the correlation between students' level of listening and level of academic performance?*
4. What are listening challenges faced by students in academic learning?

Literature Review

The most important part of communication is to be able to listen to what is being said. Communication is the basis for creating awareness, consensus

building, making informed decisions, resolving conflicts, and generating participation in the processes of change and development. The vital role of listening in communication begins with the recognition that listening is the first language skill to be acquired. This makes listening skills the most important part of communication. (Wolvin, 2009). Listening plays an important role in communication. According to Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011), of the total time spent on communicating, listening takes up 40-50%; speaking, 25-30%; reading, 11-16%; and writing, about 9%. Earlier studies by Devine (1987) found out that listening is the primary means by which incoming ideas and information are taken in. Wolvin and Coakley (1996) 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 educational development. Nevertheless, further studies by Wolvin (2009) show that listening is the most frequently used language skill in the classroom. Hence, teachers and students acknowledge the importance of listening comprehension for success in academic settings. This shows 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 (Arevalo, 2010).

Listening is a complex problem solving skill and it is more than just perception of speech sounds. Listening includes comprehension of meaning of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and connected discourse. Listening is one of the fundamental language skills. It is a medium through which children, young people and adults gain a large portion of their information, their understanding of the world and of human affairs, their ideals, sense of values, and their appreciation (Arevalo, 2010). One important definition of listening approved in 1996 by the International Listening Association (ILA) is: "Listening: the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages" (Adelmann, 2012, Oyewo, 2008). This definition, as noted by Adelmann, was also accepted by the National Communication Association (NCA) as a point of departure for listening goals in the "K-12 standards and competencies document" (National Communication Association (NCA), 1998). We shall review the listening process and its influences on information reception.

The Listening Process

The listening process starts out with receiving the words while you listen; understanding what you have received, remembering what was said, evaluating what we learn, and putting it into one's own words on paper, and

responding to what is heard to get a better understanding. As a communicator, the listener engages in a sequence of behaviours that are generally accepted to characterize the decoding process these are receiving; attending; perceiving; interpreting; and responding (Wolvin, 2009).

Receiving

The listener during reception employs auditory and visual sensory receptors. Hence, the listening process can include hearing sounds. Nevertheless, listening and hearing do not perform the same functions. The auditory reception of the message is itself a detailed process involving the intricate hearing mechanism. The sound must enter the middle ear, set into vibration the tympanic membrane, and be conducted through the inner ear to the brain. Problems with the hearing mechanism can compound the receptive process. Research at the National Institutes of Health suggests that as many as one out of every nine Americans has some type of hearing loss. Exposure to loud music, especially through headsets, has been identified as a major contributor to this situation. While many researchers and practitioners have focused their definitions and models of listening on listening to auditory-only stimuli, listening also involves the visual channel when the source of the stimuli is in the presence of the listener. The visual channel is an influential communication media, and the other senses (smell, taste, touch) impact the listener as well (Wolvin, 2009).

Attending

The next stage is attention. There is need to attend to the messages received. The listener is required to focus and concentrate on the message received. Studies have shown that shortened attention span affects one's capacity to listen to lectures, to participate in conversation, and generally to function as a listener in all sorts of settings. A listener's ability to attend to a message is influenced significantly by attention energy (Wolvin, 2009).

Perceiving

Attention to the message is affected not only by the listener's energy in the short-term memory system but also by the listener's perceptual filter. The perceptual filter serves to screen the stimulus so that one's predispositions alter the message received. The listener's frame of reference — all of one's background, experience, roles, and mental and physical states—makes up the perceptual filter. The frame of reference establishes the perceptual expectations that listeners bring to the communication so that, essentially, we see and hear what we want to see and hear. This level of empathic

perception affords the listener a solid frame of reference for interpreting the message (Wolvin, 2009).

Interpreting

The message must be interpreted by the listener after it has been received and perceived by the listener. This stage of the listening process involves fitting the verbal and/or nonverbal messages into the proper linguistic categories stored in the brain and then interpreting the messages for their meanings. Citing Lundsteen (1979), Wolvin, (2009, p. 2) describes this process as one of internal speech: “decoding the verbal and nonverbal language varies according to each individual's perceptual filter and linguistic category system, so the original intent of a speaker's message may be misinterpreted, distorted, or even completely changed as the listener's meaning is assigned. The assignment of meaning to the message is influenced not only by the linguistic category system but also by one's cognitive processing” (Wolvin, 2009, p. 2). Hence, cognitive responses to the message help to frame the listener's interpretation of the information received.

Responding

The listener responds to the message after assigning meaning to it. This phase of the listening process involves moving the received, attended to, and interpreted message from the short-term memory into the long-term memory for potential retrieval. As memory development specialists emphasized, retention requires strategy. Hence, listening constitutes an intricate internal process in which attention to feedback is essential. Studies have shown that effective listening is based on effective feedback (Wolvin, 2009).

Listening Comprehension

Listening, a skill in communication through which information (message) is analysed and conceived, has some assorted characteristics which must be understood by both the speaker and the listener in order to achieve intended purpose of communication engagement. Listening comprehension of the academic lecture is much more complex than listening comprehension in a social context. Gilakjani and Ahmadi, (2011,p:978) citing (Wolvin, 2009) state that:

...in the process of selectively listening to utterances, discourse markers may be able to assist the listener in selecting the most

probable interpretation of the possible pragmatic meaning of the utterance. In other words, the hierarchical representation that is stored in the long-term memory would be more directly in line with the original structure of the lecture text. Students will be able to recall more exactly what the lecturer conveys should they be conversant with the roles that discourse markers play in the spoken academic lecture (Gilakjani and Ahmadi, 2011, p,978)

Several studies in various countries have shown the importance of listening in academic performance of students. Hasan (2000) in his study examined 81 Arabic speakers learning English as a foreign language (EFL) for academic purposes and their perceived listening comprehension problems; the study shows that 'unfamiliar words', 'difficult grammatical structures', and 'the length of the spoken text' are the most important message factors for listening problems. In terms of speaker factor, it was revealed that 'clarity' was the main cause of EFL listening difficulties. As to listener factor, 'lack of interest' 'the demand for full and complete answers to listening comprehension questions' were the two main difficulties encountered by EFL students. Ghoneim (2013, p. 100) in the study of "Listening Comprehension Strategies Used by College Students to cope with the Aural Problems in EFL Classes: An Analytical Study Listening", the finding of the study revealed that "listeners use a variety of mental processes to give meaning to the information they listen to. These mental steps can be broadly described as listening comprehension strategies".

Sharma, (2007) concluded that one of the distinctive features differentiating successful listeners from unsuccessful ones is their use of listening comprehension strategies and they supported the idea that analyzing the role of these strategies in listening helps listeners to approach the listening task more effectively.

Theoretical Framework

Schema Theory

This is a theory which shows that mental templates help individuals to organise millions of items of information they come into contact with. Individuals develop schemata from their personal experience of TV watching, reading, hearsay these help them to organise their perception by helping them to combine classify millions of people into manageable numbers of categories a classes. Individuals are likely to recall information that is consistent with their schemata. These schema (scripts can be regarded as complex schema) are one of our ways of ordering our experience of the world. They seem to play a crucial role in the process of hypothesis generation which is so central to language comprehension. The context thus becomes an important part of the listening comprehension process because it provides important clues to help us understand the meaning (Bilokcuoğlu, 2014; Zeng, 2007). Buck, (2001, p.20) stated that “obviously, if we fail to provide a context, we rob students of important resources they would normally use in the listening comprehension process. In normal daily language use, we virtually never have to decode utterances by using only bottom-up information, devoid of the context which enables us to use top-down processing strategies” (Buck, 2001, p. 20). Therefore, if students are asked to decode short decontextualized sentences, listening comprehension is not being tested at all, but asking students to engage in a very unnatural activity which seems to be confined largely to the second language classroom. There is as yet very little research into the effects of schema on listening, but there is every reason to suggest that they play just as important a part in listening as they do in reading. Unpublished research by the author has indicated that schema is tremendously important in listening (Bilokcuoğlu, 2014; Zeng, 2007; Buck, 2001).

This theory revealed that listening also deals with mental pattern of the parties involved in a communication process, including the speaker and the receiver. The pattern highlighted here has to do with conceptualization of thoughts, ideas, and philosophies designed to achieve certain purposes. The summary of the propositions of this theory is the use of stored or acquired knowledge to proffer accurate meanings for observed texts and heard speeches. This exercise, by and large, is not uncommon to listening as it also involves interpreting and responding to messages (Bilokcuoğlu, 2014; Zeng, 2007).

The schema theory is connected with the use of stored or acquired knowledge to proffer accurate meanings for observed texts and heard speeches. This theory shows the relevance of interpersonal relationship between lecturers and students which will contribute at the long run to student's learning.

Method

Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive research design. Olayinka, Taiwo, Raji-Oyelade and Farai (2006) explain that descriptive research is useful when a researcher seeks to understand present conditions, beliefs, attitudes; a careful study and methodical observation of a phenomenon in the real world which involves careful observing and recording information as they occur without manipulating any variable. Hence, the study adopted the survey research method in the use of questionnaire and focus group discussion to determine the influence of listening on academic performance of undergraduates of the Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria. Adeyeye (2013, p.174) citing Baran, (2009) stated that "survey allows mass communication researcher to measure characteristics or behaviours of a given sample group, then generalizing back to the population which is the group under survey"

Sample size and Sampling procedure Using the convenient sampling technique, 250 respondents (male and female undergraduate students) were drawn from students' population from various departments in Lead City University, Ibadan as sample size to complete the research questionnaire, while four FGD (Focus Group Discussion) sessions were also conducted with selected students among the various departments.

In all, 240 duly completed copies of the questionnaire were used for the analysis of the study. Four Focus Group Discussion sessions which comprised eight (8) and seven (7) participants respectively were conducted to collect relevant information from students within the campus environment.

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Faculty	Agriculture	23	9.6
	Arts	56	23.3
	Education	13	5.4
	Law	58	24.2
	Nursing	20	8.3
	Science	40	16.7
	Social Sciences	20	8.3
	Technology/Engineering	10	4.2
	Total	240	100

Findings in Table 1 reveal that 24.2% respondents are from the faculty of Law followed by Arts representing 23.3% and Science with 16.7%, 9.6% respondents are in Faculty of Agriculture and 8.3% respondents each represents faculty of Social Sciences and Medicine, while Faculty of Technology and Engineering was represented by 4.2%. This shows that the views of Law students are more represented in the study than other faculties.

Research Instruments

The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Obono and Obono, in Olayinka, Popoola and Ojebode (2008, p.25), define qualitative methods as the “means of collecting and analyzing interpretive and subjective reality in which the researcher is typically immersed”. According to them, qualitative methods are especially helpful in answering 'what', 'why' and 'how' questions. On the other hand, quantitative methods use large samples that will allow results to be generalized to the population under study (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011), Questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGDG) were the only instruments used for this study. The items in the questionnaire were divided into four sections. Sections A, B, C contained questions drafted from the research questions, while section D was on the demographic variables of the respondents.

The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide contained seven (7) questions on research question three. The FGD guide was used to evaluate participants' understanding of listening and correlation between students' level of listening and level of academic performance.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents in their various departments on campus and halls of residence with the assistance of a research assistant. The questionnaire copies were also retrieved immediately after they have been completed. Four sessions of Focus Group Discussion consisting at least 8 and 7 students respectively took place in within the students' halls of residence on University Campus.

Data obtained were analyzed using the simple frequency percentage for the survey questionnaire while information for the FGD were recorded, coded and issues of interest were sorted for analysis. In addition, a free atmosphere was given to respondents to self-report required information. FGD participants were also given the opportunity to give sincere and honest response to the question asked. All issues in the questions and information gathered from them were treated with utmost confidentiality.

Demographic details of Respondents

Table 2: Classification of Respondents by Age and Gender

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 20 years	80	33.3
	20-25 years	130	54.2
	26-30 years	20	8.3
	31 years and above	10	4.2
	Total	240	100
Gender	Male	112	46.7
	Female	128	53.3
	Total	240	100

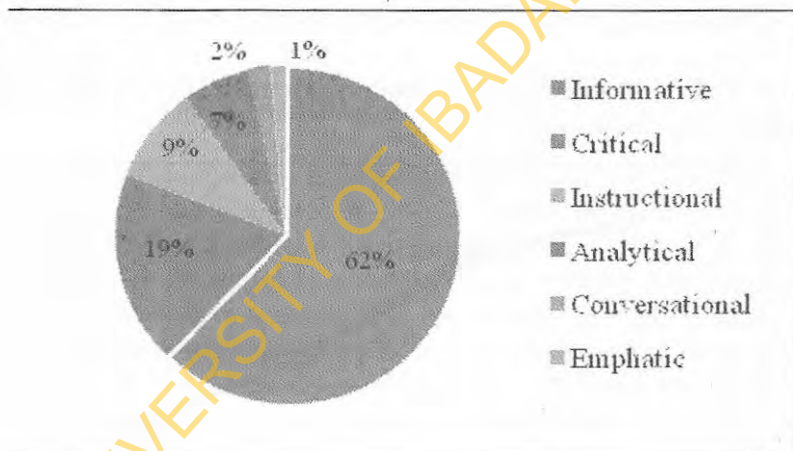
Table 2 shows that 54.2% respondents are between 20 and 25 years, 33.3% respondents are below 20 years while 8.3% respondents are between 26 and 30 years, and 4.2% respondents are those above 31 years. The concentration of the respondents in these three age groups reveals that most of the respondents (students) are in their 20s; that is, young adults. While 53.3% are females and 46.7% are males. This reveals that females' views could be more represented in the study than the males'.

Analysis and Discussion of Research Findings

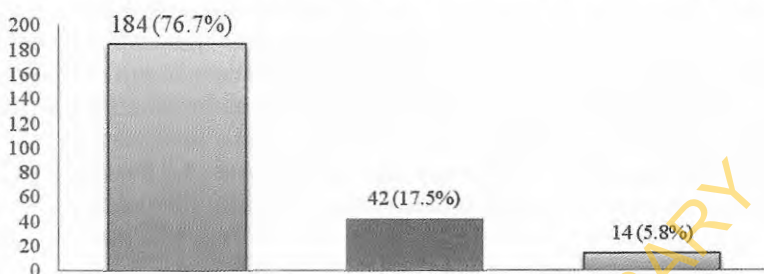
The overall purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of listening on academic performance of students in Leads City University. It should be noted here that in the presentation of quantitative data acquired through the administration of the questionnaire, frequencies in the tables are written in figures while the percentages are enclosed in brackets; and parts of the coding rates such as SA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, D: Disagree and SD: Strongly Disagree were employed in some segments of the analysis.

Type of listening skills students apply to enhance their academic performance

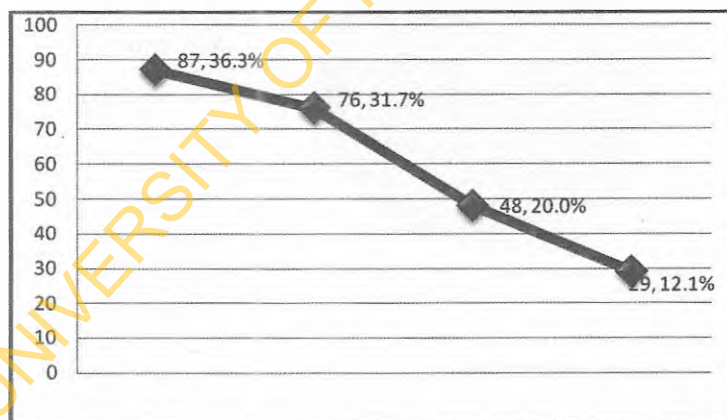
Figure 1: The Listening Types Adopted by the Students for Academic Purposes



Type of listening skills students apply to enhance their academic performance

Figure 1: The Listening Types Adopted by the Students for Academic Purposes

Findings from Figure 2, revealed that about two-third 76.6% of the respondents affirmed that they adopted the listening skills to understand the general idea of the subject than they do to knowing the detail information 17.5%. Thus, only 5.8% adopted the listening skill to understand the general idea and detail information of the course.

Figure 3: Extent to which Students' Listening Habit Affect their Academic Performance

Findings from figure: 3 reveal that 67% of respondents agrees to a high extent (addition of Very Great Extent and Great Extent) that their listening habits has affected their academic performance while 20% said their performances were affected to a little extent and 12.1% were not affected. This means that listening habits of students are vital to their academic performance.

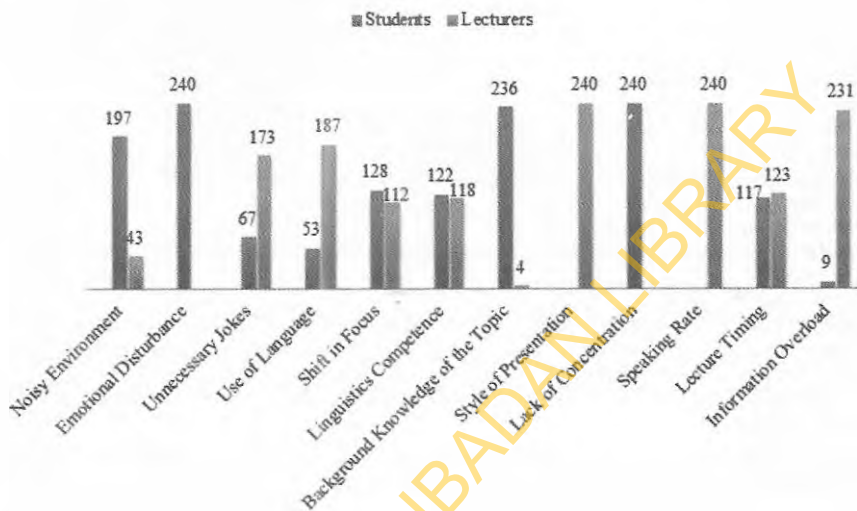
Table 3: Pearson Correlation result of Students' Listening Level and Academic Performance

Variable		Listen is important to academic performance	My level of listening determines my level of academic performance	Students who listen well in classes usually understand better and pass well in exams
Listen is important to academic performance	Pearson	1	.730**	.712**
	Correlation			
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	240	240	240
My level of listening determines my level of academic performance	Pearson	.730**	1	.954**
	Correlation			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	240	240	240
Students who listen well in classes usually understand better and pass well in exams	Pearson	.712**	.954**	1
	Correlation			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	240	240	240

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 above shows the Pearson Correlation's degree of relationship between variables. The value of $r=0.730$ shows that there is strong positive correlation between the importance and level of listening of students and their academic performance. The result is significant at $p<.05$ level of significance. The result shows that $r=0.712$; this indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between students' level of listening and academic performance. Thus, students who listen well in classes usually understand better and pass well in their examinations. The result is also significant at $p<.05$ level of significance. This implies that listen has a great impact on the academic performance of student in their various course of study. Further finding from a frequency count reveal that 151 (62.9%) respondents affirmed to this. Whereas 73 (30%) and 16 (7%) respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that there is a visible correlation between listening and academic performance.

Figure 4: Listening Challenges Faced by Students and from whom they arise



Findings in Figure 4 reveal the challenges students faced in listening in an academic situations. Findings reveal that noisy environment are usually caused by the students as 82.0% respondents pointed out. Notably, emotional disturbance and lack of concentration both arise solely from the students while challenges in style of presentation and speaking rate both solely arise from the lecturers. Also, 77.9% of the respondents claimed that challenges of use of language come from the lecturers. While 53.3% of the students blamed themselves for shift in focus while listening, 72.1% and 96.3% of the students blamed the lecturers for cracking unnecessary jokes and information overload in classes. Nevertheless, almost all the students (98.3%) blamed themselves for not usually having good background of the topic before going to class.

Discussion of Findings

The result from Figure 1 and 2 shows students' preference for informative listening. This could be as a result of students' primary goals during lectures to always be informed. In support of this

submission Adelman, (2012) stated that students oftentimes strive to understand and retain the information in any given message, either in class or group discussion. Mulanax and Powers (2001) also affirm that a good student is after listening fidelity – that is, the degree of congruence between the cognitions of a listener and the cognitions of a source following a communication event. This is shown in the 76.7% of respondent who adopting listening skills to understand the general idea of the subject as revealed Figure 1. Also 62% of students oftentimes subscribed to informative listening for academic purpose. Informative listening according to the importance of listening might not be enough to enhance academic performance of students. Hence, students need to adopt critical and analytical listening which finding from the study shows that is of low percentage. However, a 500-level Law student of Lead City University during the FGD session was of the opinion that he “preferred to combine Analytical and Emphatic listening with Informative listening type in order to perform well in school”. Based on the submissions of the FGD discussants and above findings in Figure 1 and 2 majorities of students adopt the informative listening method of study in the campus. However, informative listening is not wholesomely sufficient to enhance academic success of students. The implication of this submission is that informative listening type has to be complemented by other vital listening skills, like analytical and critical listening for students to achieve an excellent academic performance while studying in the university.

The study also reveals from respondents' that listening habits affects students' academic performance. This mean the way student listen in class will affect the way they understand the lecture and their eventual performance in examination. Hence, listening is vital to students' academic performance. This supports the assertions of Freeman, (2004) writing on “Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching” show that listening comprehension strategies is techniques or activities that contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input. While Lin, (2006) in a study entitled “The effects of note-taking, memory and rate of presentation on EFL learners' listening Comprehension” maintain that listening is extremely important for the lives of students since listening is used as a primary

medium of learning at all stages of education. Majority of the FGD discussants agreed that students' listening habits greatly affect their academic performance. One of the students during the FGD session noted that:

Listening affects a student in class. If he or she were not listening, providing answers to questions asked in class may be difficult. So, listening does affect the performance of the students because in such a situation whereby the student is in the hall (examination) and needs to recall, he has to fall back on how well he listening or how conscious he was when the lecturer was making those statements in class...some lecturers might later come out and tell you I remember saying this, this, and this....So, if you are not the listening type, you are mostly bound to fail.

This agrees with the assertion of Smit (2006) on listening comprehension that listening may assist students in receiving content information as comprehensible input. This input then can be processed as intake available for recall in examination situations. Again, the assertion established in this section connects with Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory that when one pays attention to certain events, one's language improves both in writing and practice (Tahsildar & Yusoff, 2014).

The result of the Pearson correlation analysis in Table 3 revealed that listening is directly linked to students' academic performance. A student during one of the FGD session affirmed this view that "when a listener, having listened well and attentively to the speaker's utterances, can rearrange the information based on his or her understanding and retained it in his or her memory as long as he or she wishes." The foregoing agrees with the Schema Theory's assumptions on the generation of meanings on information received that individuals, even listeners use their knowledge of language and the world to generate suggestions about what they will listen to or read,

and then extract enough data from the printed page to confirm or reject these hypotheses. This indicates that most students listen to find answers a particular academic need or want. And when this purpose is fulfilled, the students' academic performance will be positively affected. Rost (1990) clarifies this assertion by affirming that participants in any interaction pay attention only to information which seems to them relevant to their purposes or needs. Hence, this study show that listening skill is very important skill that student needs to develop to enhance their academic studies.

The study nevertheless reveals that students faced various challenges in listening. Among these challenges are information overload (96.3%), speaking rate of the lecturer (100%), style of presentation (100%), lack of concentration by students (100%), students' background knowledge of the topic (98.3%), and emotional disturbance (100%). Findings from the FGD session revealed that some lecturers' characters greatly affect listening comprehension which discourages students whenever such lecturers are teaching. Another student stated that communication context or environment can also serve as a listening challenge to the students. He further noted that:

If peradventure a lecture is taking place in a noisy environment, the students will be distracted, and therefore, concentration will be lost. And when that happens, the major aim or purpose of organizing the class, lecturing, and attending the lecture will be grossly thwarted, leading to efforts in futility.

This further affirms the views of Amin, Amin & Aly (2011) who conducted a study titled, "A Correlation Study between EFL Strategic Listening and Listening Comprehension Skills among Secondary School Students", in which they say that background noises on the recording of the teaching aid and environmental noises can take the listener's mind off the content of the listening passage, adding that unclear sounds resulting from poor-quality equipment can interfere with the listener's comprehension. Though the adoption of critical and Analytical listening skills will best enhance students' academic

performance, but findings show that most students don't concentrate during lectures, don't pay attention due to their knowledge of the topic and some with exhibit emotional disturbance which nonetheless may affect their academic performance. This means that if proper precautions are not taken to control or minimize these listening challenges, then teaching and learning purposes may be difficult to achieve.

Conclusion/Recommendation

Listening skill is a very important skill that students need to develop to enhance their academic studies. Listening skill is central to the lives of students throughout all levels of educational development because it is the primary means by which incoming ideas and information are taken in. Hence, developing appropriate listening skills and providing appropriate environment enhance academic performance. Based on the findings of this study it is recommended that managements of tertiary institution should persistently organise a series of seminars and lectures for students and lecturers on the importance of listening, and its influence on academic performance. This will inculcate into the students and lecturers the values of speaking and listening in communication encounter. Lecturers should also be aware that their speaking rate affects listening comprehension. In view of this, they should try to be modest in the rate at which they speak; that is, not too slow, and not too fast. Their choice of words should not be above the level of understanding of the students. The students should not take or see listening as a mere communication skill, but as an exercise through which proper learning is achieved. In addition to that, they should always strive to increase upon their listening levels and habits. While the University authorities should ensure that environments are conducive for learning. One of the major challenges that disrupt learning is external noise. Students can easily get distracted by unfamiliar sounds or resonances coming from other buildings around the learning centres.

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