

## ENHANCING LISTENING IN CHILDREN FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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### Abstract

*This study examined listening for effective teaching and learning for children in primary schools. Three research questions guided the study and a descriptive survey design was adopted. The population consisted of all the primary school teachers in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. From the population a sample size of 110 teachers was drawn. The data obtained was analyzed using mean and standard deviations. The findings revealed that listening is essentially important for effective teaching and learning for children in primary schools. It also indicated factors that impede efficient listening as well as strategies for enhancing children's listening. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made.*

### Introduction

Listening is an indispensable skill in human communication. It is used far more than any other single language skill in normal daily life. For instance, people everywhere at all times, in all situations essentially engage in listening on a daily basis. They spend a greater percentage of their time in listening to radios, their friends, their family members, co-workers, colleagues, among others than in speaking, reading, or writing. In addition, the hours students spend in the classroom listening can be approximated to be hundred percent (Tutoring and Academic Success Centres "TASC" 2001). Listening is the process of focusing all attention to a source of sound in order to hear. Discovery Education (2008) defined listening as paying attention or making an effort to hear something. Webster's (2008) defined listening as paying attention in order to hear. In the words of Azikiwe (2007), listening means hearing with comprehension. Thus there is a difference between hearing and listening. When one recognises the sound of a moving car, running tap, breaking of fire wood or a baby's cry, we say that the person heard whatever happened. But when one is asked a question in his native or second language and he fails to give the correct answer he has not listened although he heard.

Listening is usually the first activity a child engages in. It provides a veritable foundation in the formation of speech habit of a child in later life. With the child's listening, rules and nuances of the language are acquired in a rather unconscious manner. In a similar vein, Sholes (2008) noted that the more the skills a child gains during the early years in speaking and listening, the better he learns to read and write with ease in later life. In other words, early years are essential for teaching children how to listen in order to learn. Children could be taught this as early as in primary school. Primary education is the first port of call of official or formal education for children from age six to eleven years. FRN (2004) see it as the key to success or failure of the entire education system. If children are taught to be active listeners: possessing requisite listening skills, this could enhance their performance in school. It makes teaching and learning process effective. In fact, it cuts across all school activities. Without children, listening attentively to the teacher, the lesson may not be assimilated or grasped and the topic taught may not be remembered. Children's understanding may not be there to capture the lessons taught before processing it to be stored in retentive memory. Children who fail to listen attentively in class lessons appear to be the never-do-well who lags behind in their studies.

Teaching and learning are defined as the ways in which teachers and pupils interact, and in which pupils interact with one another (Effective Learning and Teaching in Scottish Secondary School: English, html). Listening provides the aural input that serves as a basis for language acquisition and enables learners to interact in spoken communication (Klein, 2008). Thus, effective teaching and learning is contingent on listening. To listen, involve the ears, the eyes, whole-self, that is, undivided attention and heart. Listening is a process that consists of five elements: hearing, attending, understanding, responding, and remembering. Hearing is the physiological dimension of listening that occurs when sound waves strike the ear at a certain frequency and loudness is influenced by background noise. Attending is the process of filtering out some messages and focusing on others. Understanding occurs when we make sense of a message, responding consists of giving observable feedback to the speaker such as eye contact and appropriate facial expressions while remembering is the ability to recall information (Stewart, 2005).

Listening is not just a passive activity; pupils have to be active participants in teaching and learning process. Listening effectively requires the application of considerable listening skills and practice. It needs to be learned. Listening skills according to Stewart (2005) are described as 'listening with hearts' or 'hearing between the words'. Listening skills consists of non-verbal and symbolic communication. Non-verbal communication is also known as 'body language' and includes facial expressions, posture, hand gesture, tone of voice, smell and other communications perceived by one's senses. For instance, when one does not speak, his/her non-verbal communications convey a message. Symbolic communications are demonstrated by the house one live in, the cloths one wear and especially the words one use. However, the subject of contention is that because listening is not a school subject like reading and writing, or mathematics, people think it comes naturally as long as they can hear or listen to directions or instructions on how to carry out a task. This appears to be true. Thus, listening is not recognized as a subject important to be taught. Azikiwe (2007) stated that listening is not as simple as people think and this serve to underline the need for teaching listening skills to enable the learners to comprehend spoken language with ease in any situation. Tutoring and Academic Success Centres (TASC) (2009) advocated that children should be taught listening so that they can learn to listen and learn better. Some variables appear to be a constraint to efficient listening in teaching and learning process. For instance, a classroom that is too hot or too cold, or noisy for children to stay appears to hinder the children from listening to the teacher's lesson. Sometimes the attitude of the children influences their listening to the teacher. Some of the children appear to be naughty, some are indifferent, some are biased about their teacher, some of the children have their mind closed and some do not pay attention when the lesson is going on. Lack of eye contact and use of language not understood by the children could hinder the children from listening. This is in line with the findings of Klein (2007) which states that people do not listen when the mind is closed, and when the listener is biased about the speaker as well as when there is no eye contact. Adequate nutrition appears to be a problem to some families. Children who arrive at school hungry are less able to concentrate on schoolwork (Jukes, 2006). Such crop of children may not be in a good mood to listen to the teacher's lesson. It is against this background that this work is conceived to determine the importance of listening, the factors that impede efficient listening and strategies to remediate the situation.

#### Purpose of the Study

In specific terms the study sought to:

- (i) Examine the essentials of listening in children for effective teaching and learning in primary schools.
- (ii) Identify the factors which generally impede listening in children for effective teaching and learning in primary schools.

- (iii) Determine the strategies for enhancing listening in children for effective teaching and learning in primary schools.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- (i) Why is listening essential in children for effective teaching and learning in primary schools?
- (ii) What are the factors that generally impede listening in children for effective teaching and learning in primary schools?
- (iii) What are the strategies for enhancing listening in children for effective teaching and learning in primary schools?

### Methodology

The design of the study is a descriptive survey aimed at examining the strategies for enhancing listening in children for effective teaching and learning in primary schools. The area of study is Awka south Local Government Education Authority of Anambra state. It has 42 primary schools. The population of the study comprises all the forty-two (42) primary schools, seven hundred and eleven teachers (711). Purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting six (6) primary schools out of the forty-two (42). Then, through simple random sampling; one hundred and ten (110) teachers were selected.

The instrument for data collection was a 30-item questionnaire titled Enhancing Listening Questionnaire (ELQ). It was developed in accordance with the research questions and structured on a four point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D). The instrument was organised in three sections. Section A-sought information on the importance of listening in teaching and learning process for children in primary school and section B-sought information on the factors that impede listening in children for effective teaching and learning in primary school, while section C-sought information on the strategies for enhancing listening in children for effective teaching and learning in primary school. The instrument was face validated by two experts; one in Childhood Education and another in Special Education from the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka. Their inputs were used in modifying the questionnaire items. Cronbach Alpha coefficient was employed in calculating the internal consistency of the instrument and estimates of .76, 0.77 and 0.82 were obtained for sections A, B and C respectively. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents with the help of research assistants. An on-the-spot collection was made to ensure a high return. Data collated were analysed using weighted mean and standard deviation. The cut- off point was capped at 2.50 and above while below 2.50 indicate disagree.

### Results

The results of the study are presented in line with the research questions as shown in Tables 1-3.

#### Research Question one

Why is listening essential in children for effective teaching and learning in primary schools?

Table 1: Mean score ratings of teachers on the essentials of listening in children for effective teaching and learning process in primary schools

S/N	Item statement	X	SD	Decision
1.	Listening is one of the four basic language skills	3.8	0.4	A
2.	Listening is the first and most important language skill.	3.71	0.45	A

3.	Listening enhances communication	3.56	0.49	A
4.	Listening helps to detect danger around.	3.46	0.5	*
5.	Listening provides the moral input that serves as the basis for language acquisition.	3.29	0.46	*
6.	Listening enables learners to interact in spoken communication.	3.6	0.49	*
7.	Listening enhances learning of languages.	3.43	0.5	*
8.	Listening is used far more than any other single language skill in normal daily life.	3.32	0.47	*
9.	Listening is one of the most important on-the-job communication skills.	3.39	0.49	*

The result on Table 1 indicated that teachers agreed with the 9 items that listening is essential in children for effective teaching and learning in primary schools since they have mean ratings of 2.50 and above. The standard deviations range from 0.40 to 0.50. This indicated that the respondents were not far from the mean and not far from one another in their opinions

#### Research Question Two

What are the factors that generally impede listening in children for effective teaching and learning?

Table 2: Mean ratings on the factors that impede listening in children for effective teaching and learning in primary school

S/N	Item statement	X	SD	Decision
1.	Unconducive classrooms; too hot or too cold, noisy for children.	3.8	0.4	A
2.	Teacher that has a speech defect and cannot articulate his\her words very well	3.52	0.5	A
3.	A listener that has hearing impairment	3.39	0.49	*
4.	If the children do not like the teacher	3.14	0.35	*
5.	When the mind is closed	3.29	0.45	*
6.	Prejudice or being biased about the speaker (teacher)	3.27	0.44	*
7.	Lack of concentration by the children	3.42	0.49	*
8.	Lack of eye contact	3.46	0.5	*
9.	Using a language that the children does not understand	3.36	0.48	*
10.	Unpleasant mood of the children	3.51	0.5	*
11.	Too much distraction, noise or some other discomfort	3.51	0.5	*

The data on table 2 above showed that the 11 items were perceived as factors which impede listening in children for effective teaching and learning in primary school since they have mean scores of 2.50 points and above. The standard deviation of the score generated in all the items are small indicating that the variations of the scores from the mean are not so much.

#### Research Question Three

What are the strategies for enhancing listening in children for effective teaching and learning in primary schools?

Table 3: Mean ratings of teachers on strategies for enhancing listening in children for effective teaching and learning in primary schools

S/N	Item statement	X	SD	Decision
1.	Deliberate training should begin as early as possible from the time a child can take orders.	3.75	0.44	A
2.	Children should be started with simple instructions, which will require sound discrimination.	3.48	0.5	A
3.	Teachers should train children's ears properly to distinguish between the similar sounds they hear.	3.27	0.45	A
4.	Provision of classroom environment that encourages good listening.	3.66	0.47	*
5.	Ensure that in classroom speaking-listening situation that the language is understood by both parties.	3.37	0.49	*
6.	Teachers should use appropriate tone, pitch, volume and speed in speaking.	3.45	0.5	*
7.	Teachers should provide practice in listening experiences through discussion.	3.48	0.5	*
8.	Teachers should provide reinforcement for pupils' listening experiences by asking them to listen to news, radio and television	3.55	0.5	*
9.	Teachers should make pupils understand or realize that they would do better in their class work/studies only if they have listened efficiently.	3.63	0.48	*
10.	Teachers should build a programme in which listening are consistently taught and practiced.	3.31	0.46	*

Key: \* Agree = A  
Disagree = D

The result on Table 3 above indicates the 10 strategies as effective measures for enhancing children for effective teaching and learning in primary school. This is evident in the mean scores which were above 2.50 the cut of point perceived as effective measures. The standard deviations generated from the mean scores on the items are small. This indicates that the score of the respondents are not vary far from the mean and from one another's responses.

### Discussion

The data on the Table 1 showed the essentials of listening in children for effective teaching and learning in primary schools. Listening is an indispensable tool for effective teaching and learning in primary schools. This corroborates the findings of Klein (2008) that listening provides the moral input that serves as a basis for language acquisition and enables learners to interact in a spoken manner.

The data on Table 2 indicated the factors teachers perceive as impediments to listening in children for effective teaching and learning in primary schools. Their responses showed that in schools, classrooms that are too hot or too cold or noisy are not conducive for children to listen attentively to teacher's lesson. Children, who do not like their teacher, refuse to listen to the teacher's lesson and lack of eye contact by the listener, among others. This is in line with the findings of Klein (2007) which stated that people do not listen when the mind is closed, when

they are biased about the teacher as well as when there is no eye contact. All these affect teaching and learning in schools.

An overview of the items in Table 3 indicated the strategies the teachers perceive would enhance listening in children for effective teaching and learning in primary schools. The findings agree with the NCLRC (2004) which stated that listening exercises that are meant to train should be success-oriented and build up student's confidence in their listening ability. Also, Azikiwe (2007), TASC, (2001) and Hart (2007) posited that children should be taught listening so that they can learn to listen and listen to learn better.

### Recommendations

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

- (i) Children should be trained to listen from the time a child can take orders.
- (ii) Children should be started with simple instructions which will require sound discrimination.
- (iii) Teachers should train children's ears properly to distinguish between the similar sounds they hear.
- (iv) Provision of classroom environment that encourage good listening is essential.
- (v) Teachers should use appropriate tone, pitch, volume and speed in speaking to children.
- (vi) Teachers should provide reinforcement for pupils' listening experiences by asking them to listen to news, radio and television.
- (vii) Teachers should make pupils understand or realize that they would do better in their class work/studies only if they have listened efficiently.

### Conclusion

Listening is an essential ingredient in teaching and learning process. It enhances learning of language and all other school subjects. It behoves one to take a subject or course in listening so that pupils, students and everybody would learn to listen, and listen to learn. It is essentially important to listen with one's eyes as well as one's ears. This could enhance effective teaching and learning in primary schools.

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