

## Effects of Students' Awareness on Developing Young Learners' listening skills at a foreign language center in Tra Vinh Province

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 <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijli.221111>

Received: 28/07/2022

Revision: 30/08/2022

Accepted: 03/09/2022

Online: 08/09/2022

### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:** factors, listening skills, language learning,

During the integration period, English is rapidly asserting its importance. Four key abilities — listening, speaking, reading, and writing — are required to learn a language properly. The most important and challenging of these is listening. This current study was conducted to investigate the factors affecting the listening skills of young learners. The purpose of the study is to find out the factors that can help students improve their listening skills in particular and learn English well in general. The study was conducted at a language center in Tra Vinh province with the participation of 25 students from 12 to 15 years old who answered questionnaires about activities that can help students improve their listening skills. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. The results show that many positive factors can help students develop listening skills, in addition to technology tools, students' awareness is an important factor. Besides, English outside the class (foreign language center) also helps students a lot in developing listening skills.

### Introduction

In the modern day, English is a crucial global language that is used everywhere. Surprisingly, English is a subject that is required at all educational levels in the Vietnamese environment (Le & Le, 2022). For those learning English, having good listening skills is vital. According to Renukadevi(2014), Listening is regarded as the first acquired talent among the four fundamental skills (speaking, reading, writing, and listening), as it is through listening that the human perception of language is formed. Furthermore, it is stated that effective listening contributes to the development of listeners' ability to learn and adapt to new knowledge and skills (Liubinienė, 2009). However, listening seems like a difficult skill in the process of learning foreign languages. Tran and Duong(2020) comment that listening is the hardest of the four language skills. Besides, they also point out that listening comprehension problems relate to

perception, parsing, and utilization. Listening plays an important role, but it is still a frustrating and helpless skill for learners. Realizing those difficulties, finding the factors contributing to improving listening skills becomes an urgent issue. The previous study has demonstrated that technology plays a significant role in the development of listening skills. In reality, little research has been conducted on the role of student's awareness in the development of listening skills. Hence, this paper, therefore, investigates the effects of students' awareness on students' listening skills aged 12-15 at an English center in Tra Vinh province.

## Literature review

### *Definition of Listening Skills*

Listening is one of the four key abilities required for advanced English proficiency, along with reading, speaking, and writing. Yagang (1993) simplifies the definition of listening as “the ability to identify and understand what others say”. Although mastering listening skills might aid in second language acquisition, listening is not an easy or straightforward process (Tran & Duong, 2020). As a result, learners frequently see listening as the most difficult ability to master (Hosogoshi, 2016). In addition, Balaban (2016) claimed that listening difficulties have been experienced by both students and teachers of second languages. One of the hardest classes for students to succeed in is listening comprehension. Fostering students' listening comprehension abilities and educating them to be active listeners is a difficult task for instructors of second languages. Nevertheless, Stripling (1996) emphasized listening is an active practice that encourages the learner to use active thinking while listening. Hence, Listening requires students to use both their language skills and prior knowledge to grasp what is being said.

### *Factors Affecting Listening Skills*

To assist children in improving their listening skills, we must first identify the positive factors that affect listening skills. Positive variables such as listening stages, listening tactics that promote listening comprehension, topical knowledge, and feedback during listening exercises can help students improve their listening abilities.

### *Strategies of Listening*

#### *Pre-Listening Stage*

Pre-listening is a phase of the listening process that serves as a warm-up and preparation phase (Karimi et al., 2019). Rajaei (2015) asserts that giving enough background to reflect what would be accessible in real life and inspiring motivation play the most crucial roles in the listening stage. In particular, Pre-listening activities are things students do before a listening activity to get ready for the listening, such as the teacher introducing the topic, students learning about the context beforehand, students debating the topic, students asking questions about the topic, students explaining difficult vocabulary, and students recognizing the meaning. Pre-listening so has a big impact on listening. Additionally, it is the phase of "while-listening stages" preparation.

### *While- Listening Stage*

While-listening activity is a step that teachers typically utilize during lesson instruction to assist students to build listening skills. During this stage, the teacher will explain the lesson and whether or not the student is understanding the topic, advise the student to take running notes while listening, and manage the speech delivery. The goal while listening is to deliver audio material intake with activities to learn to improve their listening skills.

### *Post- Listening*

The post-listening stage allows students to review their responses to what they have been listening to, provide comments, and solidify what they have learned. During this phase, student knowledge can be completed and improved through after-listening discussions. The post-listening stage also aids in other learning activities, such as speaking and writing the responses to the questions, by expanding on what the pupils had learned throughout the pre-listening and while-listening phases. The post-listening phase, therefore, plays a big role in listening comprehension.

### *Listening Strategies That Develop Student's Comprehension*

Listening strategies are tactics or activities that help people remember what they heard. (Renukadevi, 2014). Liubinienė (2009) states three main types of strategies, that is to say, metacognitive, cognitive, and social strategies, which will be explained in the following part.

#### *Cognitive strategies*

Liubinienė (2009) emphasizes that cognitive strategies change the information to be learned or apply a particular method to a listening job, such as elaboration, inference, visualization, summarization, contextualization, grouping, repetition, issue identification, hypothesis testing, translation, and forecasting. Additionally, cognitive strategies are distinct learning exercises that students utilize to comprehend language input and gain knowledge.

#### *Metacognitive strategies*

Metacognitive strategies are significant because they supervise, control, or manage the language acquisition process, which includes actions like planning, note-taking, transferring, resourcing, self-monitoring, assessment, selective attention, directed attention, and parsing. (Liubinienė, 2009). Metacognitive strategies are acts that students employ deliberately while actively listening to spoken material. Metacognitive techniques are concerned with learning about learning. It means that students learn how to learn by employing metacognitive tactics. Learners are involved in thinking about the process of learning while planning, monitoring, and assessing their learning with the support of this language learning technique, just like pre-task activities (Holden, 2004).

#### *Socio-effective strategies*

Social-affective strategies are tactics that learners use to learn by interacting with their peers and asking questions of their teachers to comprehend the unique subject or to erase or reduce

their worry (Holden, 2004). Additionally, socio-strategy refers to the methods that individuals employ to cooperate with others, to confirm comprehension, or to lesser as an emotional reprise, feedback, up to taking, clarifying, and effective management (Liubinienė, 2009).

### *Previous Studies*

Numerous research has been conducted to establish the factors that affect students' listening skills. These studies will assist us in better understanding the obstacles students confront throughout the listening process, analyzing the problems that create students' listening difficulties, and identifying reasons and solutions to assist learners in overcoming the problems.

Gulec and Durmus(2015) did a study using children's literature produced by elementary second-graders to look into how practices used via the usage of different approaches and techniques for building listening skills affected those practices. 23 second-grade students who participated in this study were the subjects. The study group received two hours per week of listening instruction for a total of twelve weeks after the pre-test was administered to everyone. They then completed the post-test. The pre-test and post-test achievement scores were used to evaluate the research findings. According to the study, the listening skills of second-grade kids in elementary school were improved through the application of various approaches and strategies for teaching listening skills using children's literature. Additionally, using the right literary materials helps students' listening skills.

The impact of using video materials on enhancing listening comprehension was looked at in Kim's (2015)study. A Korean university's summer session's 86 students were chosen to participate. Depending on their TOEIC test results, they were sorted into one of three groups: 29 students were placed in the low group, 29 students in the intermediate group, and 28 students in the advanced group. The same lessons were given to each group to learn using real video content. They lasted three weeks and were taught in ten sessions. All three level groups' students' listening skills were examined using the pre-test and post-test designs to see how the authentic video content affected them. The results demonstrate that in three experimental groups, employing video materials considerably enhanced students' listening abilities. However, the listening skills of the advanced and intermediate students improved significantly more than those of the low proficiency group.

Kirana (2016) carried out a study at SMPN 15 Lamjame, Banda Aceh, with second-year (year VIII) students to look into the impact of audiovisual media (AVM) on teaching listening skills. Two groups of participants were formed (an experimental group and a control group). Additionally, both groups received pre- and post-tests before and after the aforementioned therapy procedure. The results demonstrated that utilizing AVM enhanced certain parts of hearing abilities. Additionally, using AVM rather than the conventional approach of teaching listening to Grade VIII ESL students may enhance their listening skills.

A study was conducted by Lokanita et al. (2020) to assess the effectiveness of using video as a teaching tool to enhance students' listening abilities. To determine how video affects listening abilities, 5 prior research materials that were obtained for this study were the focus of a content

analysis research design. 166 students participated in total from those 5 research documents. The findings from five different types of research showed that using video as a teaching tool significantly enhanced students' listening abilities. Additionally, it was stated that using video was a beneficial method because it increased student engagement and enthusiasm, made studying more enjoyable, and attracted more students' attention.

Salsabila et al. (2021) conducted studies to determine whether Georgina's podcast may help pupils' listening abilities. Twenty pupils in the tenth grade took part in this investigation. A test and a questionnaire were the tools employed in this study. It was discovered that utilizing the Spotify app as a tool that concentrated on listening to Georgina's method was an efficient technique to improve students' listening skills.

To improve the students' listening comprehension, Hermansyah and Hasan (2020) focussed on the effects of English films. The courses were taken by 20 SMPN 1 Maiwa students. Data gathering procedures and questionnaires were used to acquire the data. After finishing the pre-test, the participants were required to complete the post-test as well as a questionnaire to find out more about their perspectives on watching English-language movies. The results of the study demonstrated that students' listening skills were greatly enhanced by watching English movies.

Additionally, Syafii et al. (2020) created an investigation to look into how games might improve students' listening abilities at Ponorogo's Muhammadiyah University Faculty of Economics. 39 Management majors in the second semester were selected to participate in this study. This study was conducted using classroom action research, which was modeled after the approach taken by Echeverra et al. (2011). This method consisted of four parts for each cycle: (1) planning, (2) implementing, (3) observing, and (4) reflecting. The devices utilized to gather the data were questionnaires, hearing tests, and an observation checklist. The collected data was ultimately evaluated to get the outcome. The results demonstrate that playing games help pupils' listening abilities greatly.

The aforementioned articles often mention technology as a useful tool for assisting students in honing their listening skills. Nguyen and Pham (2022) assert that technological devices are a powerful tool for students to study anything they wish, especially English. In the same vein, Tu (2022) believes that educational technology, particularly technological tools, is utilized in teaching and learning English to enable learners to know more actively and successfully; also encourages instructors' teaching processes to be more active, proactive, and innovative. There appear to have been many studies discussing the effects of technology on acquiring listening skills, hence the purpose of this study was to determine whether other factors might increase learners' listening skills.

### Research Questions

The survey was designed to provide information that would enable the study to achieve its objectives:

1. What are the factors affecting young learners 'listening skills at a foreign language center in Tra Vinh Province?
2. What are the effects of students' awareness on developing listening skills?

## Methods

### *Participants*

25 young students studying English at a language school in Tra Vinh Province, aged 12 to 15, make up the study's participants.

### *Design of the Study*

Questionnaires were used as the primary research tools to gather the data for this study. 12 items about the variables influencing pupils' listening skills were included in the questionnaires. 12 items divided into 3 main clusters

Cluster 1: Effects of students' awareness to support students in developing listening skills (items 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,11)

Cluster 2: Effects of technology to support students in developing listening skills (items 9,10)

Cluster 3: Effects of English outside the class to support students in developing listening skills (item 12)

### *Data collection & analysis*

The questionnaires were designed in English for students. 25 questionnaires were delivered to 12-15-year-old learners of an evening class at a foreign language center in Tra Vinh Province fifteen minutes before the class began. The researchers explained clearly the aims of administering the questionnaires to find the factors affecting their listening skills. Then the researchers instructed the students to complete it. Finally, the completed questionnaires were collected. Using SPSS 22, the quantitative data from the questionnaires were examined. Frequency-based descriptive statistics were utilized to address the study issues.

## Results/Findings and discussion

A group of 25 students completed the questionnaire. All the data selected from the questionnaires were computed to check the frequency and the intentional reliability coefficient. The result showed that the questionnaire in this research was reliable with a significantly moderate table.

**Table 1:** Test Descriptive Statistics

Task 1:	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Factors mean	25	3.4733	.30307	.06061

**Table 2:** Test Mean Differences

	Test Value = 4					
	Task 2: t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Factors mean	-8.689	24	.000	-.52667	-.6518	-.4016

Firstly, One-Sample Statistics was run to determine the mean score of some factors affecting listening skills. The overall mean score was illustrated in table 1 and table 2. The test is significant,  $t(24)$ ,  $\text{sig} = 0.00$ .  $\text{Sig}(0.00) > 0.05$  Because the value is greater than 0.5. Therefore, the result of this questionnaire was accepted.

**Table 3:** Effects of Student's awareness, Technology tools, and English outside the class in developing listening skills

Task 3:	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. You make yourself prepared for the listening subject.	25	2.00	5.00	3.7200	.73711
2. You listen attentively to the lecture (to improve your listening skills).	25	2.00	5.00	3.2400	1.01160
3. You actively participate in the discussion, answering exercises and /or clarifying things you did not understand.	25	2.00	5.00	3.8800	1.01325
4. You want to get good grades on tests, quizzes, assignments, and projects.	25	2.00	5.00	3.4000	1.00000
5. You do your assignments.	25	1.00	5.00	3.3600	1.22066
6. You exert more effort when you do difficult assignments.	25	1.00	5.00	3.0400	1.01980
7. You study harder to improve your listening tests when you get low grades.	25	2.00	5.00	3.4800	.91833
8. You practice listening at home.	25	2.00	5.00	3.1600	.85049
9. You spend time listening to English news /fairy tale stories /songs on the radio or the Internet.	25	2.00	5.00	3.6800	1.06927
10. You go to the movies (watch English movies).	25	1.00	5.00	3.5200	1.15902
11. You spend time learning new words and practicing their pronunciation.	25	2.00	5.00	3.6000	1.00000
12. You participate in learning English outside the official school hours (study at a language center, etc.)	25	2.00	5.00	3.6000	1.08012
Valid N (listwise)	25				

The result from the table indicated the main three elements most significant in the research were

respectively (3) You actively participate in the discussion, answering exercises and /or clarifying things you did not understand (M=3.8800, SD=1.01325); (1) You make yourself prepared for the listening subject (M= 3.7200, SD= .73711) and (9) You spend time listening to English news /fairy tale stories /songs on the radio or the Internet (M= 3.6800, SD=1.00000). It is clear from the mean score that the participants usually practice listening in English according to some elements above. Those ways can indeed help youngsters improve their listening performance.

On the other hand, there are some factors that the participants rarely use as good methods to practice their listening skills such as (6) You exert more effort when you do difficult assignments (M=3.0400, SD=1.01980; (8) You practice listening at home (M=3.160, SD= .85049); (2) You listen attentively to the lecture (to improve listening skills (M= 3.2400, SD=1.01160).

*Research Question 1:* What are the factors affecting young learners 'listening skills at a foreign language center in Tra Vinh Province?

Based on the research results, the students believe that there are three main factors affecting their listening skills including Students' awareness, Technology, and English outside the classroom.

#### *Students' awareness*

According to the research results, the items related to students' cognition are highly appreciated, which include two main items, respectively. (3) You actively participate in the discussion, answering exercises and /or clarifying things you did not understand (M=3.8800, SD=1.01325); (1) You make yourself prepared for the listening subject (M= 3.7200, SD= .73711). In general, students' awareness is a crucial factor in helping learners encourage themselves to study and develop their listening skills.

#### *Technology tools*

Some students believe that technology tools are important factors to help them practice their listening skills. It can be seen that item (9) You spend time listening to English news /fairy tale stories /songs on the radio or the Internet (M= 3.6800, SD=1.00000).

#### *English outside the class*

In table 3, many students also believe that English outside the class is also a good factor that can help them in the process of listening practice (12) You participate in learning English outside the official school hours (study at a language center, etc.), (M=3.6000, SD=1.08012).

*Research Question 2:* What are the effects of students' awareness on developing listening skills?

In summary, the research results show that students' awareness plays an important role in motivating them to improve their listening skills. When students make efforts, it will create good learning motivation. Thus, students' awareness will enable them to (1) make themselves prepared for the listening subject, (2) listen attentively to the lecture (to improve their listening



skills ),(3) actively participate in the discussion, answering exercises, and /or clarifying things you did not understand, (4)You want to get good grades on tests, quizzes, assignments, and projects,(5) You do your assignments,(6) You exert more effort when you do difficult assignments,(7) You study harder to improve your listening tests when you get low grades,(8) You practice listening at home,(11) You spend time learning new words and practicing their pronunciation.

## Discussion

Research findings indicate that three positive factors (Students' awareness, Technology Tools, and English Outside the Classroom) contribute significantly to language learning in general, especially with the development of students' listening skills. First, students' awareness will help to learn self-control and promote self-development. This finding is consistent with the study of researchers (Rinkevičienė & Zdanytė, 2002), who consider that students' awareness is a positive aspect that assisted students to create a clear and conscious attitude toward their learning objectives, styles, and preferred techniques as well as to extend their learning potential through a diverse range of new learning tactics. Second, using technology in the classroom is a powerful way to involve students and improve their learning. M. T. Pham et al. (2022) assert that technology is an essential tool that was created to address unmet educational demands. In line with this, Pham (2022) states that using technology is particularly important because it may help students learn more actively, inspire them to care about what they are learning, pay more attention to classes, and absorb information more effectively. Moreover, N. T. T. Nguyen (2021) believes that Technology has made it possible for people to access a variety of media kinds that are useful for foreign language instruction and learning for both students and teachers. This author also further explains that students now have easy access to knowledge thanks to social media, which also allows them to easily search for and communicate with others via video chat or even voice calls. Finally, English outside the classroom is an intriguing option for students. Sultana (2014) asserts that many students spent significant time outside of the classroom learning and practicing English; much of this time was spent on more receptive activities such as listening and reading, rather than speaking.

To sum up, it can be seen that previous studies have shown that external variables such as technological tools (books, video documentaries, English movies, etc.) help learners strengthen their listening skills. Furthermore, this study shows that students' awareness is also an important aspect to help children develop listening skills. In addition, English outside the class is necessary for students to develop listening skills.

## Conclusion

According to the research results, there are three main factors (Students' awareness, Technology Tools, and English Outside the Classroom) that are included to help 12-15-year-old students develop listening skills at a center. foreign languages in Tra Vinh province. If students want to improve their English listening skills, they can use the positive elements given in the questionnaire as a good tip. Which, students' awareness is considered the most important factor to contribute to the success of listening skills, so students need to try to create their study habits,

and build a positive sense of learning to improve listening skills. In addition, technology tools should be used as an effective means of learning, however, it is necessary to choose appropriate learning content and reasonable time when using technology tools. In addition, English outside of class time (studying at a foreign language center, etc.) is also an option worth considering. In summary, choosing an effective and appropriate learning method depends on each individual, in which three factors as Students' awareness, Technology tools, and English outside the class are considered optimal choices.

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