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(IJEPC)**www.ijepe.com**EXPLORING THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF LISTENING
SELF-EFFICACY IN THE CONTEXT OF LISTENING TEST AND
REAL-LIFE COMMUNICATION**Nur Anneliza Abd Latip¹, Iziana Hani Ismail^{2*}, Wardatul Akmam Din³, Suyansah Swanto⁴¹ Preparatory Centre for Science and Technology, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia
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This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

The nature of listening is less visible compared to other skills such as speaking and writing. This might be challenging for teacher and students to monitor their proficiency progress and further make students become demotivated. Listening self-efficacy is one of the most important constructs to accentuate listening comprehension. Listening self-efficacy related to students' belief in executing the task to produce the desired outcome. This study was conducted among science foundation students from Preparatory Centre for Science and Technology, Universiti Malaysia Sabah. The participants are from 2020/2021 enrolment. The study employs qualitative method where eighteen students were interviewed to answer questions that are adapted from English Listening Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (ELSEQ). Analysis of interview shows that there were five aspects that facilitated students' listening self-efficacy which are repetition, language proficiency and deliverance of a speaker, listening setting, non-verbal communication and first language. Delving into listening self-efficacy will shed the light on the importance of listening skill not only in language testing but also in real-life communication. This will hope to further improve their listening comprehension throughout their tertiary education.

Keywords:

Listening Skill, Listening Self-Efficacy, Listening Test

Introduction

Teaching listening is underrated compared to other skills. Listening practice in the classroom may focus on outcome-oriented rather than the process (Krivosheyeva, Zuparova & Shodiyeva, 2020). According to Vandergrift and Goh (2012), listening activities are prone to focus on the outcome of listening where they were asked to record the details of the spoken text. In addition, learners are scrutinised to show what they have understood instead of what they listened to, making them feel anxious. In Malaysia, an overall analysis by the Malaysian Examinations Council (MEC) in 2020 shows that listening result in Session 1 has the highest band 1 achievement compared to other skills as shown in Table 1.1. This worrying trend continued to happen in Session 2 as shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.1 MUET Session 1 2020 Overall Performance

BAND	800/1 Listening (%)	800/2 Speaking (%)	800/3 Reading (%)	800/4 Writing (%)
6	1.61	0.17	0.18	0.00
5	11.92	3.81	3.57	0.17
4	24.63	25.27	20.12	2.79
3	18.99	50.63	43.84	35.06
2	24.52	18.35	28.13	56.13
1	18.32	1.77	4.16	5.85

Total number of candidates: 41 381

Source: Majlis Peperiksaan Malaysia (2020)

Table 1.2: MUET Session 2 2020 Overall Performance

BAND	800/1 Listening (%)	800/2 Speaking (%)	800/3 Reading (%)	800/4 Writing (%)
6	0.91	0.20	1.26	0.01
5	10.07	4.24	11.66	0.73
4	21.90	24.80	24.89	9.16
3	17.37	47.75	32.67	50.91
2	24.55	20.46	24.72	34.74
1	25.21	2.55	4.80	4.45

Total number of candidates: 74 188

Source: Majlis Peperiksaan Malaysia (2020)

Many language experts and researchers emphasised the crucial awareness and intervention to accentuate learning comprehension. They have come to the consensus that effective listening needs to be nurtured and improved (Mendelsohn, 1994). Effective listening also depends on learners' self-efficacy for listening, and on their confidence in their ability to make sense of the input to which they are exposed. The role of self-efficacy in listening in a variety of learning contexts is vital in its development and central to effective listening (Graham, 2011). The construct in this study is self-efficacy beliefs which are related to learners' explanations whether consciously or subconsciously, for how well they have performed on certain tasks (Hsieh & Schallert, 2008). Subsequently, research on affective factors and motivation shows that other internal factors like the internal feeling of confidence can affect learning achievement. The present study aims at finding answers to the following questions:

- i. What are the perceptions of pre-university students on English listening self-efficacy in MUET listening?
- ii. What are the perceptions of pre-university students on English listening self-efficacy in real-life communication?

Literature Review

Bowen, Madsen, and Hilferty (1985) defined listening as understanding the oral language. Listening is also the ability to recognise and understand what others are telling (Hamouda, 2013). The listening process involves receiving, making, and showing meaning, negotiating meaning with the speaker, and answering to spoken or nonverbal messages (Gilakjani, 2016; Purdy, 1997). Furthermore, we are also understanding a speaker's pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary (Gilakjani, 2016). It is also said that listening involves auditory discrimination, classifying them into lexical and syntactic units, aural grammar, selecting necessary information, remembering it, and connecting it to the process between sound and form of meaning (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

Listening comprehension needs more concentration, quick understanding and involved a lot of factors (Gilakjani, 2016). Boyle (1984) divided factors that influence listening into three which are listener, speaker and material. Listeners' factors such as age, educational background, schemata and motivation may help them in comprehending the listening activities (Yildiz & Albay, 2015). Speakers' factors such as pronunciation, delivery speed, and accent of the speaker influences comprehension and motivation of students (Yildiz & Albay, 2015). The choice of listening materials is also important because it will draw the attention of students. Materials that are organised, compatible and interesting will be beneficial (Yildiz & Albay, 2015). In terms of listening comprehension, there are a few factors affecting listening comprehension such as linguistic knowledge discourse knowledge, pragmatic knowledge, metacognitive knowledge, prior knowledge, first language listening ability, sound discrimination ability, and working memory capacity (Imhof & Janusik, 2006). This success also includes affective factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-efficacy (Imhof & Janusik, 2006).

Listening Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as the “students’ beliefs in their capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce desired achievements and it is held to have a strong influence on determination” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3; Graham, 2011). Listeners with a low self-efficacy lack confidence in their listening ability and will hesitate to participate in listening activities for fear of revealing their inadequacies (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012, p. 71). They often feel like improving listening involves factors that are not within their control.

Studies show that self-efficacy has significant impact on learning outcomes, where stronger sense of self-efficacy found to lead to higher levels of achievement, a greater willingness in facing challenges and making effort (Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2006). Self-efficacy beliefs also related to learners’ attributions - the explanations that individuals give, consciously or sub-consciously, for how well they have performed on certain tasks (Hsieh & Schallert, 2008). The level of ‘control’ inherent in different types of attribution is important in determining whether their influence is positive or negative regarding motivation and persistence (Hsieh & Schallert, 2008).

In ESL listening skill, Graham (2006) stated that low self-efficacy is more severe as it is difficult to physically observe it compared to other skills. Subsequently, in a listening activity, learners have the opportunity to rewind the recordings, but this could be different when they enter the real-world especially in the university setting. There, the listener has minimal control over the input and cannot repeat the sections that were not understood or pause if the speech is too fast (Graham, 2011).

Methodology

In consideration of the aim of this study, a qualitative approach was used to answer the research question. There were 18 participants from Preparatory Centre for Science and Technology (PPST) involved in this study. The participants are from 2020/2021 enrolment.

The type of sampling used in this study was purposeful sampling. It was carried out to investigate the central issue of listening comprehension with more depth where more information can be explored from individuals or groups for better comprehension of the occurrence in the research (Klassen, Creswell, Clark, Smith & Meissner, 2012). The number of participants was decided when data saturation was achieved. These participants are homogeneous in a few ways as they share similar characteristics and they are part of the sample, and the target population. All the participants were between 18 to 19 years old and at least have 11 years of formal education with the English language as a compulsory subject in school. Participants have taken a summative examination of SPM.

The questions were taken from the English Listening Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (ELSEQ). The questions were asked concerning real-life context stated in the ELSEQ, and Malaysian University English Test (MUET) Listening. The interview was done in a group of 3 to 4 students. The interview was done approximately in 20 minutes for each group.

Data Coding and Analysis

The data transcription was carried out manually. The transcribed data were coded for identification using Quirkos. A thematic approach or the conventional content analysis approach of coding was employed. The unit of analysis for the coding included words, phrases,

and sentences. Since the study concerned learners' opinions and reasons, the linguistic elements of their spoken language were not coded as they were not the focus of the study. Thematic analysis was used in this study. It is a method for identifying patterns of meaning

across a dataset in relation to a research question. This study was concerned on theoretical thematic analysis where analysis is guided by an existing theory and theoretical concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Table 1.3 shows the thematic analysis stages in a qualitative study (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 202).

Findings

Students' Perception on Listening Self-Efficacy

Students' listening self-efficacy in a different context was facilitated by a few aspects. The first three aspects were related to MUET listening and the other two aspects involved informal setting. Firstly, repetition when listening improved the self-efficacy of listening skill. Secondly, the role of language proficiency and deliverance of a speaker where fluent speaker is easier to understand due to the clear pronunciation compared to speakers with grammatical errors and heavy accent. Thirdly, the listening setting that they are in contributes to the comprehension of the listener. The last two aspects are non-verbal communication and first language assistance.

Students listening self-efficacy in a different context was facilitated by a few aspects. Firstly, repetition when listening improved the self-efficacy of listening skill. In the MUET listening test, each of the audio is repeated twice. This repetition helps them to check and confirm the information again. Listening to the second play reduces anxiety when answering the test. Apart from repetition in the MUET listening test, students also discussed repetition of audio in real-life situations as this is the most discussed response by students. Whenever, the listeners have trouble listening to announcements or conversations, they relied on repetitions of the audio. In regards to the situation, repetition when listening is always helpful and improves overall comprehension. In a non-formal setting such as listening to a conversation in a small room or house or a crowded place such as the airport or shopping mall, students often seek repetition for clarity. Whereas, in a more formal setting such as listening to a lecture or in a medical appointment, one should not hesitate to ask for repetition to get clarification and confirmation. Table 1.3 shows students' responses to repetition while listening.

Table 1.3: Students' Responses to Repetition

Student	Feedback
2	I understand because there is repetition.
4	I understand the conversation when speaking with family members even in another part of the house due to the yelling and repetition.
1	If I am able to catch up a conversation in that noisy situation, then it will be easy. If not, I will also ask for many repetitions until I can hear clearly.

5	Just go on with the conversation even with continuous background noise. I ask for repetition to understand better.
3	I have experienced medical appointment where the doctor speaks in English. It's easier to understand in English. If I don't understand, I ask for repetition
6	I can understand an announcement over a loudspeaker such as in stadium, shopping mall or airport because there is always repetition.
8	Sometimes, I am unable to understand. I only get it after hearing the announcement for the second times, for example when I'm in a mosque.

Secondly, the language proficiency and deliverance of a speaker has a role in the listening self-efficacy. Fluent speaker is easier to understand due to the clear pronunciation compared to speakers with grammatical errors and accent. In MUET listening test, the speaker usually speaks fluently with the right intonation. Students can clearly hear the pronunciation. When asked whether they understand a listening audio spoken by a female or male, the students claimed that gender doesn't matter. Nevertheless, it is difficult to comprehend when the speaker has accent. Furthermore, simple sentences without jargon are also important. Speaker who explains the content very well will make listening becomes easier. Explanation should not be complicated and use simple language. Moreover, in a lecture setting, clarity is vital in listening and understanding. These responses arise when students were asked how well they understand a listening audio of casual conversation like having conversation with their lecturers or family members. They were also asked whether they understand when listening to medical talk or watching a television show. From a familiar context to a formal talk, these three different situations brought different experience to the students. Table 1.4 shows students' responses to language proficiency and deliverance of the speaker.

Table 1.4: Students' Responses to Language Proficiency and Deliverance of The Speaker

Student	Feedback
7	If there is like a very new word with heavy accent, it will be difficult.
4	For my experience, the thing that I hate about listening is the accent. It bothers me a lot. I think about it a lot.
9	For me it depends, because I find it really easy listening to people. But sometimes it is difficult to listen to someone with strong accent
5	Listening is challenging. If there is like a very new word with heavy accent, it is difficult. Listening also cannot be rewinded so many times.

3	My understanding depends on the fluency of the speaker.
12	For me, gender doesn't play any role. The speaker must speak clearly.
10	A correct intonation helps me to understand a conversation better.
1	There is no difference in understanding between different genders.
11	My understanding is not based on gender but the presentation skill. The gender does not affect the effectiveness.
13	The factors that make me understand a lecture are correct use of English, grammatically correct, loud and clear voice and ideas were conveyed concisely.
14	A lecturer should be straight to the points and not explain things complicatedly.
5	A content or analogy should be simple not confusing. Interaction helps to understand.
2	I understand a family member speaking basic English. Have been to medical appointment where doctors speak in English but quite difficult to understand due to medical terms.

Thirdly, the listening setting that they are in contributes to the comprehension of the listener. Students feel more confident and at ease when listening in a quiet place. If the MUET listening test happened smoothly, they feel confident to listen and understand the audio. The close distance also helps the listener to understand better. An exam room that is too big with poor audio system gives them the anxiety when taking the test. Often, a hall will produce echo and students who are sitting far from the speaker will have trouble listening. A conducive exam place is essential in giving confidence to answer the test. Whereas in a more casual setting, if they cannot hear properly, they will stop the conversation and changed place. Table 1.5 shows students' responses to language proficiency and deliverance of the speaker.

Table 1.5: Students' Responses to Listening Setting

Student	Feedback
15	I understand better in small room because in lecture room (big), the audio is echoing.
10	Due to the small number of students. Voice projection in a small room is clearer. It is difficult to focus in a lecture room. Seating arrangement in lecture hall affects your hearing and understanding
1	It's difficult when you can still hear others voices next door.
16	If I answer a phone call in a noisy place, I will go to different place to hear better.

Fourthly, non-verbal communication such as expression, eye contact, and body language play important role in comprehending conversation. This is one of the missing aspects of any listening test. It is impossible to have these aspects in any listening test. Despite that, it is worth highlighting this as it is also helping the students, especially in a non-formal setting. Students feel confident understanding a conversation when they can observe the speakers' faces and make eye contact. Relying on voice solely makes them lose the confidence and interest to continue the listening process. Table 1.6 shows students' responses to language proficiency and the deliverance of the speaker.

Table 1.6: Students' Responses to Non-Verbal Communicative Ability

Student	Feedback
12	I am not confident if unable to look at the speaker's face.
1	It is very important to look at the speaker's face. Facial expression and body gesture help understand a conversation.
6	The body language helps understand a conversation.
17	Expression like sad or happy, micro expression determine the aura of the person.
18	It is difficult to hear if not seeing the mouth's movement and facial expression.
9	A conversation becomes easier when you have eye contact.
8	It is difficult to understand without seeing facial expression.
7	It is difficult to understand because she cannot see the mouth's movement.
14	I feel like being ignored without face to face and eye contact.

Finally, first language assistance helps student in their study and every day's task. This is another aspect that is not available during MUET listening test. But from the responses, it is vital to highlight this as it also helps the student in improving their self-efficacy and comprehension. The participants of this study are mostly students who were using Bahasa Malaysia to study science subjects in secondary school. They used to speak to the teacher and read the references in Bahasa Malaysia. Hence, transitioning to fully English in lecture may takes sometimes. There is a need to translate the information that they hear in a lecture. Furthermore, most of the students' family members were speaking in their mother tongue such as Malay, Murut, Dusun and Chinese. Whereas in a situation like watching a television show or a movie, listening to the dialogues by the actors could be difficult due to the accent and pace of speech. But with the help of mother tongue, students can understand better. Table 1.7 shows students' responses to non-verbal communicative ability.

Table 1.7: Students' Responses to Non-Verbal Communicative Ability

Student	Feedback
14	I need to translate in lecture. But in listening test it's impossible to translate.
8	Yes, for listening, it's impossible to mentally translate. The duration is too short. For lecture, sometimes I translate to Bahasa Melayu. Because we were taught in Malay.
16	Sometimes I translate. In lecture I translate because I find it hard to understand because there are new terms. I learn in Malay when I was in middle school. At first, I translate everything. After a while I stopped translating. Because I gradually understand.
4	I mostly never translate when listening to my science lectures. But when watching English movie, I might translate fairly.
15	I understand television show with English subtitle, in order to catch up with the conversation.
11	I use English subtitle to understand. Sometimes used the dubbed version to understand better. Download English subtitle to help understand the terms.
13	I do not use subtitle unless it's hard to follow the show such as accent too difficult to understand.
3	Action movie is difficult to understand because the actors talk very fast. I cannot catch up.
10	It depends on what kind of television show. If the show has accent or fast pace then subtitle is needed.

Discussion

Listening self-efficacy were group into few aspects. The first three aspects which are repetition, speakers' deliverance and fluency and listening setting were related to MUET. While the other two aspects which are non-communicative ability and first language assistance and were towards informal context.

Firstly, repetition improved the self-efficacy of listening skill. Number of previous studies emphasised that repetition play a greater role in making input comprehensible and effective in facilitating listening comprehension (Cervantes, 1983; Cervantes & Gainer, 1992; Sakai, 2009). It increases redundancy of the input, allow learners to check their comprehension, which

may lead to different degree of understanding (Sakai, 2009). This is also consistent with study by Sendag, Gedik and Toker (2018) among Turkish pre-service EFL teachers where it underlines factors that were perceived as facilitating attention in listening comprehension which are repeated listening, use of earphones, and the videotaping of listening sessions. Repetition also effective irrespective to students' proficiency level (Iimura, 2007; Sakai, 2009). However, Chang and Read (2006) examination of listening supports among students enrolled in a required English listening course at a college in Taiwan particularly on questions preview, input repetition shows that only high proficiency level students benefit from it.

Secondly, the role of language proficiency and deliverance of a speaker is important where fluent speaker is easier to understand due to the clear pronunciation compared to speakers with grammatical errors and heavy accent. However, this is in contrast with the study by Tauroza and Luk (1997), as different but familiar accents is only a secondary issue compared to the degree of listening exposure they had and should not be a problem for ESL listener. What if MUET were to include accent associated with Malaysian mother tongue such as Malay, Mandarin or Tamil? Is it going to be helpful and more ideal for our students? Degree of accent familiarity may also not have important effect in listening comprehension (Yildiz, 2017) and including "non-standard" accented speech gives possibility of additional difficulty for listeners and "there is potential for biasness where listeners who share a speaker's first language are advantaged over others when listening to that speaker" (Harding, 2008, p.3). "However, speaker accent was perceived as more salient among higher proficiency learners, while lower proficiency learners expressed difficulty with other elements such as speech rate and vocabulary" (Harding, 2008, p.27). Thus, speaker's accent may not play a significant role in comprehending listening texts, unlike what students believe (Yildiz, 2017).

Thirdly, the listening setting that they are in contributes to the comprehension of the listener. Students feel more confident and at ease when listening in a quiet place or taking the listening test in a conducive surrounding. A study by Mat, Sulaiman, Din, Noor, Ibrahim and Sunnah (2017) explores the ideal condition of the listening setting as good sound quality is the essence of understanding the speech in listening task. Hence, it is a very significant part to reduce echo in having listening task of learning a second language and suggested sound intensity to be between 80 to 100 db. A literature review method by Klink, Schulte and Meis, (2012) stated that an increase in the level of late reverberation in a listening room increased listening difficulty and suggested that the use of hearing aids to improve listening effort. Reverberation happened when sound is reflecting causing many reflections to build up, and then decay as the sound is observed by the surfaces of the room (Mat et al., 2017). According to Smith (2002), to reduce echo in a listening room, several things can be done such as hanging wall arts, adding tall furniture, and installing carpet on the floors.

The last two aspects are non-verbal communication and first language assistance. These two aspects are not available during the listening test but are highlighted in this study since it facilitates students' comprehension in non-assessment and informal settings. Non-verbal communication such as expression, eye contact, and body language help in comprehending

conversation in real-life situations and more researchers are more aware and interested in the role of non-verbal communication in listening comprehension (Wagner, 2006). Adding a preview to a video (Wagner, 2006) or a combination of sound and text (Diao, Chandler & Sweller, 2007) may improve listening performance. Furthermore, video is a very suitable and

appropriate tool accompanied by different types of tasks for teaching and improving listening comprehension skills since the setting, action, emotions, gestures can be perceived in a video clip, allowing a central visual motivation for language production and practice (Sarani, Behtash & Arani, 2014). A study by Woottipong (2014) among first-year English major students in the second semester of the academic year 2012 at Thaksin University, Thailand used video materials keyword preview to develop listening comprehension seemed to be effective in motivating students to learn English. The preview makes it easier for them to remember and understand the vocabulary in the video that they had previously taught in the pre-listening stage. A pre-listening stage should be emphasised and practiced in the classroom as it outlines the listening text and familiarising cultural key concepts (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). However, a study by Wagner (2010) shows two sides of reaction from students regarding using video in the listening test, which would seem to lower test-taker anxiety, increase interest in the test tasks, and help focus test-takers attention. Another possible interpretation is that students might be distracted in the process. This does also not mirror real-life situation where a written presentation, subtitle or preview is not always available when listening (Diao, Chandler & Sweller, 2007).

Another aspect that is missing from listening test but underlined as helpful in students' daily activities is first language assistance. Students claimed that sometimes there is a need to translate what they have listened in lecture to improve their comprehension. Spontaneous translation of L2 to L1 happen in lecture where students simplify the input and may help the listening comprehension itself (Koren, 1997). Certain note-taking method such as Cornell and concept mapping helps in promoting the student's achievement test on listening comprehension (Hayati & Jalilifar, 2009). Although notetaking is not heavily emphasised in MUET test due to time constraint, this activity is still important especially when students are doing their degree study. Working hand in hand, sounds echoing in the mind and notes written down on paper find their way to enhance literacy in a broader perspective (Tsai & Wu, 2010).

Implications and Conclusion

Students need to reflect on their listening self-efficacy to develop their performance, not only in MUET test but also listening to lecture during their degree studies in general. On the other hand, language instructors involved also need to use the potential for learning inherent in every student and identify if students are facing low self-efficacy when learning so that students can be helped with appropriate intervention. Studying in their degree courses will require students to listen to variety of context in a more challenging environment. Thus, listening skill must be explored as it is one of the fundamental parts in comprehending knowledge. It is crucial for students' overall academic success. The finding concerning the listening self-efficacy and metacognitive awareness among pre-university students is significant to prepare them for their degree study (Selamat & Sidhu, 2011). Listening self-efficacy may boost their confidence to successfully listen in a test or lectures as most of the lectures conducted in university in Malaysia used English language. Exploring self-efficacy in listening not only crucial to improve their MUET listening achievement but also as a life-long learning skill. In-depth exploration of listening activities and test being conducted in class by interviewing teachers

and instructors of MUET could be done to further this study. Findings from that could explore the gaps between teaching instruction and test specifications.

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