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LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN ACADEMIA: THE CASE OF THE LISTENING COURSE IN LICENCE1 ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT UNIVERSITY JULIUS NYERERE OF KANKAN

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Résumé

L'une des compétences les plus cruciales dans l'apprentissage de l'anglais est l'écoute. Les étudiants éprouvent de nombreuses difficultés auditives lorsqu'ils apprennent l'anglais. Parce que l'écriture, la lecture et le vocabulaire sont de plus en plus pris en compte dans les lycées et les centres de formation, les étudiants rencontrent de sérieuses difficultés avec la compréhension orale dans les universités ; en particulier, à l'Université Julius Nyerere de Kankan les étudiants de la Licence 1 du département d'Anglais et la majorité des professeurs ne se focalisent pas sur cette compétence cruciale. Cet article examine les difficultés rencontrées par les étudiants dans l'apprentissage de l'écoute, l'importance de l'écoute dans le processus d'apprentissage, et la relation entre l'écoute et le patriotisme. Les participants à cette recherche sont des étudiants de la Licence 1 du Département d'anglais. Ils ont été choisis au hasard. L'étude a adopté à la fois les méthodes quantitative et qualitative. Les résultats numériques du questionnaire sur les difficultés auditives des étudiants ont été obtenus à l'aide d'une technique quantitative et les facteurs qui influencent la difficulté auditive des étudiants sont étudiés en utilisant l'approche qualitative. Les résultats de l'étude montrent que les difficultés liées à la compréhension orale comprennent le manque de vocabulaire, la concentration, l'accent de la langue, l'intérêt de l'Anglais, la prononciation, la rapidité des enseignants pendant les cours, la connaissance des mots contractés, et le manque de confiance en soi. Les variables qui contribuent à ces difficultés comprennent les connaissances préalables des étudiants, le manque de pratique et les facteurs environnementaux.

Mots clés : difficultés, écoute, motivation, patriotisme, prononciation.

Abstract

One of the most crucial abilities in learning English is listening. Students have many difficulties when learning the English language. Because writing, reading, and vocabulary are given more consideration in high schools and training centers, students struggle greatly with listening comprehension at universities. Specifically, at the University Julius Nyerere of Kankan, the Licence 1 students from the English department and the majority of lecturers do not focus on this crucial skill in their classrooms. This article investigates the difficulties encountered by students while learning Listening and the importance of Listening in the learning process and the relationship between Listening and Patriotism. The participants of this research are the students from Licence 1 English department. They were chosen randomly. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The numerical results from the questionnaire describe students' hearing difficulties and the factors influencing students' listening difficulties were investigated using the interview and observation techniques. The findings show that students' difficulties with listening comprehension include the lack of vocabulary,

concentration, language accent, students' interest in English, pronunciation, lecturers' speed while lecturing, understanding of contracted words, and lack of self-confidence. Regarding the contributing variables to those difficulties, they included the students' prior knowledge, their lack of practice, and the environmental factors.

Key words : difficulties, listening, motivation, patriotism, pronunciation.

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Introduction

The University Julius Nyerere of Kankan (UJNK) is a public institution of higher education, founded in 1962 under the name Institut Polytechnique de Kankan (IPK). It became a university in 1989. It has four (4) Faculties and a Directorate, 11 departments and 20 programs. In 2001, in the Faculty of Languages and Arts, the university's English language department was created.

One of the four primary English language skills is listening, a crucial component of efficient communication. It is important to think about the role that listening plays in language learning since without listening, learners would have less input in terms of new concepts. In this respect, Rost (1994) summarizes the value of listening in the study of second and foreign languages. Rost asserts that listening is essential in language classes since it gives students input. No learning can start if the information is not understood at the proper level. Thus, listening is crucial for the growth of spoken language competency as well as for receptive skills. The most fundamental component of language development and communication abilities is listening, which is one of the four main language skills. It is clear that before they start to speak, youngsters listen and react to language. Children still need to listen when it comes for them to learn how to read in order to acquire the knowledge and information needed to follow instructions.

While speaking and writing are extremely important skill in business, they are not used the most often. In most business situations, we listen more than we read, write, or speak (Pamela A. Angell, 2007, p. 88-89).

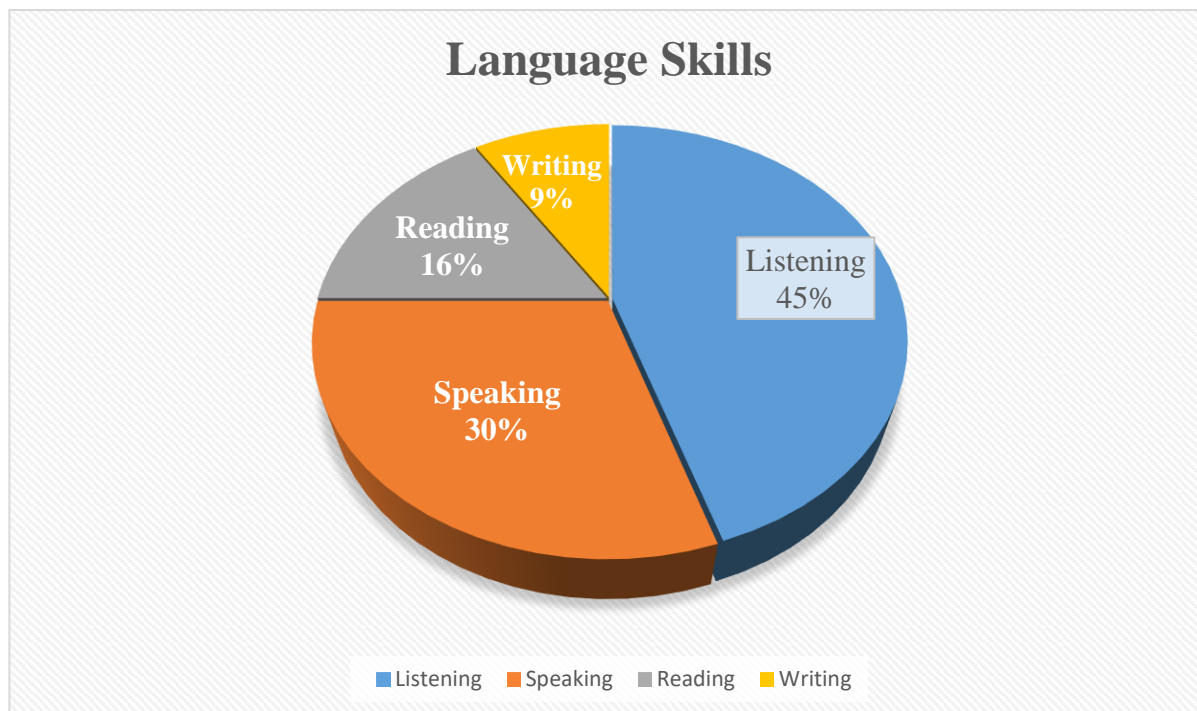


Figure 2-2 source: Pamela A. Angell (2007)

This figure shows clearly that 45% of what we learn comes from listening, 30% of what we learn comes from speaking, reading comes at the third stage with 16%, the last stage which is writing has only 9%; this means that writing is less used than reading, speaking and listening as well.

We use listening more than any other communication skills; yet we often neglect this important business tool. Effective listening can make a big difference in gaining new business and profits. Not only do we listen to learn and remember information as the technology company does, but we also listen to make decisions and to understand customer and employ needs. Managers and employees use their listening or receptive skills in order to increase productivity and profit, build employee morale, business procedures and practices, meet changing and improve customer relations. Listening is so important that many contemporary organizations offer extensive listening training programs for employees (Pamela A. Angell, 2007, p. 88-89).

As the main method of language learning, listening is seen as crucial (Bidabadi & Yamat, 2011; Nunan, 2001; Rost, 2001). Put another way, listening influences how well a language learner develops their speaking, reading, and writing skills. All students need to have good listening skills in order to become proficient communicators. "Knowledge about the language (phonology, syntax, and vocabulary), knowledge about language use (discourse and pragmatics), and knowledge about context, facts, and experiences (prior or background knowledge)" are the three categories of knowledge that learners apply when listening to a message (Goh, 2013). To identify the sound they hear and comprehend the message, learners must combine these three categories of information with two separate forms of processing, which call for distinct cognitive abilities. Due to the complexity of the process and the variety of knowledge needed for successful hearing, many second language learners view listening as one of their most challenging skills (Kavaliauskienė, 2011; Nowrouzi, Shu Sim, Zareian, & Nimehchisalem, 2015).

Furthermore, in order to have comprehension, second language learners need a larger range of word recognition and segmentation skills than when they are listening to the first language. Due

to their cognitive deficiencies, they have trouble processing information in the language they are learning (Kavaliauskienė, 2011; Sura, 2013).

Both need the use of the same macro (core) skills in accordance with the aim of hearing, listening to English as a second language, they share many parallels (Goh, 2013; Rost, 2001). The two forms of listening differ in that ESP listening calls for more advanced abilities as well as particular types of knowledge and terminology needed for academic and professional English. In addition, acquiring high-level listening abilities related to scenarios using English for academic and professional objectives may be more necessary for developing ESP listening than for English as a second language (Goh, 2013; Likaj, 2015).

Teaching listening skills is a difficult challenge for ESP teachers since it requires a lot of practice and effort due to the high-level skill requirements (Kavaliauskienė, 2011). The use of bottom-up, top-down, and interactive models (Anusienė & Kavaliauskienė, 2009; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Nunan, 2001), teaching higher level cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Wilson, 2003), and shadowing for listening comprehension (Hamada, 2016) are a few examples of teaching methods used over the past few decades.

In order to assess students' requirements and competency for these skills in an academic setting, these listening skills are pertinent to the current study.

There is not as much research on listening tasks in English for work as there is on hearing in the language for academic purposes. For instance, listening to instructions is crucial for technicians, listening to presentations is crucial for doctors and other professionals, and listening to policy presentations is crucial for business people (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). According to McDonough (2010), international business meetings and video conferences are the main occasions when listening to multimedia is done. According to Vandergrift (2007), the growth of listening is impacted by new technologies and the rise in their accessibility. As a result, many ESP classes have started to offer multimedia listening, such as watching videos or listening to music on the Internet.

As the main method of language learning, listening is seen as crucial (Bidabadi & Yamat, 2011; Nunan, 2001; Rost, 2001). In other ways, listening influences how well a language learner develops their speaking, reading, and writing skills. All students need to have good listening skills in order to become proficient communicators. "Knowledge about the language (phonology, syntax, and vocabulary), knowledge about language use (discourse and pragmatic), and knowledge about context, facts, and experiences (prior or background knowledge)" are the three categories of knowledge that learners apply when listening to a message (Goh, 2013). To identify the sound they hear and comprehend the message, learners must combine these three categories of information with two separate forms of processing, which call for distinct cognitive abilities. Due to the complexity of the process and the variety of knowledge needed for successful hearing, many second language learners view listening as one of their most challenging skills (Kavaliauskienė, 2011; Nowrouzi, Shu Sim, Zareian, & Nimehchisalem, 2015). Furthermore, in order to have comprehension, second language learners need a larger range of word recognition and segmentation skills than when they are listening to the first language. Due to their cognitive deficiencies, they have trouble processing information in the language they are learning (Kavaliauskienė, 2011; Sura, 2013).

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The distinction between listening to English for academic reasons and listening to English for work purposes is in whether the latter requires the learners to acquire new forms of knowledge

and extra listening abilities in addition to their current repertoire (Goh, 2013). In academic settings, the capacity to follow a monologue especially a lecture is crucial when speaking in English (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Additionally, in many academic environments, it is required to listen to presentations, teacher explanations, and instructions (Zohoorian, 2015). In order to assess students' requirements and competency for these skills in an academic setting, these listening skills are pertinent to the current study.

As far as patriotism is concerned, *Longman dictionary* (1995) defines it as the feeling of love, devotion, and a sense of attachment for a country or state. Along with love, patriotism is the feeling of pride, devotion, and attachment to a homeland, as well as a feeling of attachment to other patriotic citizens. The feelings of attachment may be further bound up in factors like race or ethnicity, culture, religious belief, or history, (Robert, L., 2022). Patriotism refers to an emotional attachment to an in-group, signifying a sense of belonging, responsibility, and pride (Mummendey et al., 2001). It encompasses individual's positive feelings and attachment to their country (Osborne et al., 2017). National identity involves a citizen's cognitive recognition of their political community and their inclination to accept the nation's political, cultural, and ethnic values (Wodak, 2009; Huang et al., 2023). Patriotism is thought to stem from a sense of national identity (Blank and Schmidt, 2003). Therefore, an individual's political attitudes, values, and participation also represent manifestations of patriotism. Patriotism holds considerable importance for both the nation and the individual, acting as a vital factor in the development of civic relations in a mature country (Spinner-Halev and Theiss-Morse, 2003).

It also reflects an individual's identification and pride in their country's shared culture, history, and political system (Ariely, 2021). Patriotism contributes to civil liberties and national security (Williams et al., 2008). Previous research has shown that patriotism plays a critical role in shaping civic attitudes and behaviors, correlating positively with various prosocial outcomes, including responses to crises (Rupar et al., 2021) and pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors (Hamada et al., 2021). Most previous studies have concentrated on the impact of patriotism on emotional and social behavior (Dražanová and Roberts, 2023), while also exploring the cultivation of patriotism in adolescents (Sharma and Hooda, 2023) and the influence of physical exercise on adolescent patriotism (Bas, 2016). Nonetheless, evidence suggests that factors such as Listening may influence patriotism, in the sense that, Patriotism comes from active listening to elderly persons, wise men and even teachers, telling us about the country and forefathers, how they suffered protecting the country, and how one has to behave towards his country as well. Based on this, the present study aims to investigate the Learning difficulties in academia: Case of the listening course in License1 and the link between Listening and Patriotism.

Furthermore, at the University Julius Nyerere of Kankan, learners are therefore striving to acquire good listening skills, particularly in Licence 1 in the English Department, and seminars are organized in order to sensitize students about patriotism.

The general objective of the study is to describe and understand the current state of Listening in License1 the English Department at the University Julius Nyerere of Kankan. To attain the foregoing overall objective, the following specific objectives are formulated to:

- identify the difficulties encountered by Licence 1 students in learning listening;
- demonstrate the importance of Listening in learning process;
- explain the link between Listening and Patriotism.

In regard to the above, the following research questions are formulated:

- What are the difficulties encountered by Licence 1 students in learning listening?
- What is the importance of Listening in learning process?
- What is the link between Listening and Patriotism?

Structurally, the study is divided into two parts. The first part presents the methodology of the study. The second part presents, analyzes and discusses the findings of the study.

1- Methodology

1-1- Research Participants

The participant of the research were 50 students from licence 1 in the English Department, at the University Julius Nyerere of Kankan. The participants represent 15 girls and 35 boys from the same class. The respondents were chosen randomly to answer the questionnaire. They were chosen because they were attending the Listening course at the time of the investigation.

1-2-Research Instruments

The instruments which were used in this study are the questionnaire and interview in order to answer questions about the difficulties encountered by the students while learning Listening. Both questionnaire and interview were translated into French in order to facilitate answering of the questions.

1-3-Data Collection Procedure

The researcher used mixed method; the qualitative method consisted in the use of observation and interview techniques to get insight of the behavior of L1 students in listening class. The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain students' self-reported problems and difficulties in listening comprehension; the questionnaire was translated into French, permitting them to understand it easily since in L1, they could not understand the questionnaire in English. The questions were assessed from 5 Likert Scale points ranging from formats: 1 (Strongly Agree), 2(Agree), 3 (Neutral), 4(Disagree) and 5 (Strongly Disagree). However, the students were allowed to take the questionnaires back home. They were given two to three days to return the questionnaires. As far as the observation was concerned, the researcher was sometimes walking in the class around the benches and other time sitting in the left side corner of the class to jot down in the checklist. what he is observing in the class.

2- DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

2-1- Data Analysis

After gathering the data, the researchers proceeded to analyze the data by following three steps:

a. Data Reduction: The acquired data is then condensed to extract information relevant to the inquiry. The data was subsequently condensed and prioritized, with emphasis placed on the evidence that corroborates the study's findings.

b. Data Display: During this stage, the researchers assign a code to each answer in order to organize the data points related to the research information.

c. Conclusion/Verification: The process of generating conclusions and verifying them is done simultaneously at each level, ensuring that data gathering and analysis occur concurrently.

The Analysis of Data Obtained from Questionnaire

Table 1.

N°	Lack of Vocabulary	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	It is difficult to understand every single word of the Listening text. <i>Il est difficile de comprendre chaque mot du texte d'écoute</i>	45	5			

The first question on the questionnaire was about the difficulty of students understanding every single word in the spoken text that had been filled out by 50 students. There were 45 out of 50 students who agreed strongly which means that they had difficulty understanding every word in the Listening text; and 5 students out of 50 interviewed agreed which means they still have

difficulties in listening to each single word. Both of those who chose ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’, have the same difficulties concerning this point.

Table 2.

N°	Strange Accent	SA	A	N	D	SD
2	I have hard time to understand the different accents while listening to the radio <i>J'ai du mal à comprendre les différents accents en écoutant la radio</i>	50				

Based on the questionnaire that the students filled out, all 50 students chose “Strongly Agree”. It means that students have difficulty understanding what the speaker says when speaking with various accents.

Table 3.

N°	Students' interest (motivation) in English	SA	A	N	D	SD
3	I have low motivation or spirit in studying listening. <i>J'ai peu de motivation ou d'esprit pour étudier l'écoute.</i>		20		30	

Based on this statement 20 out of the 50 interviewed student agreed with the statement, but 30 of them disagreed, saying that they want to learn but they don't understand the course because of their background knowledge.

Table 4.

N°	Lack of concentration/ <i>Manque de concentration</i>	SA	A	N	D	SD
4	I lose concentration when I think of the meaning of new words. <i>Je perds ma concentration lorsque je pense à la signification de nouveaux mots.</i>	47	3			
5	I have trouble concentrating if there is noise. <i>J'ai du mal à me concentrer s'il y a du bruit.</i>	10	5			30

Concerning the first statement of this table, 47 respondents strongly agreed upon it; and 3 were agreed; truly speaking, these two (2) groups have the same problem, which is the loss of concentration when thinking of the meaning of new words while listening. For the second statement; 10 respondents strongly agreed, and 5 respondents agreed, but 30 of them strongly disagreed; arguing that, it is not because of the noises they have difficulty learning listening, it is just because they were forced to be enrolled in the English department; so, they are against their will in this department.

Table 5.

N°	Lecturers' speed while lecturing. <i>Rapidité des professeurs pendant les cours.</i>	SA	A	N	D	SD
6	I find it difficult to understand when the lecturer speaks too fast <i>J'ai du mal à comprendre quand le professeur parle trop vite</i>	48			2	

It can be seen in the table above that, 48 students strongly agreed, for them, when the teacher is fast, explaining the lesson, it is very hard to grasp what he is trying to say. But the remaining two students asserted that they don't have problems with the speed of the lecturer, simply because they are following other English courses apart from the department, so they are used to listening.

Table 6.

N°	Lack of self-confidence. <i>Un manque de confiance en soi.</i>	SA	A	N	D	SD
7	Before Listening is started, I do fear to understand it. <i>Avant de commencer l'écoute, j'ai peur de la comprendre.</i>	45			5	
8	I do feel worried if I don't understand Listening text. <i>Je me sens inquiet si je ne comprends pas le texte d'écoute.</i>	47			3	

Based on these statements, 45 students out of the 50 students interviewed strongly agreed concerning the first statement, and the remaining five students disagreed, confirming that they do not have any phobia before the listening course is started. It may be that they have extra classes elsewhere. This indicates that students feel worried about the activities carried out in English classes, namely listening. The next statement is about students' worries before they do listen exercise. In fact, 47 of the interviewed students strongly agreed with the statement; saying that, they feel worried when they don't not understand what they are listening to. Moreover, in case of quiz, they feel worried when they don't have their average.

Table 7

N°	Importance of Listening in learning process	SA	A	N	D	SD
9	I can never learn without listening	40		10		

Listening is essential for students' success. It contributes to effective learning, classroom engagement, and academic performance. By actively listening, students can comprehend and retain information, actively participate in class discussions, and self-efficacy, or confidence in their own ability to succeed academically.

This confirmed the findings, where 40 of the interviewed students strongly agreed upon the importance of listening in the learning process, “we can never achieve more without perfect listening” said one of the respondents.

Table 8

N°	Listening and patriotism	SA	A	N	D	SD
10	There is a strong link between Listening and Patriotism		47	3		

Patriotism comes from active listening to wise elderly persons including teachers, telling us about our country and forefathers, how they suffered protecting our country, and how we have to behave towards our country as well.

Based on this statement 47 out of the 50 interviewed student agreed with the statement, only 3 of them who were neutral.

3.2. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

As far as the interviewed is concerned, the researchers got several difficulties that the students faced in listening comprehension, as mentioned bellow:

- a. Lack of Vocabulary: The conclusion indicates students still have difficulties, especially in mastering vocabulary in English, where 100% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed concerning the statement.
- b. Strange accent: The conclusion drawn from this interview showed that all the 50 students who responded to the survey have difficulties when it comes to grasp different accents while listening to the radio.
- c. Students' interest (motivation) in learning Listening: The conclusion of the interviews that have been carried out is that students do not really like Listening lessons, especially when it comes to teach them with radio, for them Listening lessons are difficult to understand.
- d. Concentration: The conclusion of the interview shows that there are several things that can hinder students to be concentrated as regards listening to the radio, such as noisy class situations and trying to understand new words while listening.
- e. Lecturers' speed while lecturing: The conclusion of the interviews indicates that students find it difficult to listen to a lecturer who speaks so quickly, and it makes students bored in listening to what the lecturer says.
- f. Lack of self-confidence: The conclusion of the interviews reveals that more than the half of the interviewed students do not trust themselves, even if they understand they hardly raise their hand to respond to the question or to repeat is said.

g. Importance of Listening in learning process: Although the majority of the respondents persist on the difficulty of learning Listening; at the same time, some of the interviewed students confirmed the importance of Listening in the learning process.

h. Listening and patriotism: The conclusion of the interview shows that more than the half of the interviewed students confirm the strong relationship between Listening and patriotism.

Conclusion

Following this investigation at UJNK's English department, the researchers have determined that a number of factors prevent students from mastering listening comprehension. These challenges can be divided into two groups: those caused by internal and external variables. Lack of vocabulary, concentration, strange accents, students' motivation in English, pronunciation, comprehension of contracted words, and low self-confidence are examples of internal factors. With reference to the external component, factors as the lecturers' speed while delivering the lecture. Beside the difficulties cited above, Listening is also vital not only in learning a language or in the communication process, but also helps to be patriot. However, students need to be motivated in order to deal with this important subject for their career development and for their patriotism.

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