

# Factors Affecting Students' Listening Capability

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**Abstract**— Many factors affect students' listening. This paper cited some noted scholars and researchers findings, as well as proposed linguistic and nonlinguistic obstacles hindering students' listening leaning.

**Keywords**— linguistic, listening learning, background knowledge.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Students' listening leaning is an attracted hot topic. Many scholars and researchers have done related studies to dig out the factors, such as lexis, phonological features and background knowledge.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars and researchers have identified many factors that affect students' listening learning. Kelly (1991) noted that those factors including speech rate, lexis, phonological features and background knowledge. Joseph P. Boyle (1984) proposed in his study "Factors affecting listening comprehension" that listener factors, speaker factors, and factors in material and medium affect students' listening input. There is no denying that various factors, internal as well as external are liable for the deficiency in listening learning.

These factors can also be generalized into two kinds: linguistic problems and non-linguistic problems. Linguistic problems include lexical, phonetic and grammatical problems. Among them, lexical problem is the biggest one, for it serves the base for understanding. A good command of vocabulary can make the listeners figure out the best interpretation in a given context, and it can help listeners predict what might come next in a given situation. The second linguistic problem is phonetic problem. It is generally agreed that English has many dialects as other languages do; moreover every speaker has his/her own dialect. Speaking is also often affected by surroundings, like noise. All these facts make listening difficult to follow, sometimes even to native speakers. In addition, some other phonetic knowledge such as intonation, assimilation, elision, and liaison will hinder listeners' listening process.

Thereby sufficient phonetic knowledge is essential to listening learning. The third linguistic problem is grammatical problem. Grammar impedes listening comprehension, in that oral language is different from written language in syntax. Oral language often deviates from normal grammar rules, which increase the difficulty in the listening process.

Non-linguistic problems also have two kinds: background knowledge and individual abilities. Background knowledge includes all the information and ideas, all the perceptions and concepts, as well as the intellectual residues of emotional expressions (Devine, 1986). The role of background knowledge in listening has been formalized as schema theory (Carrel, 1983). Based on this theory, the listening process is an interactive process between listener's background knowledge and the text we hear. So listeners are required to relate the textual material to his/her background knowledge. More background knowledge will facilitate better comprehension of a given text, or vice versa. The second non-linguistic problem is the limited practice. In the first place, two hours per week are limited for students to be exposed to authentic materials. In the second place, in class it is usually teachers occupy a major role of "recorder-player" and the students' initiative is neglected, let alone the practice opportunities.

## III. CONCLUSION

Various elements influences students' listening learning, including linguistic and nonlinguistic factors, therefore this topic need continuous attention and treatment.

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