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## **Effective Listening: Teachers' and Students' Awareness about its Roles in Academic Achievement**

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### **Abstract**

Understanding of any academic course depends on students' ability and skills of listening. In other words, students can succeed in their academic performance provided that they can comprehend the lessons presented by their teachers. This study was aimed at investigating the role played effective listening skills in supporting students in their academic performance. Students become successful when they possess effective listening skills which enable them to grasp the lesson taught by their teachers at any level. The research was conducted in the general secondary schools of Ilu Abba Bor zone, Oromiya region of Ethiopia. It embraced 3 general secondary schools: Gore, Mettu and Hurumu. The participants of the study were English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and grade 9 students in the sample schools. Simple random sampling technique was used to take the sample students from each of the schools. As the number of the English language teachers was not so large, the investigators used comprehensive sampling technique to take teacher informants for the study. The instruments used to collect data for the study were questionnaire, observation and interview. In order to analyze the data, the researchers employed mixed approach whereby both quantitative and qualitative methods were put to use. Put differently, the data from classroom observations and the interview were analysed qualitatively; whereas, those from questionnaire were quantitatively analyzed.

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It had been found out that the teachers and the students were not much aware of the importance of effective listening skill and the role it plays in helping learners in their academic walk. They held the wrong view about effective listening skill, its roles in academic performance and its teaching/learning. In addition, the teachers took no notice of the strategies to be utilized to develop their students' effective listening skills.

**Keywords:** General secondary schools; effective listening; EFL teachers; role of listening; academic success; Listening comprehension.

## **1. Introduction**

(Listening plays a very decisive role in humans' every day interactions [17,19,12]. It is the skill which is most used in people's communication process. Effective listening ,in particular, follows the how to approach to the listening process. Emphasizing on the importance of listening as a skill, scholars indicate that people spend seven of every 10 minutes they are awake in certain form of communication activity. Among this seventy percent of the time they are awake, people spend ten percent writing, fifteen percent reading, thirty minutes talking, and 45 percent listening [6,23]. This indicates how important listening skill is in our life. In spite of the fact that people spend nearly half of their communication time listening, this skill is a neglected one. According to [15], "listening is the neglected communication skill." People are not often seen making real efforts to be good listeners. If people make efforts to become good listeners in their daily life communication, the skill enables them to increase their safety, to become more productive, to be fast learners, and to develop better relationship with others [15,1].

The skill of effective listening is quite indispensable for students' academic success across discipline. Its importance is not confined to language classes. It rather influences, in one way or another, students' performance in every academic subject. Students perform well in their academic courses if they are better listeners. Better listeners are usually capable of understanding the lessons presented by their teachers through the utilization of varieties of strategies for effective listening. In addition, the advantages of effective listening exceeds the life in the arena of academia as it affects the human communication at large [15]. Studies indicate that listening is important in other places out the academic environment. Effective listening is vital in places like church, civic clubs, and at social gatherings. In these environment and others like these, listening to gain information may be less vital than listening to improve relationships. Scholars involving in the work of counseling and interpersonal communication experts emphasize that listening is the skill that can make or break relationship. In other words, the skill of effective listening can develop people's relationship by fostering positive understanding between them. Effective listening is also important in work places. As humans are relational individuals, it is necessary for them to understand the person as what the person is saying. Supporting this thought, Reference [22] contends that listening in general and effective listening in particular has to do with the ability to pay heed to understand the whole meaning of what the speaker is saying in a certain context. This reveals that listening is the skill which aids the comprehension of the message being conveyed.

People often enjoy listening to or watching English films, TV programs, music, and announcements and these all necessitate the skill of effective listening. This is because individuals with effective skills of listening skills

have the ability of figuring out information to focus on and to ignore. Furthermore, effective listening skills, promotes good communication interaction among people. Through the positive interaction which exists among people, their life as individuals and their social interaction with others will improve. Scholars also reveal that effective listening is a very important skill in everyday life [17,28]. According to [6,21] learning the skills of effective listening to become better listeners will result in the progress of the life of the individual who intends to become effective listener. Accordingly, teachers' awareness of the role effective listening skill in students' life in general and in their academic achievement in particular, is vital to help the students to become better listeners [10,20,9,4]. This relies on the teachers' skills of providing the students with the strategies which enable them to become effective listeners [8]. To this end, investigating the teachers' and students' awareness of the roles effective listening can lead to the indication of the way forward for the improvement of learners, listening skills altogether.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### ***2.1. Statement of the Problem***

The importance of effective listening skill is not discipline or subject specific. Everybody from every academic field needs to understand what is taught, and this necessitates effective listening skills. Effective listening skill is of paramount importance for students' success in the arena of academia and in the life beyond. The awareness which teachers and students possess about this fact across discipline is a base for its development. Teachers, in particular, need to be conscious of the vital roles which effective listening skill plays in backing up learners' to better achieve their academic subjects. However, the current trend shows that listening skill, in general, and the skill of effective listening in particular is neglected [15]. Academic practitioners are hardly seen focusing on the extent to which the lesson taught is understood by their students. Most often, students fail to comprehend everything or more than half of the lectures given to them by their teachers. This is often caused by students' lack of effective listening skill. Furthermore, lack of awareness of the roles of effective listening skill in academic achievement, and the fact that listening skill, in general, has been a neglected skill is a serious issue to be taken into account. Over and above, the skill of listening which the Ethiopian students have, to understand messages conveyed in English is far less than the level expected of them [2]. In spite of the fact that English language is the medium of instruction as of secondary schools, and a compulsory subject starting from grade one in Ethiopia, students at all levels are challenged with problems of listening and comprehending information conveyed by native speakers and others in various contexts. The focus given by researchers to this area is also meagre. Accordingly, investigating the why of this and the degree of awareness possessed by teachers and students with regard to the role of effective listening skill in students' academic success is thought to bring attention of all the concerned bodies to the issue. In addressing this issue, the study tried to answer the following research questions:

### ***2.2. Research Questions***

- What are the views, and the level of teachers' and learners' awareness about effective listening and its teaching/learning?

- How do teachers and students see the role of effective listening in academic achievement?
- What are the main listening strategies used by teachers to develop students' effective listening skill?
- What do you think of conditions impeding effective listening?

### **2.3. Objectives of the Study**

*The main objective of the study was to investigate teachers' and students' awareness of the role effective listening skill in academic achievement. Specifically, the study was intended to:*

- state the view of teachers and students on the teaching and learning of listening effective skills
- identify the extent to which teachers and students are aware of the role of effective listening in academic success.
- Find out the main listening strategies taught by the teachers to develop their students' effective listening skill
- identify factors which impede effective listening

### **2.4. Significance of the Study**

This study is significant to teachers, students, and educational stakeholders in that it gives them awareness about effective listening and its roles in learners' academic achievement. It give teachers insight on how to help their students to become effective listeners and users of the skills of effective listening in order that they would to be better achievers in their academic performances. The study would also enable teachers to equip their students' with the knowledge of the strategies of effective listening which they employ in their academic life and beyond. The awareness they would gain from this study also helps students to be able to listen effectively by identifying what to pay more attention to in their listening process. Furthermore, the study enables both teachers and students to work on the strategies which help them to overcome the major barriers to effective listening skills. It could be used as a springboard for further investigators who need to conduct a study in this area.

### **2.5. Limitations of the study**

The major limitation of the study was that the fact that it was conducted in the zone indicated during the teachers' busiest time. Because of this, the researchers had to spend many days in each of the schools. In spite of their willingness to participate, some of the teachers were not able to involve in the FGD in the time scheduled. The researchers had to change their schedules time and again in order to suit the convenience of the informants. Furthermore, some of the student- informants failed to return the questionnaires which they received to fill.

## **3. Literature Review**

### **• Overview of the Role of Effective Listening**

The importance of the skill of listening, in general, is unquestionable in the communication process as a whole.

Among the other language skills, the role played by listening in communication is immense. Scholars indicate that the time which people spend on listening is greater than the time they spend on speaking, reading and writing. According to [15], people spend 10 percent of their communication time on writing, 15 percent on reading, 30 percent on speaking, and 45 percent on listening. The three skills cover 55 percent of people's communication time altogether, while listening alone takes 45 percent of the communication time.

Emphasizing on how important the skill of effective listening is, scholars state that it is the province of knowledge to speak, and it is the privilege of wisdom to listen. Effective listening is an active process of making sense of what is heard. It is an actual meaning oriented process. Effective listening is indispensable to students' academic success across discipline as it helps them to keep themselves active in the whole process in order to comprehend the lesson presented by their teachers.

The advantages of effective listening go beyond the confinement of the academic environment. One of the important benefits of effective listening is gaining information. Research indicates that information is a power in doing or getting something. With regard to this, Reference [26] states that, among the skills of language, listening is the quickest and easiest way of obtaining information. For a person who needs to find out about someone who does something, finding an individual who knows about the work can help to obtain the information required in a few hours that might take that person a week of reading and researching to acquire. Furthermore, effective listening is beneficial in establishing better relationship with people and family members. In the community they reside in, people want to be understood and accepted by others. When they get people who can understand and accept them, they can experience pleasure from their company and feel closer to them [26]. Contrarily, it is found out that poor listening is a main cause of displeasure and frustration. In addition, research reveals that 60 percent of misunderstanding among people in the world of business is the result of poor listening or lack of the skills of effective listening. Only 1 percent of misunderstanding is caused by poor reading [26,15]. Furthermore, in a house, lack of effective listening or poor listening is the major cause of marital conflict. This all depicts how effective listening skills can affect people's life by transcending the limit of academic arena.

The other advantage of effective listening is its maturity value. Maturity value has to do with a person's ability to understand others' ideas and feelings whether s/he agrees with them or not. A person who is a poor listener usually has her/his own thought of the way the world should be and stops listening whenever he or she is challenged by another person's ideas [9,13,7,5]. With regard to this, Reference [26] states "to listen with a purpose requires an inner strength and the courage to open our minds to other people's ideas while at the same time we must face up to the fact that some of our ideas may be wrong."

In spite of its advantages and wider coverage in the communication process, the attention given to listening skill and its teaching is very less. The focus given to the formal teaching of listening skill is insignificant [15,26]. In addition, studies pinpoint that the skill of effective listening and its teaching have been neglected [22,6,23].

- **Impeding Factors to Effective Listening Skills**

There are varieties of factors impeding the success of students' in achieving the skills of effective listening. They are context specific and can be categorized as student related and teacher related factors.

- **Student-related Factors:** Student- related impeding factors to the development of effective listening skill have to do with learners' attitude and motivation. Motivation is the inner most drive which usually initiates people to perform an action [13]. Motivation has the power of enthusing learners to involve in their academic activities with stamina. Scholars indicate that the success of the teaching –learning process is unthinkable in contexts where there is no motivation [7]. Accordingly, total lack of motivation or less motivation can be an impeding factor to the development of effective listening skill. The attitude which students have towards listening skill in general is another impeding factor to the successful development of effective listening skill. If they have wrong perception and negative attitude towards listening skill and its learning, the development of effective listening in them will be blocked. Attitudes are internal, individual factors the presence of which can be inferred from the individual's introspection, especially when these events are exposed clearly in word or in action. Attitude revealed by words of mouth is termed as an opinion [3]. According to [24], attitude has some components to be dealt with: affective, cognitive and behavioural. The affective component of attitude comprises of the evaluation someone makes with regard to his/her likeness for something or someone, or the emotional reaction he/she has to someone or something. The cognitive component is understood as the belief or the factual knowledge which an individual has about someone or something. This belief can affect the way students act in their classroom environment. The behavioural component of attitude has to do with the overt behaviour which an individual depicts about someone or something. Students' attitude towards the lesson they learn and the teacher who teaches them has the power of affecting their success in that particular subject in one way or another. With regard to this [16], states that if someone likes the person or topic, he/she tends to listen and can understand it ;however, if he/she has resentment or negative attitude towards the person or the subject, they pay no attention to it and this impedes their success in comprehending. Reference [27] also reveals the attitude which students have towards listening lesson is the best determining factor for their success in developing their effective listening skill.

- **Teacher-related Factors:** These have to do with teachers' capacity and level of confidence, and giving feedback. Whatever subject they teach, classroom teachers are expected to have a sound knowledge of the lesson they teach. The knowledge of the subject they teach also gives them confidence on what they teach to their students. If knowledge and confidence are lacking from the teacher, he/she fails to help students develop the required skills [11]. The other teacher-related factor, feedback, has the power of encouraging or discouraging students' success in their learning of listening skills. Negative feedback usually kills students' motivation to learn. Positive and constructive feedback, on the other hand, is the source of learning and progress [25,9,5]. Therefore, in the process of giving feedback to their students, teachers need to be aware of the strategies to be employed in order not to impede the students' effective listening skill development.

#### **4. Methodology**

In investigating the role played by effective listening skill in students' academic performance, the researchers used descriptive survey design.

#### ***4.1. Sample Size and Sampling Technique***

The subjects of the study were English language teachers and general secondary school in Ilu Abba Bora zone of Oromiya national Regional State of Ethiopia. It particularly addressed three general secondary schools: Gore, Mettu and Hurumu. Students in grade nine were the focus of the study. Systematic random sampling technique was used to select the sample student- informants from grade nine. Among the total of 1850 grade nine students population in the three general secondary schools of the zone, the researcher took twenty percent as a sample. Accordingly, the size of sample students was three hundred seventy. In order to take the sample students from the total population, the researchers utilized the students roll which they obtained from the schools. In order to take the teacher-informants for the study, the researchers employed comprehensive sampling techniques. Since the number of the EFL teachers in the schools was not large, the researchers made all of them involved in this study. Totally, fifty EFL teachers took part in the research from the three secondary schools.

#### ***4.2. Data Collection Tools***

In order to collect pertinent data for the study, the researchers employed questionnaires, classroom observation and interview.

#### ***4.3. Data Analysis***

Mixed approach was utilized to analyze the data collected using the instruments indicated above. Both quantitative and the qualitative approaches were used in this process.

The data which were obtained from questionnaire were analysed quantitatively and the SPSS software version 16 was used for this particular data. Frequency and percentage were used in the analysis of the data from the questionnaire. In order to analyze the data generated from interview and observation, the researchers employed qualitative method. In this case the researchers transcribed, thematically arranged and discussed the data.

#### ***4.4. Ethical Considerations***

Before starting to collect the data, the researchers let the participants read the statement of informed consent and told them that they can discontinue the process any time if they want to.

In addition, the participants were told that the data to be collected from them would be stored in a secure location and all identifying information would be removed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Furthermore, the participants of the study were told that the data gathered from them would be used only for the purpose of this research

### **5. Findings**

The following sub-section indicated the findings from teachers' questionnaire.

#### ***5.1. Findings from Teachers' Questionnaire***

**Table 1:** EFL Teacher’s views and awareness of the teaching of listening skill and its roles in students’ academic achievement

No	Views	SA		A		NS		D		SD	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Teaching listening skill is enjoyable for me	25	50	12	24	-	--	7	14	6	12
2		30	60	13	26					7	14
3	The teaching of listening skill is a difficult task	30	60	10	20	5	10	5	10	--	--
4	Listening and its teaching is not my problem	27	54	18	36	5	10	-	--	-	--
5	Listening and hearing are the same	30	60	20	40	--		-		--	--
6	To be good listeners, people should be good readers	30	60	20	40	--	--	-	--	--	--
7	People who are smarter are better listeners	32	64	18	36						
8	In my view listening skill does not contribute anything to the teaching/learning of other subjects	40	80	10	20	--		-	--	--	-
9	In my view, learners become good listeners when they grow up and become mature	35	70	15	30	--	--	-	--	--	--
10	In my view, teaching listening is not as important as teaching language so I skip it.	35	70	15	30	--	--	-	--	--	--
11	In my view teaching listening skill does not help as students don’t use it out of class	39	78	11	22	--	--	-	--	--	--
12	The role of listening skill is confined to English class	35	70	15	30	--	--	-	--	-	--
13	In my view, students do not want to learn Listening skills	35	70	15	30	--	--	-	--	--	--
14	Listening skill is not part of national exam, so I don’t focus on teaching it	36	72	10	20	4	8	-	--	--	--

**Key-**SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

According to the data in table 1, EFL teachers enjoy teaching listening skills, and they believed that making students practice listening tasks is a way of developing their students’ effective listening skills. With regard to this, 50% of the respondents indicated that the teaching of listening is enjoyable. Respondents who revealed that practicing listening tasks is the source of effective listening skills development were 60%. However, the overall finding from the data in this table gave the implication that the teachers’ views of effective listening skill and its



roles in students' academic performance was incorrect. In relation to this, 80% of the respondents strongly agreed that listening skill does not contribute anything in other academic subjects. Additionally, 20 % stated that they agreed to the fact that listening skill does not contribute anything to students' performance in other academic subjects. According to the data in the table, the whole 100% of the teachers revealed that listening skill contributes nothing to students' performance in other academic subject. The implication of this finding is that the EFL teaches were not aware of the role of effective listening skill plays in helping students to succeed in other academic subjects. In addition, most of the respondents lack awareness about the importance of teaching listening skill to secondary school students. This issue contradicts the realities stated by scholars who state that listening can affect human life in a wider spectrum [15]. The data further indicates that, 70% of the teacher respondents viewed listening skill as a skill which less important than the other language skills such as speaking and reading. This implies that the teachers' views about listening skills were not right. In a related manner, 78% of the teachers stated that they did not consider the skill of listening important as the students do not use it our side of the class room. The finding also depicted that the teachers viewed listening as a skill which was confined to the English classroom alone (70%). In addition, more that 90% of the respondents indicated that they did not pay much attention to the teaching of listening skill since listening is not part of the national examination taken by students at the end of grade ten. The data in the table also pointed out that the EFL teachers' views of effective listening skills, its teaching and its roles in students' academic performance or achievement was full of fallacies. As can be understood from the data in the table, 60% of the respondents believed that the teaching of listening skill was a difficult task. Besides, 60% and 40% of the teacher-respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively to the fact that listening and hearing are the same. Over and above, 80% of the respondents (60% strongly agree and 40% agree viewed listening as a skill possessed by those who are good readers. These informants stated that good readers are good listeners, which may not be always the case. Almost all (100%)of the respondents(64 % strongly agree and 36% agree), depicted that people who are smarter are better listeners. According to [15], these ideas are fallacies about listening. Therefore, the EFL teachers' views of effective listening and its teaching were full of fallacies. This implies that the teachers were not much aware of the effective listening skills.

The finding from the data in table 2 reveals that the degree of focus given to the teaching of helpful listening strategies to students was very less. As can be understood from the table, the teachers used sometimes used some cognitive strategies (mental activities related to comprehending and restoring input in working memory or long term memory for later retrieval). For instance, comprehension processes, storing and memory processes and using and retrieval processes represented by items 1-3 in the table were used by the teachers sometimes only. The teachers respectively used these strategies sometimes to 68%, 60% and 50%. The finding also depicted that the teachers did not, in general, employ metacognitive listening strategies. These strategies are "conscious or subconscious mental activities that perform an executive function in the management of cognitive strategies" [18]. One can figure out from the data in the table (items 4-7) that the teachers never used metacognitive listening strategies to help their students develop their effective listening skills. Among the participants,86% indicated that they never helped their students to take the conditions surrounding a listening task by assessing their own knowledge, their internal and external resources and the constraints of the situation before engaging in the task. Likewise, 90% of the teachers pointed out that they never monitored or checked

their students' progress in the course of learning or doing listening tasks. Moreover, the finding revealed that 78% of the teachers never evaluated the success of their students in carrying out and completing the listening tasks given to them. By and large, 80% of the teachers stated that they never encouraged their students to test themselves to determine the effectiveness of their own language use or the lack thereof. It possible to deduce from this data that the teachers experience of utilizing listening strategies which can help students to develop their effective listening skills is very low.

**Table 2:** Listening Strategies Employed by Teachers to Develop Students' Effective Listening Skills

N	How often do you utilize the following to help students to become effective listeners?	Always		Someti		Rarely		Never	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	I help my students to process linguistic & nonlinguistic input	10	20	34	68	6	12	--	--
	I teach my students about strategies for storing linguistic and nonlinguistic input in working memory or long term memory.	15	30	30	60	5		--	
3	I teach them the process of using and retrieving which enables them to access memory, to be readied for output.	13	26	25	50	--		12	24
4	I help students to take the conditions surrounding a listening task by assessing their own knowledge, their internal and	2	4	5	10	--	--	43	86
5	I monitor or check my students' progress in the course of learning or doing a listening task	-	-	5	10	--	--	45	90
6	I evaluate the success of my students in carrying out and completing the listening task	4	8	6	12	1	1	39	78
7	I encourage my students to test themselves to determine the effectiveness of their own language use or the lack thereof	5	10	6	12	--	--	40	80
8	I inform my students of the listening objectives and teach them about the strategies to attain the objectives.	9	18	7	14	4	8	30	60

*F=frequency*

**5.2. Findings from Students' Questionnaire**

The finding from the data in the table indicates that students have positive view about listening and its learning. More than half of the participants(61%) revealed that learning to listen is an enjoyable act, and practicing the listening tasks provided in their textbooks is a way of developing effective listening skills(61.8%). However, the overall findings from the data in the table overtly pinpointed that the students' views of listening skills and its learning was greatly influenced by fallacies about listening. This depicts that the students' perceptions and views of effective listening was wrong. For instance, 57.5% of the respondents showed that listening is a difficult task. Additionally, about 73% indicated that effective readers are effective listeners. Moreover, 54.05 % of the participants stated that listening and its leaning was not their problem. Over and above, 81.08 % of the students portrayed that students who are smarter are better listeners. In similar token, 54.05 % of them revealed

that effective listening is the result of maturity. According to [15] , these all points indicate the wrong perceptions people possess about listening.

**Table 3:** Student’s views and Awareness of listening skill and its learning

Learners’ views on Effective Listening Skills	SA		A		NS		D		SD	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	f	%	
1.Learning to listen is enjoyable for me	225	61.0	104	20.2	14	3.8	12	11	3.0	
2.Learning listening and practicing its activities is a way of developing effective listening skill.	228	61.8	97	26.3	17	4.6	16	9	2.4	
3.The learning of listening skill is a difficult task for me	212	57.5	96	26.0	13	3.5	30	15	4.1	
4.I can be effective listener by reading notes about listening in my textbook	235	63.7	103	29.7	12	2.3	6	10	2.7	
5.Listening and its learning is not my problem	200	54.05	50	13.51	20	5.40	50	50	13.51	
6.For me listening and hearing are the same	300	81.08	35	9.45	15	4.05	10	10	2.70	
7.I am a good listener as I am good readers	270	72.97	40	10.81	20	5.40	25	15	4.05	
8.In my view, students who are smarter are better listeners	315	85.13	10	2.70	20	5.40	--	25	6.75	
9.In my view, I become a good listener when I grow up and become mature	200	54.05	70	18.91	60	16.21	--	40	10.81	
10.In my view, listening is not much important as the other skills	200	54.05	80	21.62	20	5.40	40	30	8.10	
11.Learning listening skill does not help as I don’t use it out of class	150	40.54	80	21.62	50	13.51	60	30	8.10	
12.Listening helps me to understand my teachers when they teach me	300	81.08	50	13.51	20	5.40	--	--	--	
13.I need listening skill to understand message from speech	51	13.78	50	13.51	70	18.91	100	99	26.75	
14.I need listening skill only for English class	271	73.24	50	13.51	20	5.40	--	29	7.84	
15.For me learning listening skill is not important and I do not need it	250	67.56	120	32.43	60	16.21	20	20	5.40	

Key-SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, f-frequency

This scholar clearly indicates that viewing listening as an effortless skill, thinking that it is the same as hearing,

viewing smarter students as better listeners, expecting oneself to become effective(good)listener when one grows up, are all fallacies about listening. The finding also depicted that listening skill was less important to the students as compared to the other language skills. As shown in the table, 54.05% of the respondents did not view listening as a vital skill. It was also found out that the students' did not have clear view and awareness about the goal of learning listening. This is evident from 81.08% of the respondents who pointed out that listening skill was only aimed at helping them to understand their teachers in the class. The other 73.24% of the respondents stated that they need the listening skill only for their English class. What is more, 67.56% of the students revealed that listening was not important for them, and they did not even need it and its learning. From this finding, it is possible to understand that the students' views on listening are wrong. This indicates that they have poor perceptions about effective listening and its role in their academic achievement.

#### **a. Findings from Classroom Observation**

The classroom observations indicated that the teachers focused on listening comprehension skills. They were observed reading listening texts to the students and asking them to fill blank spaces using the words and phrases from the listening text. Listening tasks provided to be done during listening were confined to vocabulary and literary stated information from the text. The teachers informed the students to copy listening questions from their textbooks and to fill them while listening. Among the teachers observed, no one was seen following the appropriate strategies and stages of teaching listening skills. The listening lessons lacked clear purpose and they were passive. The teachers were seen doing nothing to prove that the students have understood the listening text read to them.

In the process of teaching listening, teachers are expected to make the class active and interactive. They need to start with participatory activities which can involve the students through the provision of pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities [18,29]. In addition, listening skills teachers are supposed to utilize cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies when they teach listening to help their students develop effective listening skills. Strategies of planning, monitoring and evaluation of the students learning of listening skills was totally overlooked by the teachers. In teaching effective listening skills, teachers have to focus on producing students who can use listening strategies to maximize their comprehension of aural input, identify relevant and irrelevant information, and tolerate less than word-by- word comprehension. In addition, listening tasks need to address the process of comprehension monitoring. When they learn to listen, students have to be made to verify predictions they had made at pre-listening stage, check for inaccurate guesses, decide what is important to understand and what is not, listen again to check comprehension, and ask for teachers' support ([23,18] . The result of the classroom observations uncovered that the teachers were not using any of this strategies or others. Among the eight teachers observed, only one of them was seen using the three stages of teaching listening skill-pre, while and post listening. The other teachers were following the traditional approach in which students were made to locate explicitly stated information without any active involvement. From this finding, it is possible to conclude that the teachers did not have ample awareness about the strategies of teaching listening skills.

#### **b. Findings from Teachers' Interviews**

### **i. Teachers' Awareness of the Role of Effective Listening Skills in Students 'Academic achievement**

The interview was intended to find out the views of teachers from other academic discipline (i.e. teachers teaching other subjects out of English language by using English as a medium of instruction) regarding effective listening and its roles in students' achievement. In other words, it was conducted with EFL teachers and with teachers teaching other subjects (Biology, History, and chemistry). Among the participants, two of the interviewees were from the department of Biology; three were from department of History and one was from the department of Chemistry. The remaining three interviewees were from department of English; i.e. the three were EFL teachers.

The participants indicated that listening is the skill which is most emphasized in the language classes. Other subject teachers provide subject knowledge without paying much attention to the skills to be used in the learning process. The participants overtly pinpointed that they have never thought about the role effective listening played in students' academic subjects across discipline. According to the finding from the interview, the only responsible body for the development of students' effective listening skill is language teacher. The participants stated, in spite of the fact that English is the medium of instruction; they often used the local language in order that the students could clearly understand the subject matter. With regard to this, one of the Biology teachers reflected the following ideas:

I have never tried to think about effective listening. Whatever way the students listened, my focus is on presenting my daily lesson and covering the portion of the subject within the time schedule. If the students do not understand when I teach, it is up to them to go back and study what I taught them. Otherwise, I have never thought about the impact the knowledge of effective listening has on the students' life and on their academic performance. In this regard, I can say I have been a tabularassa. So, surely I am not aware of the connection between students' effective listening skills and the subject I teach, Biology. (Interview Participant No.2)

One can understand from this quotation that the views and awareness possessed by knowledge based subject teachers concerning the role of effective listening skill in students' academic achievement were low. In addition, the interviewees reported that equipping students with the skills they need to learn all subjects was the responsibility of English teacher. They added that they did not know and never thought about the role of effective listening in human communication and life in general. The other participant indicated the following:

I don't actually have a clear idea regarding the role of listening skills in general in human life. I did not think of the role effective listening can play to support students' academic performance. Listening is...imm... for just hearing. Anyone who is not deaf can hear. So I never thought about the contribution of being effective listener. I don't know much about the relation between learning and effective listening (Interview participant No.5).

The idea of this participant also revealed that the teachers do not even have awareness about the difference between listening and hearing. According to the data from the interview, the teachers' awareness about the role of effective listening skill in students' academic achievement was low.

### **ii. Conditions which impede the development of effective listening skills**

With regard to conditions which impede the development of effective listening, it was found out that the teachers' lack of awareness about its importance and the knowledge gap they have about its teaching were the main ones. In addition, students' lack of interest and motivation to learn the listening skill was the factor affecting the development of this skill. The finding also indicated that the way the teachers viewed effective listening and its teaching were impeding conditions to the development of students listening skill. According to the interview, the teachers did not know much about the listening strategies to be employed in the teaching effective listening skills. Furthermore, the interviewees pointed out that the conditions in the classrooms were not conducive for teaching listening. They emphasized that there were no important materials like recorded cassette, tape-recorder, video camera/cassette, adequate supplementary books, etc. in the schools. According to the interviewees, the teachers had to read the listening texts (passages) provided in the textbook, which students listen to and answer the listening questions.

One of the interviewees among the EFL teachers, specifically, stated the following ideas:

*I teach listening skill based on the questions given in students' textbook.*

*I have to read to the students the passage which they have to listen to.*

*Then, I ask the students to do the listening exercises given in the book.*

*The questions are blank feeling and they require the students to find out explicitly stated information and some vocabulary words. Nothing more!*

*There are no additional materials which I can use to teach listening.*

*For example, there is no recorded cassette or tape recorder for teaching*

*listening. I can't find authentic materials. Personally, I teach listening, only*

*because it has been included in the textbook. I have no clear purpose for*

*teaching it (Interviewee participant No.6).*

This indicates that the EFL teachers by themselves were challenged with lack of authentic materials for teaching listening skills. Their teaching was totally dependent on students' textbook which is not supported with audio cassette. This, according to the data, was an impeding factor to the development of effective listening skill.

The result interview also revealed that poor motivation and large class were the main factors impeding the effective teaching of listening comprehension. It was indicated that the students lack motivation of paying attention to the listening texts read by the teachers. Teachers often gave them listening comprehension questions and read the text on the basis of which the students answered the listening questions. During this time, instead of listening to the text being read attentively, the students were involved in side talks about irrelevant issues.

Scholars indicate that lack of motivation from the students' side discourages teachers from teaching well. According to [7,16] the success of teaching, in general, and the teaching of language skills in particular in the absence of good motivation is questionable

Large class was indicated by the participants as a main factor impeding the teaching and learning of the effective listening skills. The interview and the classroom observation indicated that the number of students in a class were 85 and more. This class size caused the EFL teachers failure to motivate and encourage the students by facilitating activities at different stage of teaching listening. In a similar manner the informants pointed out that students' lack of concentration related to absence of motivation and inability of understanding the meaning of the vocabulary in the listening text were additional factors affecting the teaching and learning of listening skills.

## **6. Discussions**

The results from the study revealed that the teachers and the students did not have clear views about effective listening and its teaching and learning. Above all, the participants were totally unaware of the role played by effective listening skill in helping students to succeed in their academic performances. During the interview, most of them pointed out that they did not know and had never thought about the relation between effective listening and academic achievement. This reveals that the focus given to effective listening skills by teachers across discipline was very poor, and the skill was totally abandoned. This can have a diverse effect on the students in their academic performance and in their life beyond the learning context. According to [26] and [15], effective listening skill has great contributions to people's social life in general. The scholars indicated that people who are deficient in effective listening skill often face marital and other social conflicts. This reveals how important effective listening skill is. However, the finding of this study revealed that the teaching of effective listening skill and the focus given to it as a whole is very poor. It was indicated that the teachers and the students had the wrong views about the role of effective listening in students' academic performance.

Teachers who taught other subjects out of English depicted that they did not know the connection between effective listening skills and the subjects they teach. From this, it is possible to figure out that they made no efforts to make their students listen effectively and understand the content of the subject matter they taught.

It is evident that the EFL teachers did not use listening strategies which help the students to develop effective listening skills when they taught the skill. The classroom observation revealed that the teachers did not use the appropriate stages of teaching listening during teaching. They need to start with participatory activities which can involve the students through the provision of pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities [18]. In addition, listening skills teachers are supposed to utilize cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies when they teach listening to help their students develop effective listening skills. Effective listening strategies such as strategies of planning, monitoring and evaluation of the processes followed by students in learning listening skills were totally overlooked by the teachers. In teaching effective listening skills, teachers have to focus on producing students who can use listening strategies to maximize their comprehension of aural input, identify relevant and irrelevant information, and tolerate less than word-by- word comprehension. In addition, listening

tasks need to address the process of comprehension monitoring. When they learn to listen, students have to be made to verify predictions they had made at pre-listening stage, check for inaccurate guesses, decide what is important to understand and what is not, listen again to check comprehension, and ask for teachers' support [23,18]. However, the teachers who were observed did not do any of these.

The research uncovered that teacher-related factors, students-related factors, learning contexts were the main impeding factors to the teaching and the development of listening skills. Skills and abilities of teaching were teacher related factors. Among students- related factors, lack of motivation and interest were the most impeding factors. With regard to this [7,16] revealed that the success of teaching, in general, and the teaching of language skills, in particular, in the absence of good motivation is questionable. Among learning context related factors, class size was identified as an impeding factor to the development of effective listening skill. In relation to this, Reference [22] stated that large class related problem like noise and the physical setting of the classroom affect the teaching of listening comprehension skills. This scholar also indicated that listeners' limited vocabulary, failure to recognize signals when the speaker passes from one point to another, inability to concentrate, problem of interpretation affect listening comprehension.

## **7. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **7.1 Conclusions**

This research was aimed at investigating teachers and students' awareness of the role of effective listening skills in students' academic achievement in Ilu Abba Bora zone of Oromiya National Regional State of Ethiopia. It particularly focused on Gore, Mettu and Hurmu secondary schools on the basis of their proximities. The study tried to address teachers' and students' views of effective listening and its teaching/learning. In addition, the study tried to identify the strategies used by teacher to teach listening skill to secondary school students. Furthermore, it was intended to find out the major impeding factors to the development of effective listening skills in students. In so doing, the study had tried to answer the following basic research questions: What are the views, and the level of teachers' and learners' awareness about effective listening and its teaching/learning? How do teachers and students see the role of effective listening in academic achievement? What are the main listening strategies used by teachers to develop students' effective listening skill? What do you think of conditions impeding effective listening? On the basis of the findings of the following conclusions were drawn.

The findings of the study indicated that the teachers and students have wrong views about effective listening skills and the roles it has in learners' academic achievement. Both of the informants overtly pinpointed that they were not aware of the role of effective listening in supporting students in their academic performance across disciple. This was evident from the finding from the participants who were not English teachers which indicated that listening skill was not totally their concern. This is an indication of wrong perception among the teachers.

It was found out that the EFL teachers did not totally use metacognitive listening strategies to help their students develop their effective listening skills in their class. The teachers sometimes used cognitive strategies. This shows that their awareness of the strategies to be used in teaching listening skills was low.



It was evident from the research that the major impeding factors to the development of effective listening skills were teacher-related factors, student-related factors, learning context related factors and factors related to students' lexical knowledge.

In general, teachers and students were ignorant of the role of effective listening skills in helping students in their academic performance. Moreover, the attention given by teachers to the development of students' listening skills, in general, and their effective listening skills, in particular, was very less. On the basis of the findings of the study and the conclusion made, the following recommendations were forwarded:

## **7.2. Recommendations**

- The importance of effective listening skill is not confined to the classroom context. It transcends the arena of academia and goes to the extent of influencing people's communication or life in one way or another in a wider spectrum. Therefore teachers should be made aware of the indispensability of this skill, and should be made to work on improving it..
- All knowledge based subject teachers should be made to improve their views on effective listening skill through trainings and workshops.
- Teachers across discipline should be made to know that poor listening skill can affect students' performance in all subjects..
- Views and attitudes affect actual performance. Therefore, the concerned body (Ministry of education, regional education office and zonal education office) should work on changing the wrong views teachers and students hold on effective listening skills through refreshing trainings and workshops.
- EFL teachers and other concerned educational stake holders should offer awareness raising trainings to secondary school teachers on the role of effective listening skills in students' academic achievement and performance.
- English language specialists (from Universities) should give trainings to secondary school teachers on strategies for teaching listening skills.
- EFL teachers should take the responsibility of making efforts to develop their profession in general and their skills of teaching language skills.
- The teachers were unaware of cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies which help students' to develop effective listening skill. Thus, the regional and zonal education offices should give to them training.
- Teachers should make students aware that listening is a skill which they need to develop for their success in all academic discipline.
- Teachers and other concerned body should work in collaborating on overcoming factors which impede the success development of effective listening skill.
- Schools should provide the necessary teaching material and authentic texts used for teaching effective listening skills.
- The role of effective listening skill on learners' academic performance has not got much focus by researchers. Therefore, Scholar in the area of linguistics, language teaching and others should conduct

further research in this area.

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