

Awareness of Factors Affecting Listening Comprehension: A Study Based on English as Second Language Learners

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Studies on Second Language Listening comprehension have been a neglected area and in recent years, there has been an increasing interest in researches related to several fields including factors that influence listening comprehension. The current research has therefore been designed to investigate the ESL learners' awareness of factors that affect listening comprehension in the context of Sri Lanka. The study is based on 100 intermediate students following Higher National Diploma in English at Advanced Technological Institute, Kegalle. The students were given seven factors that affect listening comprehension to name top three factors that affect their listening. According to the frequency of mention, three major factors as speech rate of the audio, accent used in the audio and vocabulary knowledge of the listener are selected to research the factor that affects listening comprehension most. The students were grouped into several groups as students who listened to different speech rates ; fast, average and slow, and as students who listened to different accents ; British English and Sri Lankan English, and as students with different vocabulary levels; better and less vocabulary knowledge. Two listening tests were conducted and all groups were made to listen to the same tests followed by a questionnaire. The findings revealed that students with better vocabulary knowledge have performed most and students with less vocabulary knowledge have performed least. Fast speech rate has resulted in second lowest scores while the difference in the accent has not caused a major impact on the performance. Discrepancies in students' perception on the factors affecting listening comprehension and their performance were identified as students perceived accent as the factor that affect listening most while the performance suggested that vocabulary knowledge is the factor that affect listening most. Accordingly, it was concluded that the students are unaware of the factors that affect listening comprehension.

Key words: Listening Comprehension, speech rate, accent, vocabulary knowledge, awareness