Abstract: The study sought to assess the listening habits among college students and their effects on their academic performance. It also examines whether more attention needs to be paid to listening as a necessary skill. The study was conducted on law college students. A questionnaire was used for the data collection. The data collected were analyzed quantitatively with the use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Figures and tables were used to present the results of findings. From the total of 500 copies of questionnaire distributed, 475 copies, representing 95.0% were filled and returned. The findings showed that majority of the respondents acknowledge the importance of listening, some of the respondents neither listened nor read any informative speech while some of the respondents only listened for the purpose of having good grades and passing examination. The study confirmed that listening habit has a greater influence on academic performance and there is a close relationship between listening habit and academic performance. The study recommended among others that teachers/mentors should be advised to stop providing handouts to students but rather encourage them to use the best possible resources for research and training and also, the current system of assessing students should be given a second thought with respect to the formulae of assessment.

Keywords: Effective Listening, Communication, Attention efforts, Reading Interest, Academic Performance, Academic Resources, Students, Tertiary Institution

Introduction

Listening is a very essential part of Communication. It cannot be complete unless a message we want to deliver is heard and retained thoroughly and positively by the listener’s. Healthy listening encourages optimistic attitude, healthy relations and more participation.

The groundwork for the recognition of listening as a field of inquiry was laid primarily in the late 1940s by the pioneering works of the “father’s of listening”, James Brown, Ralph Nicholas and Carl Weaver, who have researched it for more than thirty three years. Even though, they found listening to be the most frequently used mode of communication but it was until late 1940s that listening attempts were attempted and established.

From the mid 1950s to the late 1970s, listening habits were focused on the teaching /learning pedagogical aspects of listening and on its assessment. It has attained a form of uniformity on the part of students towards understanding academic topic and passing in examinations. The listening abilities were focused on comprehensive and critical listening in 1979 when the first listening society was established which brought tighter all the researchers from varied fields such as Sociology, Psychology, Communication, Social Sciences etc. (Feyten, 1991)

Listening habits determine the academic accomplishments of students to a great extent. Both listening and academic accomplishments are interrelated and interdependent on each other. Students often come from varied backgrounds and places with different levels of academic accomplishments. Therefore, they might be at variance when it comes to listening practice. While some students have good listening habits, others tend to exhibit poor listening habits. Academic accomplishment means how much knowledge the individual has acquired from the institution. (Bashir & Mattoo, 2012).

An innovative and practical education system involves the habit of personal exploration. The present day act of personal exploration requires self-study to be followed by self-thinking and analysis. Self-study, referred to as reading at one’s own accord, requires a habit that makes way for a better understanding of one’s own experiences and it can be an stimulating journey to self-discovery.

“Reading habit is best formed at a young
impressionable age in school, but once formed it can last one’s life time (Green, 2001).

Listening carefully in the classroom sessions followed by academic achievement are essential for research workers and educationists to know that every student whether he or she is gifted, average, normal or backward etc, should be educated in his or her own way but if he or she possesses good listening habits, he or she can perform well in academics and in every situation. It is the reading habits which help the learner in obtaining meaningful and desirable knowledge. Good listening habits act as a strong weapon for the students to excel in life.

Listening habit is a critical and significant aspect for creating a literate society in this world. It shapes the personality of individuals and it helps them to develop proper thinking and creating new ideas. However, the developments in the communication had continued to influence interest in listening in the form of interactive sessions, seminars and conferences, training programmes among others.

The effective communication is important avenue of effective learning and reading is interrelated with the total educational process and hence, educational success requires successful listening habit. He believes listening is the identification of the words and the association of appropriate meaning with them. It requires identification and comprehension. Comprehension skills help the learner to understand the meaning of words in isolation and in context. Before the advent of the television, both the young and the old found enough time to listen to each other’s communication. Apart from teachers, other professionals used to spend their leisure time in either reading books or debating on a crucial issue both English and regional language. English medium schools almost always demanded extra reading from their students. But all these have become a thing of the past. But, nowadays, reading and listening habit has lost its importance as both the young and the old are glued to their mobile phones, laptops and other electronic gadgets and no one likes to listen to the other fellow. As far as educational institutions are concerned, training students for the examinations seems to be the be-all and end-all of our present educational scenario.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem most students have that contributes to their poor performance in tests and examinations is lack of proper listening habits. For an excellent performance, there is the need for the students to develop good listening and studying habits. At present, due to the influence of the media communication, people do not show much interest in reading books; magazines and journals, among others (Palani, 2012). The by-products of scientific and technological inventions and innovations have also contributed greatly to the dwindling fortunes of the good practice of listening among majority of the students. Today, many students prefer to watch movies and other shows on the laptops, listen to online music, watching online videos, among others (Issa, 2012). Many parents and teachers complain about students of our generation who have not developed good listening habits among themselves.

One of the many issues confronting students nowadays is perhaps, not their inability to listen carefully but their lack of interest. From the above assertion, the work was conducted to examine the listening habits among students and the effects on their academic performance in tertiary institutions, specifically among College students.

**Objectives of the study**

The general objective of the research is to assess the listening habits of students and how it affects their performance. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the listening habits (styles) among students
2. To assess the effect of listening habits on students’ performance
3. To examine the communication and the content students listen
4. To ascertain why students engage in listening
5. To ascertain the relationship between listening habit and academic performance

**Some barriers to effective listening**

Unfortunately, it is not astonishing that students don’t listen efficiently and most of us have not been taught how to do so. We learn how to read, speak and write but not how to listen. Even the Training programmes offered by reputed organizations place a great emphasis on honing the presentation skills as well as written communication skills but ignore listening skills. However, mastering listening skills is very crucial and significant in the present high-tech world if we...
are to become efficient and excellent communicators. By putting forth a conscious effort, we can surely become effective listeners. Before knowing the different tips to develop effective listening skills, let us identify the barriers to listening so as to overcome them efficiently. The following are ten major common barriers to good listening:

- Talking excessively without listening to a person/communicator
- Different types of distractions and noise around
- Excessive attachment to personal beliefs and values
- Inability to hear correctly & interrupting a conversation in the middle
- Not paying accurate attention
- Having close minded attitude that you may have prejudged what the other person is trying to say even before the words come out
- The problem of different accents
- Lack of training in listening skills is another important barrier

Finally gender differences can also be a barrier to listening as it is not easy if a person unable to identify these obstacles that stand in the way of effective listening. There may be barriers to effective listening, but understanding these barriers can help to overcome them and become a more effective listener.

**Literature Review**

Listening is the absorption of the meanings of words and sentences by the brain that leads to the understanding of facts and ideas. But listening takes attention, or sticking to the task at hand in spite of distractions. It requires concentration, focus of your thoughts upon one particular problem. Active listening is a method of responding to another that encourages communication paying and attention to the person who is speaking. Paying attention to the listener’s words not just by moving your body but if truly interested (which is often just a matter of attitude) then the body will happily follow the mind. (JStor.org)

The fundamental attitude to support this is to value and accept all people, even if you do not agree with what they have to say or how they say it. Thus, if you disagree, disagree with the argument and not with the person. Show your acceptance of their right to differ with you, whilst stating your opposition to what they say.

Listening is the ability to understand words contained in a dialogue and make use of the knowledge for personal growth and development (Dadzie, 2008). This implies making meaning out of recorded information either printed or non-printed in the life of an individual. People listen for different reasons and purposes, some of which include for pleasure, leisure, relaxation, information and for knowledge.

Listening is the identification of the words and the association of suitable meaning attached with them. Comprehension skills help the learner to understand the meaning of words in isolation and in context (Palani, 2012). Hence, listening is a process of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning and problem solving.

According to (Cheatham 2000), listenership is an intellectual action which is possible only if a person forms a habit of listening and practices from the age of early childhood. Listening habits, therefore, play a very crucial role in enabling a person to achieve practical efficiency.

It further, follows that if we are in the practice of listening regularly without thinking about it because of the permanence of its continuity then, one can conclude that good listening habits have been formed. This is because a habit is formed instinctively when an individual does something many times lately becomes an essential part of a person’s life. Incidentally, many students do not belong in the category of those with good reading habits. Their poor or bad reading habits could partly be held responsible for a wide-ranging poor performance that the institutional systems usually record in both internal and external examinations (Issa et al, 2012).

Perhaps, due to lack of good listening habits among students, academic performance with respect to their examination result has been dismal nowadays creating a great source of worry and concern for all public policy makers in the educational sector (Issa et al, 2012). The setting of “crashed programmes such as certificate courses, workshop and seminars” rather prevalent in the educational systems today has not been supportive in the development of the good practices of listening as
most of the participants are not keen on listening throughout the entire planned sessions. It was also noticed as those who are not keen on listening could be the disruptive or upsetting factors mess up the entire session. Thus, the enthusiasm associated with the urge to engage in listening practices voluntarily, pleasurably and extensively is almost nearly absent among the greater number of students in the educational system today (Issa et al, 2012).

**Theoretical background**

Bandura’s Social Learning Theory states that people learn from one another, via observation, imitation, and modeling and there is a close relationship between behaviorist and cognitive learning theories because it encompasses attention, memory and motivation. The social learning theory states that parents send their children to school to learn and get exposure about the outside world. Therefore, learning is a change in behaviour. Such a change is seen in their mental reasoning, physical growth, manipulative skills and development of values and interests. The change may be easy or difficult depending on the home and the learning environment. (Ogbodo, 2010)

**There are mainly six types of listening habits.**

Discriminative, Comprehension, Critical, Biased, Evaluative, Appreciative, Sympathetic, Empathetic, Therapeutic, Dialogic, Relationship. The practice of listening helps one to be versatile in knowledge in many areas and the person can discuss issues knowledgeably with others.

**Methodology**

Survey method with the use of questionnaire was used for data collection. Copies of questionnaire were administered on college students with the assistance of trained research personnel. This study through systematic simple random sampling technique with a sample of 500 and above, a sample size of is acceptable. To improve the Reliability and validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire was Pilot-tested on similar neighborhood but with a very smaller sample group.

From the total of six hundred copies of questionnaire distributed, five hundred and five were filled and returned, representing a response rate of 95.0%.

**Discussion of Findings**

**Table 1 Students participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total No. of students</th>
<th>600</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No of students participated</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Student who participated in the study</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Response**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Got to learn new things</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Got bored</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prefer interactive sessions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should be practical rather than explaining the same old concepts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that out of 600 questionnaires 505 students returned the questionnaire properly filled and rest 95 copies were dropped because of incomplete answers.

**Chart 1 Response of the students**

From Figure 1 out of the total respondents of 600, 40% indicated that they get bored while listening in the class or while attending any workshop, seminar/conference, 30% indicated to learn new things, 20% indicated they prefer interactive sessions and 10% indicated that the sessions hold be practical rather than explaining the same old concepts.

The indication was that most of the respondents had the view that listening to an interesting topic enables them to express themselves well. This finding concurs with that of listening habit as an essential and important aspect of creating the literate society, because it shapes the personality of an individual and helps him/her to develop the proper thinking methods, and create new ideas. This finding also agrees with the assertion of that there is no doubt that through listening, the individual is able to build or fix things, enjoy sessions that are planned for them, discover what
Influence of Listening on Academic Performance

Listening had an influence on academic performance, 40% agreed, 30% disagreed, while 25% strongly disagreed that listening had influence on academic performance. The inference was that most To confirm the information obtained, a follow up question was asked, whether good listening habits had a relationship with academic performance, 55.4% of the respondents said “yes” but 35.2% said “no” as against 9.4% who were uncertain whether there was any link between good listening habits and academic performance. From the study, the majority response indicated that students with good listening habits are able to understand questions easily and better express themselves as opposed to those who do not have good listening habits. This finding agrees with Issa et al (2012) that engaging in reading continuously considerably influences ones studying skills and subsequent academic performance.

Conclusion

The study revealed that 85.5% of the respondents acknowledge the importance of listening and helps them to express themselves better. However, the study also found that 81.9% had not read a novel or fiction within the two preceding semesters and only 18% said they had read a novel or fiction within the same period. The study further confirmed that 75.0% respondents engage in reading just to pass an examination. It was also confirmed in the study that 62.0% of the respondents visit the library to read lecture notes, 25.0% to read textbooks and only 3.0% visit the library to read novels or fiction. The study revealed that majority of the respondents had the view that reading habits have effect on academic performance and that there is a direct relationship between reading habits and academic performance. The study further found out that laziness is one of the basic hindrances to reading among the respondents.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Maintaining eye contact to the maximum extent. In fact, good listening begins with making and maintaining eye contact with whoever is speaking.
2. Always be open to accept new ideas and information.
3. Students must keep on asking question that demonstrates that how well they have understood the speaker’s ideas and also those they are listening to him.
4. Sit up straight or lean forward slightly to show the attentiveness through body language.
5. Don’t interrupt in the middle. Let the speaker finish what she/ he is saying before you explain your point of view or ask questions.

It is further recommended that lessons on communication skills should be made mandatory for all first students to learn new ways of teaching-learning pedagogy. This will go a long way to inculcate listening habits into the students.

It is becoming quite a major issue in many academic institutions that students tend to depend on Lecture notes rather done rather doing self-studying/learning attitude. The faculty staff should engage students in several assignments and presentations and these should form a greater part of the assessment process of students. Currently, examination takes 70% and assignments take only 30%. When this trend is reversed, it will help students to acquire more skills in searching for information than adopting the “chew and pour” syndrome.

Finally it is recommended that parents should help their children cultivate the listening skills when they are young, so that it becomes part and parcel of their everyday life. When this is done, it will help them express themselves well, learn and be good learner’s which will eventually lead to better academic performance in the near future.

REFERENCES


