



## A Survey of the Level of Junior Secondary School Students' Use of Listening Comprehension Strategies in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the level of the listening comprehension strategies that junior secondary school students in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State use in learning English Language. From a population of six thousand five hundred and thirty four (6534) Junior Secondary 3 students in public schools, a total of six hundred and sixty two (662) students constituted the sample size drawn through the stratified sampling and simple random techniques from six (6) sampled schools. Two instruments titled Listening Comprehension Proficiency Test (LCPT), developed by TOEFL and Listening Comprehension Strategy Questionnaire (LCSQ) adopted from Oxford (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) were used to collect the data for the study. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation). Results indicated that among the six strategy categories, Metacognitive ( $M=2.16$ ,  $SD=.46$ ), had the highest mean, followed by the Cognitive ( $M=1.97$ ,  $SD=.34$ ), Compensation ( $M=1.97$ ,  $SD=.46$ ), Social ( $M=1.95$ ,  $SD=.47$ ) and Memory ( $M=1.89$ ,  $SD=.41$ ). Affective ( $M=1.84$ ,  $SD=.43$ ) had the lowest mean. On the average, all the variables put together the findings from research question 2 indicates that the subjects had a mean score of 1.96 which is lower than the theoretical mean of 2.0. This indicates that students' use of listening strategies is low. As a result, the study proposed that learners should be exposed to listening strategy instruction.

**Keywords:** Listening Comprehension strategies, Memory strategies, Cognitive strategies, Compensation strategies, Meta-cognitive strategies, Affective strategies, Social strategies

### 1. Introduction

English Language, which was introduced into Nigeria by the missionaries on arrival to Badagry in 1842, has come to stay as a veritable language, not only of cohesion, but also of government and education. Right from the pre-primary up to the university level whether in the rural or urban areas, English is the medium of instruction even though the National Policy on Education (NPE 2012) stipulates that the "medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years." This means that the Nigerian child's access to the cultural and scientific knowledge of the world is largely through English through listening to or reading books in which these are documented. However, students seem not to be able to listen effectively or read efficiently. Listening, the most frequently used form of language skill, plays a significant role in daily communication and educational process. In spite of its importance, listening ability development has received only slight emphasis in the language classroom.

Vandergrift (2007) defines listening strategies as strategies that listeners consciously or unconsciously use in order to understand, analyse, and interpret a spoken text. Vandergrift used the tripartite classification scheme of meta-cognitive, cognitive and socio/affective strategies as the framework for classifying listening strategies. He classified them into meta-cognitive, cognitive and socio/affective strategies. Ochoa (2014) defines listening strategies as conscious activity selection, which allows learners to take hold of the meaning of any listening material in a more effective way. Goh (2005) describes listening strategies as conscious procedures that are used for understanding, recalling and remembering information.

O'Malley and Chamot (1996), define language learning strategies as "the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information". They differentiated listening strategies into three categories depending on the level or type of processing involved: Meta-cognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and social/affective strategies. Meta-cognitive strategies involve thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring the learning task, and evaluating how well one has learned. Cognitive strategies involve interacting with the material to be learned, manipulating the material mentally or physically, or applying a specific technique to a learning task. Social and affective strategies involve interacting with another person to assist learning or using affective control to assist the learning task.

Oxford (1990) defines language learning strategies as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations". She added that "strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence (p. 1)." From an extensive review of the literature, Oxford gathered a large number of language learning strategies, which she divided into two major classes: direct and indirect. Direct language learning strategies are strategies that directly involve the target language, while indirect strategies support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language (Oxford, 1990). Both direct and indirect strategies support each other in helping the learner to gain autonomy.

On the basis of factor analyses, she divided strategies into six groups: *memory strategies* (such as grouping or using imagery, which help students store and retrieve new information), *cognitive strategies* (such as summarizing or reasoning deductively, which enable learners to understand and produce new language by many different means), *compensation strategies* (like guessing or using synonyms, which allow learners to use the language despite large gaps in knowledge), *Metacognitive strategies* (which allow learners to control their own cognition by using functions such as centering, arranging, planning and evaluating), *affective strategies* (which help to regulate emotions, motivations, and attitudes) and *social strategies* ( which help students learn through interaction with others). Memory, cognitive and compensation strategies fall under the direct class, while metacognitive, affective, and social strategies fall under the indirect class. These six categories underlie the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) used by Oxford and others for a great deal of research in the learning strategy field.

The two major classes of learning strategies identified by Oxford have been adopted for this study by the researchers to explain and describe the listening strategies used by junior secondary students in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.

Nevertheless, in Nigerian secondary school classrooms, listening serves as a primary channel for learning, and therefore requires that students function effectively as listeners. It is therefore important for ESL programmes to prepare students for successful listening in academic lectures by teaching effective listening strategies and using authentic listening materials for practice in ESL classrooms. A large proportion of students' time is spent listening to the teacher during the teaching and learning process. All secondary school students need to develop good listening strategies to be able to perform well not only in English Language but in all school subjects as they all depend on the skill. However, the development of the skill is more critical at the junior secondary school level to enable the students move seamlessly into the senior secondary and tertiary levels where more serious academic work is done. Without an efficient listening skill, students may not progress adequately in their academic career.

Available records in the Ministry of Education (Statistics Division) indicate that students have been performing poorly in English Language in the Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE). Without notes or handouts, ideas given to students during lessons are lost. Students' performance in the subject has been poor. The situation is so bad that so many students are unable to secure admission into the university every year because of their poor grades in English. Studies on methods of teaching have been conducted over the years and recommendations for improvement made, yet the problem persists. For this reason, since the 70's, researchers have shifted their attention from the teachers to the learners (Wenden & Rubin, 1998). Is there anything that the learners need to do to improve the situation? With the increasing interest in learners, more and more studies have been conducted to investigate language learners' learning strategies. As a result of this, a study of the language learning strategies employed by students in the process of learning the language of education is relevant. One of the methods learners can become actively involved in controlling their own learning is by using well known and tested listening strategies. How do students listen to their teachers? Do they apply any strategies?

## 2. Statement of the Problem

In spite of the many advantages inherent in teaching students listening skills, an observation of the teaching and learning activities in our junior secondary schools revealed that it is not given adequate attention. Despite the fact that

listening is the language skill that is used the most, it is the one that is taught the least in the classroom. Listening strategy instruction seems to be the missing piece in the puzzle of most language teaching programmes. Learners do not know how to improve their listening skills, and how to overcome listening comprehension problems, despite the fact that careful/skillful listening is a way of learning a language. Students and teachers do not recognize the importance of the development of this skill.

Students' poor performance in English could therefore be attributed to their poor listening skill. Students are not taught listening comprehension neither are they taught effective strategies of listening. Most basal readers that are used in Nigerian secondary schools do not have sections on listening comprehension. The few that have sections on listening only have exercises on testing listening and not on teaching it. Since this is the case, what strategies are junior secondary school students using to facilitate their listening in English?

Listening comprehension is at the heart of language learning. Since language learning requires intentional listening, students are expected to be made aware of strategies that will be useful to them. Proficiency in listening comprehension makes a central contribution to the learner's overall development of competency in a second language. This could be one of the reasons why students' performance in English Language in internal and external examinations is poor. The implication is that they do not listen effectively. Unfortunately, they are not taught listening comprehension as well as listening comprehension strategies, neither do the different examination bodies in Nigeria test the listening skill. This study is therefore designed to find out the different strategies used by junior secondary students to overcome listening comprehension problems in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.

### 3. Research Questions

To find out the strategies used, the following questions were posed:

1. Which listening comprehension strategies do junior secondary school students use when their teachers teach them?
2. How frequently do the students use listening comprehension strategies when they listen to their teachers?
3. Is there a relationship between listening comprehension strategy use and listening proficiency in English among junior secondary school students?

Research question 3 is hypothesised thus:

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between listening comprehension strategy use and listening proficiency in English among junior secondary school students.

It is hoped that this study would provide information to teachers to have a better understanding of their students' listening difficulties and examine their own teaching methods to improve students' listening comprehension. It is also expected to draw teachers' attention to the importance of helping their students to develop listening comprehension strategies which will make them efficient listeners and effective learners. It is hoped too that this study will encourage curriculum developers to include the teaching of listening skills and strategies in the language programmes.

### 4. Review of Related Literature

Researchers such as Chamot (2001), Cohen (1998), O'Malley (1987), Oxford (1990) and Wenden (1991), have suggested that learners might be able to learn language more effectively by the use of language learning (listening) strategies. Although researchers have recently been interested in strategies employed by language learners, the concept is however not new. Mnemonic or memory devices have been used in ancient times by story tellers. As a language teacher, the first researcher often explains to her students that to identify vowel and consonant sounds they "should associate them with words that they will not forget."

A number of studies have been done to investigate the listening comprehension strategies that have been used by ESL/EFL learners. However, most of them were carried out in Asia, Canada and the United States of America in university settings with undergraduate and graduate students (Adbalhamid, 2012; Amin, Amin, and Aly, 2011; Bidabadi & Yamat, 2011; Eslahkonha & Mall- Amiri, 2014;; Goh, 2002; Mohseny & Raeisi, 2009).

Abdalhamid (2012) carried out a study titled "Comprehension Listening Strategies of Arabic-speaking ESL Learners". A total of 30 Arabic-speaking ESL learners were administered a listening comprehension test and a listening strategy use questionnaire. The participants were both graduates and undergraduates of different fields, all native speakers of Arabic, who had been in the US for more than one year. The results indicated that cognitive strategies are the most powerful predictor of listening comprehension, followed by socio-affective strategies, whereas metacognitive

strategies were the predictor that accounted the least for listening comprehension.

Goh (2002) investigated the listening strategies and tactics used by a group of ESL learners. Participants were male and female students, aged between 18 and 19, from the People's Republic of China. Goh (2002) identified a total of 44 different tactics used by the learners: 22 cognitive tactics grouped under eight cognitive strategies and 22 metacognitive tactics grouped under six metacognitive strategies. Goh (2002) concluded that although individual tactics were useful, successful comprehension also depended on whether the listener was able to combine various mental tactics in a way that could truly enhance comprehension.

Amin, Amin, and Aly (2011), conducted "A Correlation Study between EFL Strategic Listening and Listening Comprehension Skills among Secondary School Students". The subjects of the study consisted of 80 female first year secondary school Students, at El-Shimaa Secondary School for Girls, Benha, Qalyoubiya Governorate, Egypt. Participants' strategic listening was measured by a Strategic Listening Interview (SLI), a Strategic Listening Questionnaire (SLQ) and a Strategic Listening Checklist (SLC) with think-aloud protocol. Their listening comprehension skills were measured using an EFL listening comprehension test. A Pearson correlation analysis was run to test the correlation between strategic listening and listening comprehension test scores. The findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between strategic listening and listening comprehension. The higher the level of strategic listening these students obtained, the higher the score they obtained on the listening comprehension test and vice versa

Eslahkonha and Mall-Amiri, (2014) investigated the correlation between English Language listening comprehension ability and listening strategy use among Iranian TEFL junior university students. Seventy (70) junior TEFL university undergraduates at Alborz University in Qazvin, Iran were randomly selected. The Oxford Placement Test developed by Allan (1992), was employed to identify the students' listening comprehension ability, and a Listening Strategy Questionnaire developed by Vandergrift (1997) was used to identify the strategies they employ in listening situations. The data were analyzed using the Pearson Correlation formula, the results of which revealed a statistically significant relationship between the listening strategies (meta-cognitive, cognitive and, socio-affective) employed by advanced, intermediate and, lower-intermediate TEFL students and their listening comprehension ability level.

In Nigeria, little or no study had been done on the listening comprehension strategies used by junior secondary school students. Consequently, the current study recognizes the important role of the listening skill in junior secondary schools in Nigeria, as it is the skill that other language skills draw from and is interested in finding out the listening strategies used by students in junior secondary schools to learn English, since the students are not taught any listening strategies. This is the gap that the study intends to fill by investigating the listening comprehension strategies used by junior secondary school students in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.

## 5. Methodology

This study employed the descriptive survey design. This design was chosen so as to collect information already in existence from the respondents using a questionnaire and a proficiency test to describe the listening strategies used by junior secondary school students in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The independent variable for the study is listening comprehension strategies. The dependent variable of this study is listening comprehension proficiency.

Subjects in the present study comprise six hundred and sixty-two (662) junior secondary school students from six (6) sampled schools drawn from a population of six thousand five hundred and thirty four students (6534) in Oredo Local Government Area, using simple random sampling procedure.

Two instruments were used to collect the data for the current study. The first instrument, a test of listening comprehension tagged "Listening Comprehension Proficiency Test (LCPT)" developed by TOEFL (2014) was adopted for the study. It consists of sections A and B. Section A solicits information about the students such as name of student, name of school, sex and school type. Section B which consists of ten (10) multiple choice questions was used to test the students' ability to listen for basic interpersonal, instructional and academic purposes. The second instrument is a questionnaire of listening comprehension strategies tagged "Listening Comprehension Strategy Questionnaire (LCSQ)", adapted from Oxford (1990). As Oxford's original questionnaire was based on general language strategies including listening, reading, speaking and writing strategies, and the focus of this study is only on listening comprehension strategy use, only the questions related to the listening strategies were used in this questionnaire. The original instrument consists of fifty (50) items describing the strategies second language learners use generally to learn language with each statement having a five point Likert-item rating. The ratings are weighted as follows: 1. "Never or almost never true of me"; 2. "Usually not true of me"; 3. "Somewhat true of me"; 4. "Usually true of me"; 5. "Always or almost always true of me". However, the researchers because of the level of their subjects reduced the number of items to thirty five (35), and also

reduced the number of ratings to three alternatives weighted as follows:1 “Never”; 2 “Sometimes”; 3 “Always”. Thirty five (35) questions were divided into the six (6) types of strategies, while the questionnaire consists of sections A and B. Section A solicits information about the students such as name of student, name of school, sex and school type. Section B is divided into six sections A, B, C, D, E and F to cover the six types of strategies proposed by Oxford (1990) and adopted for this study.

In order to validate these two instruments LCPT and LCSQ and to determine their suitability for this study, they were subjected to expert appraisal and criticism to achieve face and content validity.

Reliability check of the instruments was done via a pilot study using thirty (30) students, who were randomly selected from a school outside the sampled schools. The internal consistency reliability of the Listening Comprehension Proficiency Test (LCPT) was estimated using Kuder- Richardson Formula 20 (KR20) and a reliability coefficient of .71 was obtained. Cronbach’s Alpha reliability test was used in calculating the reliability coefficient of the LCSQ. Reliability coefficient of .77 was obtained showing therefore that the instruments have satisfied Kuder- Richardson Formula 20 and Cronbach’s Alpha reliability tests.

## 6. Procedure

The study was conducted using intact classes. In administering the instrument what the study was about and what they were required to do in the study were explained to the subjects. They listened to the researchers read short passages and then answered the questions given to them by putting a circle around the correct option. Passages on the questions were read only once. The researchers read the dialogues after the Listening Comprehension Strategy Questionnaire (LCSQ) were administered on the subjects. Because students of junior secondary schools were the subjects of the study, the researchers had to explain every item on the questionnaire to the students before they indicated their opinion. In each school the exercise lasted for an average of one hour twenty minutes. At the end of the exercise, a worksheet titled Listening Comprehension Strategy Questionnaire Worksheet (LCSQW) was distributed to the subjects, and their responses were calculated.

The results showed each subject the kind of strategy they use in learning English and their level of strategy use. Those whose average scores were between 2.5- 3.0 made high use of strategies; 1.5- 2.4 medium strategy use; 1.0- 1.4 low strategy use.

Descriptive statistics was used to answer research question one (1). Data collected to answer research questions 1 and 2 were analysed using the mean and standard deviation statistics. For research question 2, the acceptable mean value on each of the six category of listening comprehension strategy use is 2 points. This is derived thus; weights 3, 2, and 1 were assigned to the indicators ‘Always,’ ‘Sometimes,’ and ‘Never’ respectively. To obtain the acceptable mean, the values 3, 2 and 1 were added together and divided by  $3 / (3+2+1=6)=2$ .

## 7. Results

### 7.1 Research Question 1

Which listening comprehension strategies do junior secondary school students use when their teachers teach them?

Data collected to answer research question 1 were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation). The result of the analysis is shown in table 1.

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard Deviation of Listening Comprehension Strategy Use of Students

Strategy Category	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Memory	662	1.89	.41	5
Cognitive	662	1.97	.34	2
Compensation	662	1.97	.46	3
Metacognitive	662	2.16	.46	1
Affective	662	1.84	.43	6
Social	662	1.95	.47	4

Table 1 shows the mean statistics of the six strategy categories used by junior secondary school students based on the listening strategy questionnaire completed by the subjects of the study. Among the six strategy categories, Meta-

cognitive (M=2.16, SD= .46), has the highest mean. The Cognitive strategy (M=1.97, SD= .34), Compensation strategy (M=1.97, SD=.46), Social strategy (M=1.95, SD=.47) and Memory strategy (M=1.89, SD=.41). The Affective strategy (M=1.84, SD=.43) has the lowest mean. A bar chart summarizes the results (Figure 1)

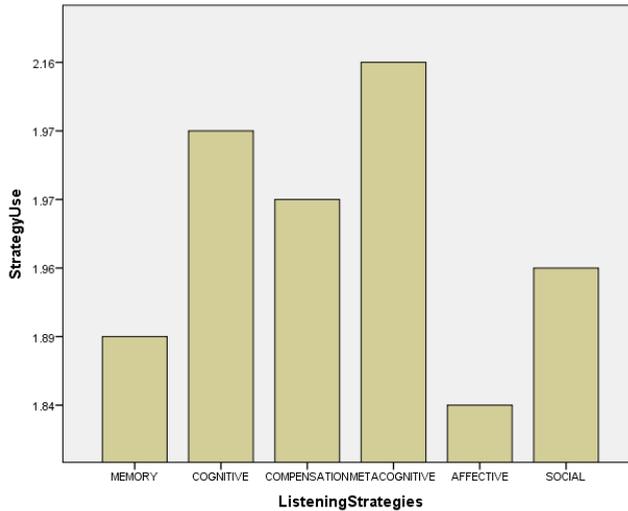


Fig. 1. Bar chart Showing of Listening Comprehension Strategy Use of Students

Where:

- Memory Strategy = 1.89
- Cognitive Strategy = 1.97
- Compensation Strategy = 1.97
- Meta-cognitive Strategy =2.16
- Affective Strategy = 1.84
- Social Strategy =1.96

This shows that the students made use of listening strategies, but to what level or extent?

## 7.2 Research Question 2

What is the frequency of use of listening comprehension strategies by junior secondary school students when they listen to their teachers? Data collected to answer research question 2 were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation). The result of the analysis is shown in table 2.

Table 2: Overall Mean and Standard Deviation of Listening Comprehension Strategy Use of Students

Strategy Category	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Memory	662	1.89	.41	5
Cognitive	662	1.97	.34	2
Compensation	662	1.97	.46	3
Meta-cognitive	662	2.16	.46	1
Affective	662	1.84	.43	6
Social	662	1.95	.47	4
Overall	662	1.96	.34	

Table 2 reveals that the mean of overall strategy use is 1.96, which is at a medium level (with a range from 1 to 3) but less than the acceptable theoretical mean value of 2.0. This means that students' use of listening strategies is low as it is less than the acceptable theoretical mean value of 2.0.

## 8. Discussion of Findings

The findings from the research questions as presented in Table 1 shows that the respondents (students) use all the six categories of listening strategies. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) was employed to find out the mean score of listening comprehension strategies that junior secondary school students use in learning English as a second language. Among the six strategy categories, Metacognitive (M=2.16, SD= .46), has the highest mean, followed by the Cognitive (M=1.97, SD= .34), Compensation (M=1.97, SD=.46), Social (M=1.95, SD=.47); Memory (M=1.89, SD=.41) and Affective (M=1.84, SD=.43) the lowest mean. This means that of all the listening strategies, junior secondary school students use more of Meta-cognitive strategy than all the others. The reason for this could be that these subjects are self-regulated learners who are conscious of their individual learning process and the demand of their learning tasks. For this reason, they have developed a variety of strategies to meet their listening needs. The subjects use the Affective strategy least perhaps because they are afraid to take risk with language; they do not write their feelings in a language learning diary, neither do they talk to someone else about how they feel when learning English. This finding is contrary to the finding of Abdalhamid (2012), whose subjects (Arabic ESL learners in USA) use Cognitive strategies more because they have lived in a native speaker's environment for over a year and as such employ strategies that directly involve the target language as a result of their proximity to native speakers.

On the average, the finding from research question 2 indicates that the subjects had a mean score of 1.96 which is lower than the theoretical mean of 2.0. This indicates that students' use of listening strategies is low. One reason which may well explain the low level use of the strategies by the subjects of this study is the educational system which lacks listening strategy instruction. As such, many students are not very familiar with the strategies or are not accustomed to using them because they do not know what strategies they can benefit from or how to use them. Listening plays a key role in language learning for its contribution to the development of overall language proficiency. This finding that the level of students' listening strategy is low is in consonance with the views of Gbenedio (1996) who asserts that our students not speaking well could be as a result of the fact that they are not good listeners and so find it difficult to imitate their teachers. Longe and Ofuani (2008) have pointed out the weakness in listening skill not being formally taught in our regular school curricula.

The analysis of the data of the only hypothesis which states that "There is no significant relationship between listening comprehension strategy use and listening proficiency in English among junior secondary school students" revealed a Pearson Correlation Coefficient of .698 and a p-value of .000. The strength of the correlation between listening proficiency and listening strategies use is also interpreted as large according to the rule of thumb suggested by Cohen (1988) as:  $r = 0.10$  to  $0.29$  or  $r = -0.10$  to  $-0.29$  shows small correlation;  $r = 0.30$  to  $0.49$  or  $r = -0.30$  to  $-0.49$  indicates medium correlation; and  $r = 0.50$  to  $1.0$  or  $r = -0.50$  to  $-1.0$  reveals large correlation.

These findings show that there is a positive relationship between listening strategies use and listening proficiency which eventually translates to language proficiency. The implication of this finding is that as students make more use of listening strategies, their listening comprehension proficiency increases. This means that students' listening proficiency is dependent on their increased use of listening strategies. This finding is consistent with the findings of Amin, Amin and Aly (2011) Eslahkonha and Mall-Amiri (2014), who found a significant relationship between listening comprehension strategy use and listening proficiency. This hypothesis is therefore rejected, meaning that there is a significant relationship between listening comprehension strategy use and listening proficiency in English among junior secondary school students.

## 9. Conclusion

Based on the results of the current study, the following conclusions are drawn. Curriculum planners, textbook designers, teachers and students take the listening skill for granted. For this reason, students do not frequently employ the strategies of listening. The consequence of this is possibly their poor performance in internal and external examinations not only in English Language but also in other school subjects all of which are taught in English Language.

## 10. Recommendations

Students inadvertently employ listening strategies for listening comprehension even though they are not taught. However, they are not aware of what these strategies are. Students use the metacognitive strategy more even though they do not know it. Learners, who use listening strategies more, perform better in listening activities than those who use

them less. Based on the findings of the study and the conclusion drawn there-from, the following recommendations are made:

Teachers should as a matter of policy, teach listening skills as they teach other language skills. There is need for English Language teachers to familiarise themselves with the different types of listening strategies and teach learners listening strategies to enable them gain from lessons/ lectures. They should find out the listening comprehension strategies used by their students, so that they can develop teaching strategies that are compatible with their students' ways of listening. Teachers should also help students to cultivate and raise their students' awareness of language learning strategies. Also, teachers should help students to reduce anxiety, gain self-confidence and encourage cooperative learning in listening activities. ESL listening instruction should encourage students in the use of self-monitoring, self-reflecting, and self-evaluating practices, by keeping a language diary which they currently seldom use.

Text book writers should incorporate sections on listening comprehension and listening comprehension strategies in English language text books. This will facilitate the teaching of listening comprehension and listening comprehension strategies since many teachers use the text books as their major teaching material.

Curriculum planners should revisit the English Language curriculum with a view to paying attention to the teaching of the listening skill, while government should organise workshops, seminars and in-service training for language teachers on the importance of the listening skill, and the inculcation of listening strategies in the students for learner autonomy in language learning.

Finally, the different examination bodies in Nigeria should test the listening skill as they test other language skills, so that teachers and students will have no choice but to pay attention to it. According to Richards (2008) "... if listening is not tested, teachers won't teach it."

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