Listening Assessment Practices In High School EFL Classrooms

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Abstract: This article explores how assessing listening is important for teachers understand high school students' ability to comprehend spoken language. The research focuses on identifying proper assessment techniques and types of listening tasks used in classrooms. The goals of it and approaches to listening assessment are highlighted. Data are collected through the studies of researchers and scientists. This study suggests using a wider variety of listening assessment tools, improving audio materials by learning students' strengths and weaknesses.

Keywords: Receptive skills; formative and summative assessment; language proficiency; English language teaching, macro and micro skills.

Introduction: Assessing listening skills is crucial to figuring out how well students comprehend spoken language. It assesses how well listeners can interpret information, follow speech, and recognize meaning in various communicative circumstances. According to Brown (2019), listening assessments should determine how students interpret sound rather than only testing word recall. Both top-down (using prior information, prediction, and inference) and bottom-up (identifying sounds, words, and grammar) skills are integrated in an effective hearing evaluation.

Objectives of the Listening Assessment:

Determine the level of listening: To adjust assignments and resources according to students' skill levels.

Test your ability to listen: To assess comprehension of the speaker's aim, specifics, and primary ideas.

Monitor progress: To keep eyes on students' growth over time.

Inform instruction: To assist educators in identifying particular listening challenges and creating solutions for improvement.

Formal assessments are set assignments or standardized tests used for certification or placement. For instance, the listening portion of the TOEFL and IELTS

Informal assessments include ongoing instructor observation or assignments completed in the classroom. Role-plays, taking notes during lectures, and debates are a few examples.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

A total of 388 participants from both public and private educational institutions participated in this study. 102 EFL teachers, 174 senior high school students, 32 administrators, and 80 parents made up the sample (see Table 1). Participants came from a wide variety of southern Ecuadorian educational institutions, ranging from elementary schools to colleges. The COVID-19 lockdown forced the teachers, who had previously been teaching directly, to quickly switch to remote instruction and adapt their methods to the emergency curriculum set by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), students' language competence levels ranged from A1 to A2 (Council of Europe, 2020). Surveys for parents, teachers, administrators, and students were used as data gathering tools (see Appendices A–D). 19 items on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," were included in each questionnaire. The instruments were created to determine the kinds of assessments that were used, along with the techniques and resources utilized to

assess the effectiveness of speaking and listening abilities. Due to COVID-19 constraints, Google Forms was used to administer all surveys. In order to ensure accuracy and dependability, the instruments were controlled and tested before being put into use.

For the purpose of to produce a thorough knowledge of students' English competency and the utility of the assessment tool, this study used a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative and qualitative techniques (Ahmed et al., 2024). Multiple-choice and essay scores provided quantitative data, while rubric-based assessments and classroom observations provided qualitative information. Because of this integration, the study was able to record both quantifiable learning results and contextual insights from classroom practice, supporting an assessment of the assessment's viability and efficacy in a real-world educational setting.

A sample of 25 eleventh-grade students was purposefully chosen for the study at SMA Negeri 1 Siantar because they represented an intact class actively participating in English education. The sample was suitable for an exploratory, classroom-based study despite its small size. Tests, observation logs, and

rubric-guided analyses were used to accomplish data triangulation, which increased the validity of the results. The four macro skills—listening, reading, writing, and speaking—were the focus of the evaluation. Thirty multiple-choice questions and one or more essay or performance activities, weighted 60% and 40%, respectively, made up each section. Real conversational audio was used in the listening texts, which were taken from ELLLO.org. In order to replicate real-world reading situations, reading passages included biographies, ads, and informational materials. Writing assignments comprised creating brief narrative texts, while speaking exercises required role-plays and group discussions. Analytical rubrics that addressed fluency, correctness, vocabulary, organization, and coherence were used to record and assess spoken and written products. Receptive skills were evaluated first, and then productive skills over the course of two days. In order to ensure uniformity and neutrality, the researchers evaluated written material and recordings before assigning a score to each response. To enhance the qualitative interpretation, informal student responses and observational notes were also included.

RESULTS

Private and Public High Schools					
Types of assessment	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Placement assessment	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Diagnostic assessment	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Formative assessment (short–term achievement assessment	0%	8%	23%	37%	32%
Summative assessment (achievement) assessment)	2%	6%	7%	31%	54%
Proficiency assessment	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Observation of learning	0%	26%	44%	10%	20%

Table1. Types of assessment (Benítez-Correa, Ochoa-Cueva and Vargas-Saritama, 2024, p. 493).

Table 1 summarizes the many types of assessments used in this study, including formative, summative, diagnostic, placement, proficiency assessments, and learner observation. All participating teachers expressed considerable concern with the use of placement assessment for speaking and listening skills during remote instruction. Students' past knowledge was not evaluated to determine their strengths and weaknesses in relation to these competencies, as evidenced by the diagnostic assessment's unanimous result of strong disagreement (100%).

Formative assessment, on the other hand, became a widely used strategy. In all, 37% of teachers agreed and

32% strongly agreed that formative assessment was used to track students' progress. Students' replies also supported the idea that this type of evaluation allowed teachers to improve the teaching-learning process by giving prompt feedback and modifying instructional tactics. Anisa (2021) supports this approach by highlighting the critical role formative assessment plays in monitoring continuous learning and preparing students to meet desired learning objectives. According to reports, summative assessments are the most commonly used kind while teaching remotely. In particular, 31% of teachers agreed and 54% strongly agreed that summative assessment was widely employed, mostly for final grade assignments. Students

highly agreed that summative tests were frequently used to assess their speaking and listening abilities, which is consistent with their impression. All teachers (100%) strongly objected with the implementation of competence assessments. This outcome is not surprising because proficiency exams are infrequently used in high school EFL environments and are often intended to assess overall language competency. Lastly, only 20% of teachers strongly agreed and 10% agreed that this method was utilized to track students' speaking and listening development, indicating a limited application of observation of learning. High school administrators also confirmed to the fact that English teachers most frequently used formative and summative evaluations out of all the assessment kinds that were looked at. Overall, the results show a great deal of on summative evaluation and a moderate usage of formative assessment; nevertheless, during remote instruction, diagnostic, placement, proficiency, and observational methods were mainly neglected.

Students' receptive and productive language skills were noticeably out of balance, according to the evaluation results. Receptive skills performed significantly better, with listening and reading averaging 86.34 and 82.31, respectively, whereas productive skills performed worse, especially speaking (67.33) and writing (58.00). This pattern is indicative of a widespread tendency in Indonesian EFL classrooms, where possibilities for language production are often subordinated to input-based activities. Because of this, students are frequently exposed to fewer structured speaking and writing assignments, which may explain why they perform less well in these domains. In order to improve learners' overall communication competence, a more balanced instructional framework that methodically integrates productive skill development is required, as evidenced by the observed difference. The assessment had been carried out successfully in spite of the contextual limitations usually present in Indonesian public schools. While speaking performances were captured using teachers' devices, listening exercises were carried out utilizing easily accessible tools like cellphones and portable speakers. Analytical rubrics made it possible to score consistently and objectively, which made evaluation processes more effective. Furthermore, the entire evaluation procedure was completed over the course of two academic days,

proving that well-crafted language tests may be effectively conducted even in environments with constrained resources. The assessment process was not significantly hampered by minor issues, such as student absenteeism and limited time available. Overall, the results show that comparable assessment methods are useful and repeatable in similar learning environments.

Herlina (2023) shows that using bottom-up listening strategies can greatly enhance students' listening performance, which is in line with the current study's aim. This method shows the varied levels of listening needed in various communicative circumstances and stresses the difference between micro-skills and macro-skills. While macro-skills allow listeners to create overall meaning and follow general concepts or directions, micro-skills help detailed comprehension, such as decoding sounds and deciphering language nuances. In addition to reducing unnecessary listening obstacles, developing both skill types enables students to receive spoken material more efficiently and participate in communication holistically in social, professional, and academic contexts. According to Maulina et al. (2022), cumulative exposure to a variety of auditory events leads to the gradual development of listening abilities. Factors including background noise, sound distortion, and frequency variation can pose challenges to learners and eventually affect their ability to listen. Engaging with these challenges on a regular basis helps people adjust to different listening situations, which eventually improves their capacity to comprehend and react to spoken language.

In the same way, Hughes et al. (2022) highlight how listening comprehension relies on both macro and micro skills. Micro-skills include intricate procedures including discourse marker identification, intonation pattern recognition, grammatical structure interpretation, and cohesive device comprehension. Macro-skills, on the other hand, concentrate on obtaining particular information, understanding the basic idea, and obeying oral commands. Comprehensive listening skills and effective communication require knowledge of both skill levels.

In order to promote successful listening development, these studies together highlight the significance of balanced listening education that incorporates skill awareness, listening styles, and real-world experience.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide significant new information on how high school students' listening abilities are evaluated. Overall, the findings show that students performed better on tasks involving receptive hearing than on tasks involving more complex interpretation and response. This result is consistent with earlier studies that indicate listening training and evaluation in EFL classrooms frequently emphasize surface-level comprehension over more in-depth processing of spoken language (Buck, 2001; Field, 2008). According to Vandergrift and Goh (2012), effective listening assessment should capture both bottom-up processing (e.g., sound discrimination, lexical recognition) and top-down processing (e.g., inferencing, interpreting meaning in context). The frequency of traditional listening tests, such as multiple-choice and short-answer formats, reflects common assessment practices reported in secondary education contexts (Brown, 2004). As a result, the study's limited use of performance-based and formative assessment tools may limit students' ability to develop strategic and metacognitive listening skills. Additionally, the results support Rost's (2011) claim that listening is a dynamic and active process that necessitates consistent exposure to real input. Students' inability to comprehend natural speech may be exacerbated by the use of controlled listening materials and test-oriented activities, particularly when confronted with a variety of dialects, speech rates, and real-world communication scenarios. Formative evaluation techniques, such as reflective listening assignments, portfolios, and teacher comments, may help students become more conscious of how they listen and encourage steady progress (Vandergrift, 2007). The study shows that systematic listening evaluation is possible with proper planning, despite the contextual limitations common in high school settings. However, assessment procedures should use a variety of learner-centered methods in addition to summative testing in order to provide a more thorough evaluation of listening proficiency. This change would help students improve their overall listening skills and bring evaluation more in line with the principles of communicative language instruction.

CONCLUSION

This study focused in to the way high school students' listening abilities are evaluated, paying close attention to the kinds of assessments, the tools used, and how they are actually used in classroom settings. The results show that listening assessment procedures primarily focused on measuring receptive abilities, and students often performed better on listening comprehension tasks than on productive language skills. This disparity is a reflection of instructional and evaluation practices that emphasize input-based tasks, which frequently restrict learners' abilities to participate in more in-depth listening processes and communicative language use. Additionally, research found that formative assessment was employed to a moderate degree while summative evaluation was the most commonly used approach. On the other hand, there was a significant under-utilization of diagnostic, placement, proficiency, and observational methods. The findings imply that depending too much on traditional listening assessments may limit the thorough assessment of students' listening proficiency, despite the fact that these assessments were praised for their usefulness and effectiveness. However, the fact that the test was successfully administered in a short amount of time and with few resources shows that structured listening evaluation is possible in ordinary high school settings.

The study concludes by highlighting the necessity of a more integrated and balanced approach to listening evaluation that incorporates both formative and summative techniques. Students' overall communicative development can be supported by improving assessment design to address various aspects of listening comprehension. Teachers can better monitor students' development and improve their listening skills by using a variety of evaluation tools and offering insightful comments. Overall, the results emphasize how crucial it is to match listening evaluation with educational objectives in order to support more thorough and successful language learning outcomes at the high school level.

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