



Challenges Encountered and Strategies Used in Teaching Listening Comprehension of Elementary Teachers

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of elementary English teachers when they teach listening comprehension to Grades 5 and 6 learners. It delved into the challenges teachers encountered and the strategies used in teaching listening comprehension. Teacher-participants share ways to enhance the listening comprehension skills of the elementary students. A phenomenological qualitative research design was used in this study making the researcher look at the lived experiences of the teachers in teaching listening comprehension especially when conducting specific listening episodes like oral reading and recitation. For the teachers to deliver the necessary input needed by the students during English subject classes, teachers should consider listening activities that are engaging to learners like using visual aids (e.g. videos, storybooks, multimedia materials) that will encourage learners to listen. Teachers might also use a combination of traditional materials (e.g. storybooks, oral reading of the story) and multimedia tools for the students to have engaging and meaningful receive of input. Elementary English teachers should integrate different strategies in teaching listening comprehension. School Heads and administrators should provide interventions and training for teachers on the various listening strategies, allowing teachers to employ appropriate and relevant strategies that address the listening comprehension challenges of students.

Keywords: listening comprehension, listening comprehension challenges, listening strategies, Master of Arts in English Language Teaching, elementary teachers



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INTRODUCTION

Listening to speech is a skill that takes place quickly and efficiently (Grosjean & Byers-Heinlein, 2018). People process seven to ten sounds a second, and about 175 words a minute, often in a noisy environment containing other sounds, yet we do so effectively and effortlessly (Grosjean & Byers-Heinlein, 2018). Listening comprehension, as defined by Hien (2015), refers to the ability to identify and understand what others are saying, including recognizing accents, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and intended meaning. It involves active attention and interpretation to achieve understanding, particularly in authentic communication where speech occurs at a natural pace and with spontaneity.

Despite its important role in language acquisition, listening comprehension is

frequently undervalued in English language teaching. Jaya, Petrus, and Kurniawan (2021) note that listening is often overlooked by other language skills such as reading, speaking, and writing. In most classrooms, listening is viewed as a passive or secondary skill that can be acquired informally rather than explicitly taught.

Cerbito (2018) emphasizes that listening requires purposeful meaning-making and active engagement with spoken language. Effective listening, however, goes beyond hearing sounds. When students struggle with listening comprehension, they face challenges in understanding orally delivered lessons, instructions, and discussions. Since classroom instruction largely depends on verbal communication from teachers, students who cannot effectively process auditory information

may experience learning gaps and reduced achievement (Lanuza, 2023).

Although listening comprehension is essential for communication and language development, it remains one of the most difficult skills for learners to master. Tran and Duong (2020) argue that weaknesses in listening can hinder students' ability to exchange information orally and affect overall communicative competence. Given its role, listening comprehension needs more instructional attention. Strengthening listening comprehension skills can enhance learners' participation, understanding, and communication skills, making it a crucial part for educators to use it in classroom practice.

With this, this study explored the listening comprehension problems of the students as investigated from lived experiences of the English teachers. The researcher observed that elementary pupils have not fully developed their listening skills. Listening skills have been given less emphasis by teachers, resulting in a decline in the pupils' listening comprehension. The researcher also observed that learners find it hard to answer questions that the teacher asks regarding the information that they have listened to. Thus, it results in pupils' low performance in listening comprehension. Also, one of the reasons why the researcher explored this study was because she observed that most of the teachers from Grades 5–6 who handle English subject classes are non-English majors.

An article published by Cariaso (2025) about Department of Education teachers teaching subjects outside specialization, it mentioned that teacher-subject mismatch has become a significant issue in the Philippine education system. It directly affects instructional quality, teacher competence, and student learning outcome. A study conducted by Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2025) titled "Taught Off-Guard: When Specialization and Teaching Assignments Do Not Match" revealed that 43% of teachers in the Philippines are assigned to subjects for which they lack formal training or credentials. The findings indicate

that teacher-subject mismatch is not an isolated case but a systematic problem. The Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2) reported that 62% of public-school teachers are teaching outside their area of expertise. Thus, teachers' expertise in teaching a subject is a critical factor in academic success for a student.

This study was situated in Ricardo P. Cruz Sr. Elementary School, a public elementary school located in New Lower Bicutan, Taguig City. The researcher carefully examined, explored and surfaced the Grade 5 to Grade 6 teachers' challenges encountered while teaching listening comprehension to their students. Using a qualitative research approach, this study aimed to gather in-depth insights into teachers' perspectives, experiences, and instructional practices. Through descriptions and narratives, the research is intended to surface recurring themes related to instructional difficulties, learner-related factors, and pedagogical responses. This study also aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of listening comprehension instruction to elementary level providing context-based insights that may provide instructional improvement and better learning outcomes in listening comprehension among elementary learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Listening Process. Listening is a fundamental skill in language learning and communication, occupying an important portion of human interaction and serving as the foundation for speaking, reading, and writing (Yildirim & Yildirim, 2016; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Velasco, 2019). Unlike hearing, which is passive, listening is an active, complex process that involves attending to sounds, interpreting meaning, understanding grammar and vocabulary, and responding appropriately (Bermillo & Aradilla, 2022; Babayigit, 2018; Carroll, 2022). Effective Listening engages cognitive and metacognitive processes, such as comprehension and language acquisition (Sidayao, 2018).

Listening comprehension instruction requires strategies to help in understanding and promote active engagement. Structured approaches such as pre-listening, while listening, and post-listening activities, combined with cognitive and metacognitive strategies like predicting, summarizing, note-taking, and using audio-visual materials, enhance learners' comprehension and retention (Tong, 2019; Nguyen, 2020; Habibah et al., 2022; Siegel, 2022). Listening comprehension is a vital skill in academic success and everyday communication, and understanding its processes and for instructional strategies is important for effective English language teaching (Cerbito, 2018; Siregar, 2017; Sabouri, 2016).

The Role of Teachers in Learner Listening.

Teachers play a central role in facilitating effective listening comprehension in English classrooms and serve several functions that go beyond the delivery of content. They act as organizers, guiding students through instructions, activities and tasks, while also controlling the pace and structure of the lesson to optimize learning (Ahmadi, 2016; Latupono & Nikijuluw, 2022). Teachers have the responsibility to create interesting and innovative teaching resources to motivate students, spark curiosity, and establish good learning environments (Tong, 2019; Merilia, 2019). They also act as evaluators, providing feedback, assessing comprehension, and assisting students in overcoming difficulties with vocabulary, grammar, and understanding of context (Lestari, Kurniasari, & Riznanda, 2021; Darti & Asmawati, 2017).

Teachers are important in scaffolding listening activities, supporting strategy use, and addressing comprehension challenges, ensuring that students can process spoken input accurately and participate actively in classroom communication (Lanuza, 2023; Abdulrahman et al., 2018).

Problems Encountered in Learner Listening.

Students encounter various difficulties in listening, including unfamiliar accents, fast

speech, complex vocabulary, and extended listening tasks, all of which affect comprehension and participation (Bingol, Yidliz, & Mart, 2014; Rahimirad & Zara-ee, 2015; Megasari, 2021). Other challenges are from syntactic and semantic processing, pragmatic and discourse understanding, cultural differences, and limitation in attention and memory (Nowrouzi et al., 2015; Sah & Shah, 2020). The complexity of listening tasks is further compounded by classroom conditions, such as poor audio quality, background noise, and lack of repeated exposure, as well as curriculum practices that prioritize reading, writing, and speaking over listening (Toni et al., 2020; Lanuza, 2023). The limited focus on listening comprehension in teaching practice, coupled with insufficient strategy instruction, prevents students from developing the cognitive and linguistic skills needed to process and retain spoken input (Datta & Roy, 2023; Aryana & Apsari, 2018).

Synthesis. Listening is more than just a background activity; it is a foundational skill that drives students' ability to speak, read, and write (Yildirim & Yildirim, 2016; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Velasco, 2019). While hearing is passive, true listening is an active process. It requires the learner to focus on sounds, decode grammar and vocabulary, and figure out the intended meaning to give a thoughtful response (Bermillo & Aradilla, 2022; Babayigit, 2018; Carroll, 2022). By using specific tools like note-taking, summarizing, or watching videos, students can turn a difficult task into a manageable one (Ton, 2019; Nguyen, 2020; Habibah et al., 2022; Siegel, 2022). Ultimately, mastering these listening strategies is a major key to doing well in school and communicating clearly in English (Cerbito, 2018; Siregar, 2017; Sabouri, 2016). Teachers play an important role in supporting listening comprehension by guiding, scaffolding, and motivating learners, while also providing feedback, assessing understanding, and addressing linguistic and contextual challenges (Ahmadi, 2016; Latupono & Nikijuluw, 2022; Lestari, Kurniasari, & Riznanda, 2021). However, students face numerous difficulties, including unfamiliar

accents, fast speech, complex vocabulary, syntactic and semantic challenges, and classroom limitations such as background noise and poor audio quality, which impede comprehension (Bingol, Yidliz, & Mart, 2014; Nowrouzi et al., 2015; Megasari, 2021; Toni et al., 2020). The limited emphasis on listening within curriculum and teaching practices further hinders learners' ability to acquire and retain this essential skill (Datta & Roy, 2023; Aryana & Apsari, 2018).

METHODS

The study utilized a phenomenological qualitative research design, delving into the teachers' experiences and perspectives. The study had a total of six English subject teachers who served as participants of the study. Each grade level was represented equally: three teachers from Grade 5 and three teachers from Grade 6. These teachers possessed the following criteria to be considered qualified as research participants: (a) currently teaching English subjects in the Grades 5–6 department, (b) have at least three years of experience in teaching English, and (c) a master's degree student or a master's degree holder. The study relied on qualitative data from the teacher interviews.

Data was gathered through a one-hour semi-structured interviews and observations in classroom listening activities. To ensure the quality of the data, the interview guide questions were validated by three experts in the field of education and English language teaching. All interviews were voice-recorded with strict adherence to participant confidentiality and anonymity. Finally, the researcher transcribed the recordings and used a systematic six-step thematic analysis—moving from initial coding to the development of a conceptual model—to identify and interpret the key challenges faced by the teachers.

The researcher asked for the assistance of two key informants who had expertise in listening comprehension from the Division of Quezon City and Division of Cavite City. Two Master Teachers

aided the researcher. One Master Teacher has a master's degree in English Language Teaching from Polytechnic University of the Philippines and has been teaching English to elementary students for 5 years. One Master Teacher has a master's degree in English Language Teaching from Polytechnic University of the Philippines and has been Teaching English for 9 years. These key informants validated the participants' answers. They also gave essential insights that were used to support the themes discovered in this study.

Table 1
Distribution of study participants

Participant	Grade Level	Years of Teaching English Subject	Educational Attainment
Key Informant A	Grade 5	5	Master's Degree Holder
Key Informant B	Grade 6	9	Master's Degree Holder
Participant A	Grade 5	4	Master's Degree Student
Participant B	Grade 5	6	Master's Degree Student
Participant C	Grade 5	6	Master's Degree Student
Participant D	Grade 6	6	Master's Degree Student
Participant E	Grade 6	11	Master's Degree Student
Participant F	Grade 6	9	Master's Degree Student

The required triangulation of data sources for qualitative research, therefore, were satisfied by the three sources of data: the participants, the key informants (in addition to the relevant literature reviews), and the researcher (setting aside her biases and beliefs) who collated, analyzed, and interpreted the data.

While conducting the research study, the participants in the study were made aware of the following ethical considerations, safeguarding the confidentiality of the participants. The researcher secured Research Ethics Clearance from the University Research Ethics Board. This is to safeguard the rights, safety, dignity, and well-being of everyone who participates in the research study. It was also to determine the protocol in the research work involving human subjects and know the risks involved, whether they are acceptable or in violation of certain ethical procedures.

RESULTS

This part provides the themes generated from teachers' lived experiences: Identifying the various categories of the participants' labelled

or initially coded responses to the four anchor codes: (a) ways on how students receive input, (b) challenges encountered by teachers in teaching listening comprehension, (c) teachers' strategies used in teaching listening comprehension, and (d) ways on enhancing learners' listening comprehension.

The themes for the first anchor code – ways on how students receive input – are (a) listening activities, (b) recall, (c) visuals, and (d) note-taking and summarization.

Table 2
Theme 1: Ways on how students receive input.

THEMES	MEANING	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTATIONS
Students' Engagement	Students' Engagement means using listening activities that help learners improve their listening skills.	"Listening activities is an important source of language for me, hhm, input to increase the learner's vocabulary and structural input."
Students' Prior Knowledge	Students' Prior Knowledge means the ability to remember and reproduce information that was previously heard.	"...kailangan mong i-recall and then as much as possible simple lang yung mga examples..." "They (students) learn best if the examples are simplified and then I always tend to have a recap, I need to review the lessons every time..."
Auditory and Visual Learners	Visuals are non-verbal cues providing additional information and context to help the learner understand the message. Note-taking is the act of writing down key points, ideas, or information from a spoken conversation or lecture. Summarization is the act of restating the main points or key ideas of a speaker's message using one's own words.	"Some can grasp the key concepts while others are not since they are totally dependent to what they see, or we can say it or call it as visual learners." "So, they might take notes, jot down notes, mentally summarize information, or ask questions to clarify their understanding."

The themes for the second anchor code – challenges encountered by teachers in teaching listening comprehension – are the following: (a) perception challenges (phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and distractions), (b) parsing challenges (semantic and syntactic parsing problems), and (c) utilization challenges (pragmatic and discourse utilization problems).

Table 3
Theme 2: Challenges encountered by teachers in teaching listening comprehension

THEMES	MEANING	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTATIONS
Phonological Awareness	Phonological awareness is an individual's awareness to recognize and manipulate individual sounds within spoken words.	"I think yung ano 'i think', yung phonological awareness nila 'their (students) phonological awareness."
Phonemic Awareness	Phonemic awareness is the capacity to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds.	"...difficulty in distinguishing similar sounds, struggling to recognize word boundaries, taska trouble with phonemic awareness."
Distractions	Distractions are anything that pull learners' attention, preventing them from focusing on the message of the input heard.	"And one of the factors that can hinder their ability to concentrate is yung 'like', maybe the distraction of the environment and aside from that, parang yung 'like', attention span nila 'their (students) attention span'." "Sa akin, lacking of background knowledge." "Tapes inadequate vocabulary."
Semantic Parsing Problems	Semantic parsing problems are listening comprehension problems that occur when understanding the precise meaning of an input or utterance given.	"Isa na yon, yung teacher na pag may speaker: sila na naririnig na yung accent o pronunciation." "So one of the major problem is that the language can be complex. Maybe hhm, unfamiliar words, Tapos, with that, with difficult vocabulary and sentence structures that can confuse them." "So as I mentioned earlier, misuse of words. So, they just get whatever words that appeal to them that is good or bad. And then, sometimes they use it in a sentence without knowing the correct meaning of the word so they tend to use it incorrectly."
Syntactic Parsing Problems	Syntactic parsing problems are listening comprehension problems that occur when analyzing the structure and relationship of words and phrases in a sentence in order to comprehend the meaning of a word or sentence.	"I mean, in trying to understand what you are teaching them and they're good naman in developing new vocabularies when they just understand you or when you translate it to vernacular. Sometimes, they really ask, 'Ma'am what's that in vernacular?'" "So in connection with my answer to the rest of the questions, maybe it is the appropriateness of the words when used."
Pragmatic Utilization Problems	Pragmatic problems mean that these are challenges that are encountered in everyday interaction and communication with other people.	"Okay, new information really is challenging when a child or a pupil do not understand the meaning of the word. He hasn't heard it at all, or he just doesn't read, or if the word is new to him, then that's where we have to intervene, okay."

Discourse Utilization Problems

Discourse problems refer to listeners that are unable to understand the flow of ideas in the communication process. It means listeners are unable to recognize the overall idea of the message or text.

"So, many of my students may have limited background knowledge or experiences related to the topic being discussed."
 "When students lack relevant background knowledge, learning is likely to be fragmented or incomplete. Students will struggle to identify the meanings of the terminology and then they will also struggle differentiating main ideas from the detail. So, ano pa, inappropriate din minsan ang kanilang prior knowledge eh."
 "Oh, dito yung understanding complex vocabulary 'This is where understanding complex vocabulary enters.'
 "Tapos overcoming language barriers 'Then, overcoming language barriers.'"

The themes for the third anchor code – teachers' strategies used in teaching listening comprehension – are the following: (a) cognitive strategies, and (b) metacognitive strategies.

Table 4
Theme 3: Teachers' strategies used in teaching listening comprehension

THEMES	MEANING	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTATIONS
Cognitive Strategies	Cognitive strategies are listening to strategies that involve manipulating language to make it easier to understand. It refers to the	"Hmm, I use comprehension questions." "Another one is through retelling the story or by the use of roleplay." "And you could assign various activities like groupings, recitation, interviews a lot but not overwhelm them because pupils have different needs and you have to adapt to it." "Because Ma'am Kristine, peer teaching is really effective. I see it effective." "Number one is Roleplay." "And then the second one is reflection." "Third one is summarization."
Metacognitive Strategies	Metacognitive strategies are listening to strategies that uses techniques or conscious actions that a listener uses to actively monitor and control their own listening process.	"...various activities like group discussions, hhm, reportings, projects, yung mga 'their (students)' outputs na pinapasa nila 'that they (students) submit', yung mga 'the' PETA (Performance Task) natin 'that we (teachers) do'. So, I engage my students with that along with, of course, visual aids such as charts, diagrams, and other videos."

The themes for the fourth anchor code – ways on enhancing learners' listening comprehension – are the following: (a) asking questions, (b) summarizing, (c) paying attention, (d) sharing, and (e) using multimedia tools.

Table 5
Theme 4: Ways on enhancing learners' listening comprehension

THEMES	MEANING	ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTATIONS
Asking Questions	Asking questions in listening mean actively engaging with the teacher by asking questions for the purpose of clarification, understanding, and showing interest.	"Ask clarifying questions." "Taking down notes during lectures or discussions and using audio materials followed by of course yung mga 'the' HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) questions, yung mga 'those' comprehension questions that can reinforce understanding."
Summarizing	Summarizing in listening means to get the main points and main idea of a spoken input of the teacher into precise statements.	"One is pay attention. Second, summarize. Three is to reflect. And the fourth one is share."
Paying Attention	Paying attention in listening means focusing the learners' attention to what the teacher is saying.	"One is pay attention." "Pay attention to the speaker."
Sharing	Sharing in listening means an active participation in a discussion by sharing thoughts, feelings, and relevant experiences to show understanding.	"And the fourth one is share."
Using Multimedia Tools	Multimedia tools in listening are a combination of different media like video, audio, images, and texts to enhance listening comprehension process of learners.	"Minsan magding din sila ng audio books 'Sometimes, they should listen to audio books.' "What I tell them every time is to develop a love for, ah, not just like reading but as well as watching movies, documentaries." "Taking down notes during lectures or discussions and using audio materials followed by of course yung mga 'the' HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) questions, yung mga 'those' comprehension questions that can reinforce understanding."

DISCUSSION

There are different ways as to how Grade 5 learners receive input as to how teachers

observed it during their classes. One is through active engagement in listening activities and activation of prior knowledge. It also highlights the importance of using structured listening tasks, actively involving detecting and processing sounds to make meaningful words and phrases. Recall is also an important factor in listening comprehension class. The study also emphasized the importance of visuals, note-taking, and summarization in enhancing students' reception of input. Teachers might consider doing listening activities that are engaging to learners like using visual aids (e.g., videos, storybooks, multimedia materials) that will encourage learners to listen. Also, teachers might ask students to connect the new input that they give to the previous or prior knowledge of students. Teachers might also use a combination of the different traditional materials (like storybooks, oral reading of the story) and using multimedia tools for the students to have engaging and meaningful receive of input.

Teachers encounter various perception problems affecting learners' listening comprehension. Teacher-participants observed phonological awareness issues, noting that students often need repeated exposure to words and tend to imitate teachers' pronunciation to understand them. Other teacher-participants mentioned problems that phonemic awareness difficulties, such as recognizing vowel sounds, diphthongs, Marungko patterns, distinguishing similar sounds, and identifying word boundaries. Lastly, some teacher-participants mentioned that distractions such as selective listening, short attention span, peer conversations, and environmental noise, which further hinder comprehension. These findings suggest that both linguistic factors and classroom conditions significantly influence students' listening performance.

The results revealed that teachers experience semantic and syntactic parsing problems in their listening comprehension class. Semantic parsing problems include learners' limited vocabulary, lack of background knowledge,

limited working memory, and difficulty understanding complex language, which makes learners miss important parts of the message and struggle to decode meaning. Syntactic parsing problems involve unfamiliar or inadequate vocabulary, misuse of words, reliance on translation into the vernacular, and difficulty in understanding complex words. The teachers also mentioned that learners also tend to forget what they hear, fail to form clear mental representations of the message, and have trouble when exposed to unfamiliar accents, long listening texts, or fast speech.

Teachers apply both cognitive and metacognitive strategies to ensure learners' understanding in listening comprehension classes. Teachers used cognitive strategies such as comprehension questions, recitations, memorization, retelling, recapitulation, writing, discussions, spelling, and reinforcement of classroom rules to help learners process and organize new information. Teachers also use metacognitive strategies including role play, reflection, summarization, think-pair-share, group work, interviews, peer teaching, reporting, guided practice, projects, video performance tasks, and visual aids. These approaches help learners plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning, promoting deeper understanding and learner independence.

Teachers suggested various strategies to enhance learners' listening comprehension strategies in English classes. The use of higher-order thinking questions to engage learners intellectually, summarizing information, note-taking, and encouraging attentive listening. Group activities, visualization, and reflection are also employed to help learners process and retain information. Additionally, multimedia tools such as audiobooks, movies, songs, and other audio-visual materials are used to increase exposure of learners to language and make learning enjoyable.

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