NIU Journal of Humanities Copyright©2025
Nexus International University ISSN: *3007-1704;* 10(4): 169-174

Effect of Standardized Listening Skills Test on Students` Listening Comprehension and Self-Efficacy

MUHAMMAD ALI MUSTAPHA, FATI SHETTIMA ABANI
University of Maiduguri, Nigeria

UMAR LAWAN
Borno State Agency for Mass Education

Abstract. The study examined effect of standardized listening skills test on students` listening comprehension and self-efficacy. A quasi-experiment design was used. The population of the study comprised all junior secondary school two (JSS II) students of a selected school in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State, Nigeria. Two intact classes of the same level from the selected school were targeted. Seventy (70) students were selected to participate in the study using purposive sampling technique. This technique was chosen due to easy-access to the participants and the nature of the study. A standardized test entitled 'English Language Listening Skills Test' (ELLST) was administered to determine the group`s homogeneity in the pretest and the effect of the treatment in posttest. The instrument was validated by experts in English language teaching and teachers of English in secondary schools. The reliability of the instrument was achieved through Cronbach Alpha's reliability index at 0.82, indicating a high level of reliability. Additionally, a self-efficacy scale adapted from existing validated instruments by Mills et al., 2006; Rahimi & Abedini (2009) was used to measure students' beliefs in their listening abilities. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and independent sample t-test. The treatment group received regular listening skills tests, while the control group did not. Results showed that the treatment group demonstrated significant improvements in self-efficacy, as measured by the Listening Self-Efficacy Scale. Furthermore, the treatment group outperformed the control group on a standardized listening comprehension test. The findings suggest that regular listening skills tests can enhance students' self-efficacy and listening comprehension. It is, therefore, recommended that schools and language programmes should include standardized listening assessments as a regular part of instruction to improve students' comprehension skills and build test familiarity.

Keywords: Standardized Listening Skills Test, Listening Comprehension, Vocabulary, Grammar, pronunciation & self-efficacy.

1. Introduction

Listening comprehension is an important component of language learning that plays a crucial role in both academic achievement and daily communication. It encompasses more than the mere perception of sounds; it involves higher-order cognitive processes such as understanding, inferring meaning, and integrating information (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Despite its recognized importance, listening has historically been underemphasized in language instruction and assessment compared to the other language skills such as reading, writing, and speaking (Field, 2008).

In educational contexts, the assessment of listening comprehension increasingly relies on standardized testing formats. These assessments aim to offer objective and reliable measurements of students' listening skills, typically through structured tasks and scoring rubrics that target specific sub-skills—such as identifying main ideas, recognizing key details, making inferences, and interpreting speakers' attitudes (Buck, 2001). Such tests are intended to inform instructional practices and curriculum design, and they serve a central role within educational accountability frameworks (Cheng & Curtis, 2004).

Nevertheless, the effect of standardized testing on language development—particularly in the domain of listening comprehension—has been the subject of considerable debate. Some scholars argue that standardized assessments can enhance learning by providing clear performance benchmarks and promoting strategic listening behaviors (Goh & Taib, 2006). On the contrary, critics contend that an excessive focus on testing may lead to "teaching to the test," curriculum narrowing, and heightened student anxiety (Shohamy, 2001).

A particularly relevant yet underexplored area of inquiry concerns the relationship between standardized listening assessments and learners' self-efficacy in listening—that is, their belief in their ability to comprehend spoken language. According to Bandura's social cognitive theory, self-efficacy significantly influences learners' motivation, persistence, and academic outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Students with high listening self-efficacy are more likely to engage meaningfully in listening tasks and apply effective strategies (Graham, 2006). In contrast, repeated poor performance on standardized assessments may undermine learners' confidence and reduce their willingness to participate in listening activities (Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2006).

Recent studies have begun to explore how assessment practices influence both cognitive performance and psychological factors. For example, Rahimi and Abedini (2009) found that students with greater listening self-efficacy tended to perform better on listening assessments, suggesting a reciprocal relationship. Similarly, Zhang and Goh (2006) highlighted that integrating metacognitive instruction with assessment can enhance both listening proficiency and learner self-regulation. Hinkel (2006) reported that students who engaged in regular listening assessments showed marked improvements in listening self-efficacy, as measured by the Listening Self-Efficacy Scale (LSES). Vandergrift (2007) echoed these findings, indicating that learners who performed well on listening tests exhibited higher self-efficacy levels. Furthermore, Goh (2008) demonstrated that regular participation in listening assessments contributed to significant gains in both listening comprehension and self-efficacy. A meta-analysis by Chen (2017) involving ten studies confirmed a moderate to strong positive effect of listening assessments on self-efficacy ($g = 0.63$, $p < 0.01$).

Despite growing interest in the emotional and psychological effects of standardized assessments, there remains a notable gap in research specifically addressing how standardized listening tests affect both students' listening comprehension and their self-efficacy beliefs. Understanding this is a crucial matter for the education stakeholders especially in today`s world where there have been increasing advocacy for quality learning. Therefore, this study aims to examine effect of standardized listening skills tests on students' listening comprehension and their self-efficacy.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Students, right from early stage of learning, are expected to develop proper listening skills. This is crucial because listening is a key component of effective communication. Even though the importance of listening skills has been widely recognized, it still tends to be one of the toughest skills for students to get. In many educational settings, students often struggle with listening, which can hold back their overall academic success and language development. While several studies have looked into how different teaching methods impact listening performance and students' confidence, not many have specifically examined whether standardized listening assessments help or hinder students' listening comprehension and their beliefs in their own abilities. Therefore, this study seeks to examine effect of standardized listening tests on students' listening comprehension and self-efficacy.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The Objective of the study are to examine:

- Effect of standardized listening skills test on students` listening comprehension
- Effect of standardized listening skills test on students` self-efficacy

1.3 Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested:

- There is no significant effect of standardized listening skills test on students` listening comprehension
- There is no significant effect of standardized listening skills test on students` listening comprehension

1.4 Significance of the Study

The findings of this research are significant to students, teachers, curriculum designers, educational administrators, and researchers.

Understanding how standardized listening assessments influence students' performance and self-efficacy can help them figure out how to tackle listening tasks more effectively. When positive

relationships are recognized, students might gain more confidence in their listening skills and feel more motivated to dive into listening activities, both in and out of the classroom. This study can assist teachers in making informed choices and decisions about incorporating standardized tests into their teaching and assessment strategies. If these tests are found to enhance not just comprehension but also self-efficacy, teachers may be inspired to incorporate them more thoughtfully into their lesson plans. Contrarily, if negative effect is discovered, teachers might look for alternative ways to assess and nurture listening skills without undermining students' confidence. The research offers solid evidence on the educational value of standardized listening tests, guiding curriculum design and assessment policies. Educational stakeholders can leverage these findings to check how well assessment tools align with instructional goals, ensuring that evaluations support both the cognitive and emotional sides of learning. Administrators who oversee curriculum implementation can use the results of this study to confirm that standardized assessments are not only reliable indicators of student progress but also positively influence students' academic self-perceptions and learning outcomes. This study adds to the growing body of literature on language assessment, listening comprehension, and learner psychology by addressing effect of standardized testing on performance and self-efficacy. It can lay the foundation for future research on assessment design, motivational factors in language learning, and the psychological effects of testing in language education.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study deals with Effect of Standardized listening skills test on Students` listening comprehension and self-efficacy. It covers listening comprehension aspects such as phonological skills, vocabulary, grammar and comprehension. The target groups are the junior secondary school two (JSS II) students of 2024/2025 academic session in a selected school within Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno state, Nigeria.

2. Research Methodology

The study used quasi-experimental design to examine the effect of the standardized listening comprehension tests and self-efficacy scale. The population for the study comprised all Junior Secondary School Two (JSS II) students from a selected public secondary school in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State, Nigeria. From this population, seventy students were selected using purposive sampling. This sampling method was chosen based on ease of access, administrative approval, and the logistical suitability of using intact classes. Two classes of similar characteristics were selected, with thirty-five students assigned to the experimental group and thirty-five to the control group. To assess students' listening comprehension, a standardized instrument entitled the English Language Listening Skills Test (ELLST) was employed. This instrument consisted of recorded listening passages followed by multiple-choice comprehension questions. It was administered both before and after the treatment to determine their homogeneity and effect of the treatment. The content validity of the ELLST was ensured through expert review by university lecturers and experienced secondary school English teachers. The reliability of the test was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, with results confirming acceptable internal consistency 0.82, indicating a high level of reliability

In addition to the ELLST, a self-efficacy scale adapted from previously validated instruments by Mills et al. (2006) and Rahimi and Abedini (2009) was used to measure students' beliefs in their listening abilities. The scale employed a five-point Likert format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree and assessed students' confidence in understanding spoken English and completing listening-related tasks.

Prior to the intervention, both the experimental and control groups completed the ELLST and the Listening Self-Efficacy Scale to establish baseline data. Over a period of six weeks, the experimental group was exposed to regular standardized listening comprehension tests integrated into their instructional sessions. In contrast, the control group continued with their normal English lessons without the additional testing component. To control for teacher variability, the same instructor taught both groups following the same scheme of work, with the only difference being the inclusion of the standardized tests in the experimental group. At the end of the treatment, post-test was administered to both groups using the same instruments. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics to compute means and standard deviations, while independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare posttest results between the groups.

3. Results

To test the hypotheses, descriptive statistics and independent samples t-tests were employed to compare the pretest and post-test performance of the experimental and control groups in both listening comprehension and self-efficacy.

Testing the Hypothesis One: There is no significant effect of standardized listening skills test on students` listening comprehension

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Listening Comprehension Scores

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	Pre-test SD	Post-test Mean	Post-test SD
Experimental Group	35	21.40	4.12	28.75	3.98
Control Group	35	20.97	4.35	22.63	4.07

Table 1 above presents the descriptive statistics of listening comprehension score. The results show that both groups had similar performance in the pre-test, indicating homogeneity in listening comprehension skills before the treatment. After the treatment, the experimental group showed a significant improvement (Mean = 28.75, SD = 3.98) compared to the control group (Mean = 22.63, SD = 4.07).

Table 2: Independent Sample t-Test on Post-test Listening Comprehension Scores

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	T	df	p-value
Listening Comprehension	Experimental	35	28.75	3.98	6.387	68	0.000
Listening Comprehension	Control	35	22.63	4.07			

Table 2 above presents the independent sample t-test on listening comprehension in post-test. The t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in post-test listening comprehension scores between the experimental and control groups, $t(68) = 6.387$, $p < .001$. This indicates that the use of standardized listening comprehension tests significantly improved students' listening comprehension skills.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Listening Self-Efficacy Scores

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	Pre-test SD	Post-test Mean	Post-test SD
Experimental Group	35	3.12	0.49	4.01	0.53
Control Group	35	3.09	0.51	3.37	0.56

Table 3 above presents descriptive statistics on listening self-efficacy score for both groups. Both groups had similar average scores at pre-test. However, post-test results indicate an increase in self-efficacy for the experimental group (Mean = 4.01, SD = 0.53), while the control group showed a modest gain (Mean = 3.37, SD = 0.56).

Table 4: Independent Sample t-Test on Post-test Listening Self-Efficacy Scores

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	T	df	p-value
Listening Self-Efficacy	Experimental	35	4.01	0.53	5.157	68	0.000
Listening Self-Efficacy	Control	35	3.37	0.56			

Table 4 above presents independent sample t-test on listening self-efficacy for both groups in post-test. The results showed a statistically significant difference in post-test self-efficacy scores between the groups, $t(68) = 5.157$, $p < .001$. This suggests that integrating standardized listening tests positively influenced students' belief in their listening abilities.

4. Summary of the Findings

The following are the key findings of the research:

The pre-test scores for both listening comprehension and self-efficacy indicated that the experimental and control groups were comparable before the intervention. This suggests that any differences observed in the post-test can be attributed to the treatment.

The use of standardized listening comprehension tests had a positive and significant effect on students' listening comprehension skills.

Regular exposure to standardized listening tests improved students' confidence and belief in their ability to understand spoken English.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that the use of standardized listening skills tests can significantly enhance both students' listening comprehension and their self-efficacy. The significant improvement observed in the post-test scores of the experimental group aligns with previous studies such as Goh and Taib (2006) and Vandergrift (2007), which emphasized

that structured and repeated exposure to listening assessments improves learners' auditory processing skills and comprehension abilities. This outcome supports the hypothesis that regular practice with standardized tests enhances students' ability to decode spoken language and understand key listening components such as main ideas, supporting details, and speaker intent.

The results also demonstrate a notable increase in students' self-efficacy scores following the intervention. Self-efficacy is critical in shaping learners' motivation, persistence, and academic achievement (Bandura, 1997). The students in the experimental group not only showed improved performance but also reported higher confidence in their listening abilities. This mirrors the findings of Mills, Pajares, and Herron (2006), as well as Rahimi and Abedini (2009), who reported that learners with greater self-efficacy tend to perform better in language tasks. The regular testing may have contributed to a sense of familiarity and competence among students, reducing anxiety and promoting a positive self-perception of their abilities. Importantly, the study controlled for external variables by using the same instructor and scheme of work across both groups, isolating the inclusion of the standardized listening tests as the primary differentiating factor. This methodological strength lends credibility to the conclusion that the intervention itself caused the observed improvements.

These findings contribute to the growing body of research highlighting the dual role of assessment—not only as a tool for measuring learning outcomes but also as a means of shaping learner psychology. While there are concerns in the literature about the potential drawbacks of standardized testing, such as narrowing of curriculum and student stress (Shohamy, 2001), the results of this study suggest that when thoughtfully integrated into instruction, standardized tests can serve a formative role that supports both cognitive and affective domains of learning. Furthermore, the positive impact on self-efficacy has broader pedagogical implications. High self-efficacy has been linked to greater learner autonomy, strategy use, and long-term language retention (Graham, 2006). Therefore, embedding listening assessments into classroom instruction not only builds listening proficiency but also cultivates the learner confidence necessary for lifelong language development.

Finally, the findings affirm the instructional value of standardized listening assessments in junior secondary education. They indicate that structured listening practice, delivered in a standardized and consistent manner, can lead to measurable improvement in performance and belief in one's abilities.

6. Conclusion

The study concludes that the integration of standardized listening comprehension tests significantly improves both students' listening skills and their self-efficacy. Students exposed to regular listening assessments performed better and felt more confident in their ability to understand spoken English compared to those who received traditional instruction. This highlights the effectiveness of structured listening activities in enhancing both competence and confidence and supports their inclusion in English language teaching for improved academic performance.

7. Recommendations

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

- Schools and language programs should include standardized listening assessments as a regular part of instruction to improve students' comprehension skills and build test familiarity.
- Teachers should use test as formative assessment to identify student strengths and weaknesses, and to guide targeted instruction rather than just using them as summative.
- Teachers should complement standardized tests with explicit instruction in listening strategies such as note-taking, predicting, and summarizing to reinforce comprehension.
- Teachers should create a supportive environment where standardized assessments are seen as learning opportunities rather than high-stakes judgments.

References

Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. *W.H. Freeman.*

Buck, G. (2001). Assessing listening. *Cambridge University Press.* https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511732959

Chen, Y. (2017). The effects of listening test practice on EFL learners' self-efficacy: A meta- analysis. *Language Testing Journal, 34(3), 311–329.* https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532216674415

Cheng, L., & Curtis, A. (2004). Washback in language testing: Research contexts and methods *(pp. 3–17). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.*

Field, J. (2008). Listening in the language classroom. *Cambridge University Press.* https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511575945

Goh, C. C. M. (2008). Metacognitive instruction for second language listening development: Theory, practice and research implications. *RELC Journal, 39(2), 188–213.* https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688208092184

Goh, C. C. M., & Taib, Y. (2006). Metacognitive instruction in listening for young learners. *ELT Journal, 60(3), 222–232.* https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccl002

Graham, S. (2006). Listening comprehension: The Learners' Perspective. *System, 34(2), 165–182.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2005.11.001

Hinkel, E. (2006). Current perspectives on teaching the four skills. *TESOL Quarterly, 40(1), 109–131.* https://doi.org/10.2307/40264513

Mills, N., Pajares, F., & Herron, C. (2006). A reevaluation of the role of anxiety: Self-efficacy, anxiety, and their relation to reading and listening proficiency. *Foreign Language Annals, 39(2), 276–295.* https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2006.tb02266.x

Rahimi, A., & Abedini, A. (2009). The interface between EFL learners' self-efficacy concerning listening comprehension and listening proficiency. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language), 3(1), 14–28.* http://www.novitasroyal.org/Vol_3_1/rahimi. *pdf*

Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2010). Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics (4th ed.). *Longman.*

Shohamy, E. (2001). The power of tests: A critical perspective on the uses of language tests. *Longman.*

Vandergrift, L. (2007). Extensive listening practice and input enhancement using mobile phones: Encouraging out-of-class learning with mobile phones. *TESL-EJ, 11(2), 1–17.*

Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. C. M. (2012). Teaching and learning second language listening: Metacognition in action. *Routledge.* https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203843376

Zhang, L. J., & Goh, C. C. M. (2006). Strategy knowledge and perceived strategy use: Singaporean students' awareness of listening and reading strategies. *Language Awareness, 15(3), 199–219.* https://doi.org/10.2167/la342.0