

# Identifying Student and Classroom Characteristics Related to Primary School Students' Listening Skills: A Systematic Review

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This study presents a systematic review of available empirical research on primary school students' first language listening skills. At the classroom level, students' listening skills and teaching practices (such as listening strategy instruction) in addition to classroom features (such as classroom noise) were related. At the student level, students' listening skills and their cognitive skills (such as working memory) and background characteristics (such as socioeconomic status) were related.

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This study presents a systematic review of available empirical research on primary school students' first language listening

skills. In total, 27 studies were selected and reviewed. First, the outcome variables of listening skills were labelled, with the results indicating that most studies evaluated listening skills as the ability to remember, understand, or interpret an auditory message. Second, important correlates related to primary school students' listening skills were identified. At the classroom level, students' listening skills and teaching practices (such as listening strategy instruction) in addition to classroom features (such as classroom noise) were related. At the student level, students' listening skills and their cognitive skills (such as working memory) and background characteristics (such as socioeconomic status) were related.

- Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the four language skills.
- In an educational context, research indicates that primary school students spend approximately 50%–75% of each school day listening to teachers, classmates, or audio-supported media.
- Listening skills remain rather challenging for many students, especially for non-native speakers and students with language impairments, learning disabilities, or hyperactivity disorders.
- Classroom noise and poor acoustics could have an effect on listening skills.
- There is a shortage of listening instruction.

### **Why are listening skills important?**

- Listening skills and academic success (or knowledge) are closely connected, since listening is an important medium for students to process and acquire information.
- Listening skills play a key role in literacy success and the development of numerous other language skills, such as reading comprehension and writing.
- Students need listening skills to understand practical oral instructions from the teacher, such as homework

assignments.

- Good listening skills are fundamental for the development of social and relational skills in the school context.

### **The six components of listening skills (HURIER model):**

- Hearing
- Understanding
- Remembering
- Interpreting
- Evaluating
- Responding



### **The study**

The intent of this study is to analyse existing listening literature and provide a systematic overview of the correlates of primary school students' listening skills.

#### *Research questions:*

- 1. How are student listening skills defined and described in different studies according to the HURIER model?*
- 2. According to the model of Palardy and Rumberger (2008), which input and process characteristics are related to primary school students' listening skills?*

**The data** consisted of 27 articles reviewed in this study.



## Findings

- Most studies could be classified on the understanding (18 studies) and/or interpreting level (12 studies) of the HURIER model.

## Results at the class level

### Teaching practice

- In 9 out of 11 studies, studying teaching practice in relation to student listening skills resulted in a significant positive effect.
- Teachers taught their students strategies for identifying characters or making inferences about thoughts and feelings of the stories, trained the students in retelling stories, and asked students questions about events such as the main character or the location.
- A significant positive effect was found in three studies that focused on applying visual techniques during listening training. For example, storytelling supported with illustrations increased student listening skills.
- One study compared manipulation strategy (moving manipulatives as directed by the narrative) to viewing pictures of the actors of the story. Those students in the manipulation strategy group outperformed those who only viewed the pictures with the story.
- One study found teaching students to listen for a purpose, clarifying difficult words, imagining the auditory text, predicting what could happen, or summarising the text to be effective listening strategies.

## **Classroom features**

- Three studies reported that attention and listening were impaired when classroom acoustics were less beneficial.
- Two studies indicated the potential benefits of sound field amplification technology for student listening skills. This technology improves the sound environment of the class by ensuring an even distribution of sound from the teacher, students, and multimedia.
- Reducing class sizes significantly improves listening scores from kindergarten to third grade.

## **Teacher background**

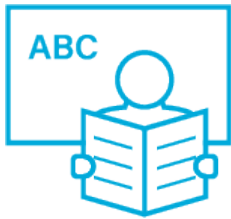
- In one study, significant positive changes in student listening skills were observed after the implementation of a teacher-training package. This included information on the theoretical aspects of the listening material and instruction strategies.

## **Results at the student level**

### **Student background**

- Four correlational studies found a significant positive relationship between family background (such as parental education, number of books at home, and home language) and student listening skills.
- Seven correlational studies indicated that academic background characteristics (linguistic knowledge (such as vocabulary and language scores) and cognitive skills (such as working memory, theory of mind, and concentration)) were positively related to student listening skills.
- One study demonstrated that high-proficiency listeners had a significantly higher listening motivation and listening interest in performing listening exercises compared to low-proficiency listeners. Further, high-proficiency listeners used significantly more listening

strategies compared to low-proficiency listeners.



## Implications

- Listening skills are a prerequisite for further educational success.
- The relationship between correlates and listening skills was primarily investigated towards the 'lower levels' of listening skills (remembering, understanding, and interpreting).
- Different student level characteristics (such as academic background, demographics, and family background) are correlated to student listening skills.
- Working memory and vocabulary are especially significant predictors of listening skills.
- A student's socioeconomic status is related to their listening skills.
- Students will remember more facts from auditory texts when they receive instruction in the specific structure of the text type (such as a narrative or expository strategy instruction).
- Student listening skills can be improved through applying visual techniques during listening training, such as telling stories supported by illustration or asking students to paint a picture of the main features in their mind.
- Listening strategy instruction affects listening skills positively. For example, teaching students different listening strategies (such as listening for a purpose or predicting what could happen) will improve their

listening skills.

- Listening skills can be improved through integrating listening activities into the entire curriculum and by combining listening activities with speaking, reading, or writing activities.
- Poor interior acoustics and background noise cause attention loss and exacerbate listening difficulties, while sound system improvements positively influence student listening skills.
- Reducing class sizes and/or investing in sound systems by improving the sound environment in the classroom will positively influence student listening performance.