

Investigating L2 Students' Listening Anxiety: A Survey at a Malaysian University

Mohammad Nasim Tahsildar*, Zailin Shah Yusoff

*Centre for Modern Languages & Human Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Pahang, Lebuhraya Tun Razak,
26300 Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia*

Article Information

Received 30 April 2014
Received in revised form 20
August 2014
Accepted 22 August 2014

Abstract

Listening anxiety is said to have a direct effect on listeners' abilities to comprehend what has been said. This is often because listeners are concerned that the message is so complex that they will not be able to understand what they are listening to. In relevance to listening tests, students' listening anxiety may prove to be a variable that could affect their listening test scores especially for second language (L2) learners. This preliminary study was carried out, as a part of a bigger experimental study to investigate if L2 students experienced listening anxiety. The Foreign Language Learning Survey (FLLAS) (Kim, 2000) was used as the main data collection instrument. The survey comprised of 33 items, which was tested for reliability in this study (Cronbach Alpha $\alpha = .928$). Eighty-three ($n = 83$) undergraduate students from one of the universities in Malaysia participated in the survey. The findings of the survey indicated that the students have a rather high level of listening anxiety. This paper elaborates on areas in which students were most anxious about while listening, which may have some implications on the teaching of listening specifically listening comprehension to L2 students.

© 2014 Penerbit Universiti Malaysia Pahang

Keywords: Listening anxiety; Listening comprehension; Second language learners

INTRODUCTION

The impact of anxiety in language classrooms especially in foreign and second language classrooms has long been under consideration of language researchers (Kimura, 2008). Some researchers such as Sparks et al. (2000) asserted that learners with high language anxiety levels would have low language performance. Anxiety occurs when learners come across an activity that they feel is so difficult or unfamiliar (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). In terms of the listening skills, Young (1992) asserted that listening comprehension itself is highly anxiety provoking specifically when the text is not comprehensible to the learner. Learners often felt anxious while listening in the target language due to many factors such as the authenticity of the listening text (Christenberry, 2003), unfamiliar or difficult vocabulary used in the text (Young, 1992), incomprehensibility of the listening material due to environmental factors such as accent (Gonen, 2009), and learners' lack of confidence in their listening ability (Dunkel, 1991). Vogely (1998) attempted to distinguish the source of listening anxiety in the language classroom and noted that foreign or second language listening anxiety are associated with the types of listening input the learners have to listen to, the listening process they underwent (such as strategies taught to them and the time given for using the strategies), and instructional factors, such as in-

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +6017-928-2195.

E-mail addresses: nasim83.angel@gmail.com [Tahsildar, M.N.]; zailinshah@ump.edu.my [Yusoff, Z.S.].

class practices and tests. To be an effective listener, a learner must be able to actively and strategically participate in the listening process within a low-anxiety classroom situation (Fang, 2011). However, the verdict on whether listening anxiety causes poor language performance is still inconclusive (Zhang, 2013). Consequently, research on listening anxiety is essential for the effective teaching of listening, specifically to foreign or second language learners).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Anxiety is an affective factor that widely obstructs the learning process. It is associated with negative feelings such as uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension and tension (Fang, 2011). Second language anxiety directly affects motivation and creates a negative affective response to the language being learned (Gardner et al., 1987). The negative impact of listening comprehension anxiety has encouraged some researchers to investigate the causes of listening anxiety. Hang (2006) conducted a study on 20 students to find the sources of listening comprehension anxiety. He divided listening anxiety sources into characteristics of listening comprehension, listening materials and listening tasks, social and instructional factors, foreign language proficiency and listening level. Vogely (1998) also found that characteristics of input such as the speed or unfamiliarity with the listening input and instructional and personal factors easily produced listening anxiety. He added that among the personal factors, fear of failure seemed to be related to students' erroneous beliefs about language learning or negative past experience. Kim (2000) on the other hand explored the nature of listening input such as speed, pronunciation and intonation, length of the text and level of vocabulary and found that they were the preliminary sources of listening anxiety. In addition, Chang and Read (2008) stated that in her study low confidence in comprehending spoken English, taking English listening courses as a requirement, and worrying about test difficulty were the three major factors which contributed to second language (L2) learners' listening anxiety in a classroom context. Furthermore, Bekleyen (2009) in his study explored another source of anxiety that was the students' failure to recognize the spoken form of a known word, segments of sentences or weak forms of words and unearthed that these affected listening. Yan (2005) also in his study indicated that listening anxiety played a negative role in listening, and it could affect listening performance by a variety of factors such as learner's causes, classroom activities, environmental causes and teacher's causes. Thus, studies have shown that there exist negative effects of listening anxiety and listening performance. The sources of listening anxiety are mainly addressed as characteristics of listening input, listening materials and tasks, low confidence in comprehending spoken English, taking English listening courses as a requirement, and worrying about test difficulty.

However, other studies which explored the relationship between listening anxiety and listening comprehension did not find a direct correlation. For example, Zhang (2013) examined the possible causal relations between foreign language listening anxiety and listening performance. Three hundred participants who learned English as a foreign language (FL) completed the foreign language listening anxiety scale (FLLAS) and the IELTS test twice with an interval of three and a half months. The findings showed that the FL listening anxiety could affect FL listening performance, but FL listening performance did not appear to affect FL listening anxiety systematically. In addition, In'nami (2006) investigated the effects of listening test anxiety on listening test performance where 79 Japanese students took a listening performance test, and answered two questionnaires designed to measure test anxiety. Results showed that listening test anxiety did not affect listening test performance. Therefore, in order to fully understand the relationship between listening anxiety and language performance, more studies are needed to look at the whole dynamic system, including anxiety and the learning context (Zhang, 2013).

As a result, it has been suggested that there are ways to alleviate anxiety in the listening classroom. Chang and Read (2008) investigated how four forms of listening support (pre-teaching of content and vocabulary, question preview and repeated input) affected the anxiety levels of college students in Taiwan taking a multiple-choice listening tests. Participants included 160 students in four intact classes with similar listening ability. The instruments were a general listening anxiety questionnaire, short measures of task anxiety given just before and after the test, and post-test interviews. Prior to the test, the test-takers were uniformly anxious but afterwards, there were significant differences in anxiety according

to type of support and level of proficiency. It could be concluded that strategy instruction may enhance the effectiveness of support in listening tests. In addition, Yang (2012) attempted to find the effect of strategy employment on EFL learners' listening anxiety. It was found that metacognitive instruction could significantly facilitate listening comprehension and alleviate listening anxiety. Thus, because listening instruction is essential in helping learners overcome their listening anxiety, foreign and second language learners' listening anxiety has to be measured first before any instructions could be planned for the learners. In this way, appropriate instruction could be planned to overcome specific listening anxiety rather than providing a generic listening instruction as what is happening in many classrooms today.

Therefore, this paper elaborates on a study which investigated second language learners' listening anxiety. The areas in which students were most anxious about while listening were explored. This would have implications on the teaching of listening, specifically listening comprehension to L2 students.).

THE PRESENT STUDY

Dornyei and Skehan (2003) stated that individual difference variables such as aptitude, motivation, emotion and learning strategies are known to influence the L2 learning process. For example, emotion could have facilitating or debilitating effects on learning (Dirkx, 2001) and could affect learners' motivation to learn (Woldkowski, 1999). Among all the emotions, anxiety appears to be especially important (Oxford, 1999; Gregersen, 2005). Fang (2011) asserted that anxiety is the affective factor that most extensively complicates the learning process. It is associated with negative feelings such as uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension and tension. In addition, Chang and Read (2008) claimed that in a second language environment, students regularly learn English through formal instructions in the classroom, and their ability to comprehend spoken English could be limited. Comprehension is further diminished in situations where affective factors like anxiety would influence their performance. Therefore, despite the negative role of anxiety in L2 classes, there has not been enough previously published researches examining which areas L2 learners are most anxious about while listening, and only few researches have reported implications on the teaching of listening specifically listening comprehension on L2 learners (Zhang, 2013).

Thus, it is essential to investigate factors that could influence L2 learners' language performance, specifically examining emotional factors such as anxiety in order to inform instruction and to provide effective pedagogical approach. As a part of a bigger experimental study which looked at the effects of intervention on listening comprehension, this study was a preliminary step aimed at investigating L2 students' listening anxiety. It would explicitly examine and elaborate on areas in which students are most anxious about while listening.

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. Do L2 learners experience listening anxiety?
2. Which of the components measured in the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Survey do L2 learners face the most anxiety?

METHODS

4.1 Participants

The participants of this study were 81 undergraduate students; 41 male and 40 female, who enrolled in English for Academic Communication course at a university in Malaysia. The participants' age ranged between 19 and 24 years old. Table 1 demonstrates the participants' demographic data.

Table 1: The participants' demographic data.

Age	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
19	1	0	1
20	12	15	27
21	8	7	15
22	14	12	26
23	3	4	7
24	3	2	5
Total	41	40	81

4.2 Data Collection Instrument

The research data, which was collected prior to the intervention, used the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) developed by Kim (2000) as its main instrument. The scale has been employed in studies measuring both foreign Zhang (2013) and second language listening anxiety (Kimura, 2008). The instrument was found to have a high internal consistency when measured using Cronbach alpha; $\alpha = .93$ (Kim, 2000) and in his study was $\alpha = 0.928$, which indicated that it was a highly reliable instrument to use.

The questionnaire comprised 3 sections and 33 Likert-scale items. The information gleaned from the participants was on the following themes: background knowledge (8 Items), listening text and strategies (8 Items) and listeners' characteristics (17 Items). The items in the first theme included questions relating to students' background knowledge such as types of vocabulary and dealing with familiar and unfamiliar words as well as new information, while the items in the second theme included questions relating to listening text and strategies such as type of passage, pronunciation and the way the passage was read by the speaker and heard by the listener. The items in the last theme comprised questions asking about student characteristics, for example students' concentration as well as feelings of confidence, fear, tense and nervousness.

The participants' low, moderate and high levels of anxiety were measured through their choices in response to the Likert-scale type questions given to them in which the participants had to choose from a scale of 1 to 5. Scale 1 indicated that the participants had a Strong Disagreement (SD) with the statement given, and it is considered as the lowest level of anxiety in this study. In turn, choosing 5 would show that the participants had Strong Agreement (SA) with the statement given, and it was recorded as the highest level of anxiety. The survey was administered by the instructor teaching the course with the researcher in attendance. The responses were coded and analysed by the researcher using statistical analysis software.

FINDINGS

5.1 L2 Learners' Listening Anxiety

To answer the first research question: "Do L2 learners experience listening anxiety?", the findings revealed that the participants have a rather high level of listening anxiety. Table 2 shows a summary of the three different levels of anxiety: high, moderate and low levels of listening anxiety faced by the participants in this study. High level of anxiety was calculated when a majority of the participants responded with Agree or Strongly Agree to the items in the survey, while for low level of anxiety it was concluded when most of the participants answered Disagree or Strongly Disagree. As for moderate level, it was assumed when participants responded with a neutral answer in the survey. The frequency and percentage was calculated to reflect the level of anxiety faced by the participants for each item.

Table 2: Summary of the three different levels of listening anxiety.

Listening Anxiety Levels	No/Items	Percentage
High Level of Anxiety	19	58%
Moderate Level of Anxiety	11	33%
Low Level of Anxiety	3	9%
Total	33	100%

Table 2 demonstrates that the participants have chosen Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA) for 19 items (58%) of the FLLAS items which suggested a high level of anxiety. On the other hand, they responded with a neutral answer for 11 items (33%) indicating moderate level of anxiety. However, the participants showed a low level of anxiety for only 3 items (9%) that they answered with Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D). Thus, it could be concluded that most of the participants suffered from a high level of listening anxiety.

5.2 Components of Listening Anxiety

As for research question two; “Which of the components measured in the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale do L2 learners face the most anxiety?”. The data collected were grouped into three themes which were: background knowledge, listening text and strategies, and listeners’ characteristics. The data on each theme is shown in separate tables below. Table 3 demonstrates the results from the first theme (Survey items 1-8), which examined the participants’ anxiety in relation to their background knowledge.

Table 3: Listening anxiety related to background knowledge.

No	Theme / Items	Background knowledge <i>n</i> (%)				
		1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
1	When listening to English, I tend to get stuck with one or two unknown words.	2 (2.5)	3 (3.7)	10 (12.3)	42 (51.9)	24 (29.6)
2	I am nervous when I’m listening to English if I am not familiar with the topic.	1 (1.2)	11 (13.6)	24 (29.6)	29 (35.8)	15 (18.5)
3	It is easy to guess about the parts that I miss while listening to English.	3 (3.7)	14 (17.3)	35 (43.2)	22 (27.2)	6 (7.4)
4	If I let my mind drift even a little bit while listening to English, I worry that I will miss important ideas.	1 (1.2)	3 (3.7)	11 (13.6)	36 (44.4)	30 (37)
5	During English listening tests, I get nervous and confused when I don’t understand every word.	3 (3.7)	15 (18.5)	13 (16.0)	26 (32.1)	24 (29.6)
6	I fear I have inadequate background knowledge of some topics when listening in English.	2 (2.5)	13 (16.0)	29 (35.8)	31 (38.3)	6 (7.4)
7	Listening to new information in English makes me uneasy.	2 (2.5)	13 (16.0)	35 (43.2)	19 (23.5)	11 (13.6)
8	I get annoyed when I come across words that I don’t understand while listening to English.	1 (1.2)	9 (11.1)	23 (28.4)	34 (42.0)	13 (16.0)

*1 SD = Strongly Disagree, 2 D = Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 A = Agree, 5 SA = Strongly Agree

The statistics in Table 3 shows that for the background knowledge theme, the items in which participants showed a high level of anxiety were item 1, 66 (81.4%), followed by item 4, 66 (81.4%), item 5, 50 (61.7%), item 8, 47 (58%), and item 2, 44 (54.3%). For the rest of the items, the participants portrayed a moderate level of anxiety: item 3, 35 (43.2%), item 7, 35 (43.2%), and item 6, 29 (35.8%).

These results suggest that the participants were of the opinion that having the appropriate background knowledge was essential to listening. This was especially true when it concerned the lack of knowledge at word or vocabulary level as indicated by their high level of anxiety for items 1, 5 and 8. Lack of this knowledge made the participants nervous to face the listening task as they portrayed in their high level of anxiety for item 2. This compounds research on the role of background knowledge in listening whereby studies have indicated that having the appropriate background knowledge facilitates listening (Chang & Read, 2008; Othman & Vanathas, 2004) and that instructors need to integrate activities which activate learners' background knowledge in the listening classroom (Brown, 2006). Therefore, it could be assumed that before any listening comprehension task is given to learners, teachers need to focus on activating students' background knowledge on unfamiliar topics and provide more pre-listening activities to contribute to their listening comprehension process.

Next, Table 4 demonstrates the results for the second theme (Items 9 to 16), which investigated the participants' anxiety in relation to listening text and strategies. The components in which the students are most anxious about are highlighted.

Table 4: Listening anxiety related to listening text and strategies.

No	Theme / Items	Listening Text and Strategies <i>n</i> (%)				
		1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
9	I get nervous if a listening passage is read only once during listening tests.	2 (2.5)	3 (3.7)	12 (14.8)	33 (40.7)	30 (37)
10	When someone pronounces words differently from the way I pronounce them, I find it difficult to understand.	1 (1.12)	11 (13.6)	18 (22.2)	38 (46.9)	12 (14.8)
11	When a person speaks English very fast, I worry that I might not understand all of it.	1(1.2)	8 (9.9)	13 (16)	38 (46.9)	21 (25.9)
12	When I am listening to English, I am worried when I can't watch the lips or facial expressions of the person who is speaking.	10 (12.3)	22 (27.2)	27 (33.3)	16 (19.8)	6 (7.4)
13	When listening to English, it is difficult to differentiate the words from one another.	2 (2.5)	18 (22.2)	25 (30.9)	25 (30.9)	11 (13.6)
14	I feel uncomfortable in class when listening to English without the written text.	4 (4.9)	14 (17.3)	40 (49.4)	17 (21.0)	5 (6.2)
15	When I'm listening to English, I usually end up translating word by word without understanding the contents.	5 (6.2)	29 (35.8)	25 (30.9)	17 (21.0)	4 (4.9)
16	When listening to English I often understand the words but still can't quite understand the speaker's mean	2 (2.5)	12 (14.8)	27 (33.3)	31 (38.3)	8 (9.9)

*1 SD = Strongly Disagree, 2 D = Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 A = Agree, 5 SA = Strongly Agree

The statistics in Table 4 shows that for the listening text and strategies theme, the items in which participants showed a high level of anxiety were item 9, 60 (77.7%), followed by item 11, 59 (72.8%), item 10, 50 (61.7%), item 11, 39 (48.2%) and item 13, 36 (44.5%). The participants portrayed a moderate level of anxiety only for item 14, 40 (49.4%). As for the rest of the items, the participants portrayed a low level of anxiety: item 15, 34 (42.8%) and item 12, 32 (39.5%). These results suggest that the participants thought that knowledge of the appropriate listening text and strategies was essential to listening. Lack of this knowledge made the participants anxious to face the listening task. This is similar to what is highlighted in related research on the role of listening text and strategies in listening whereby studies have shown that having the appropriate knowledge of listening text and strategies facilitates listening comprehension (Brindley & Slatyer, 2002; Buck, 2001; Goh, 2008; Slahshuri, 2011; Kim, 2000; Othman & Vanathas, 2004; Vandergrift, 2004;). Field (2008) pointed out that learners felt more comfortable and motivated with authentic listening comprehension texts in case the teacher can provide the text according

to their level. Kim (2000) also found that characteristics of a listening comprehension text were the most common elements related to listening anxiety. Thus, Goh (2008) suggested that prior to a listening comprehension process, teaching metacognitive strategies to students could facilitate their comprehension of the listening text. In addition, Ishler (2010) proposed that listening comprehension teachers should incorporate strategy teaching in order to minimize listening comprehension problems. Therefore, it could be assumed that before any listening comprehension process, teachers need to focus on listening text and strategies to contribute to students' listening comprehension.

Table 5 illustrates the results for the third theme (Items 17 to 33), which investigated the participants' anxiety in relation to listening listener's characteristics.

Table 5: Listening anxiety related to listeners' characteristics theme.

No	Theme / Items	Listeners' Characteristics <i>n</i> (%)				
		1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
17	I have difficulty understanding oral instructions given to me in English.	6 (7.4)	21 (25.9)	33 (40.7)	17 (21.0)	4 (4.9)
18	It is hard to concentrate on what English speakers are saying unless I know them well.	6 (7.4)	5 (30.9)	27 (33.3)	14 (17.3)	9 (11.1)
19	I feel confident when I am listening in English.	1 (1.2)	22 (27.2)	47 (58.0)	8 (9.9)	2 (2.5)
20	When I am listening to English, I often get so confused I can't remember what I have heard.	1 (1.2)	26 (32.1)	19 (23.5)	28 (34.6)	7 (8.6)
21	My thoughts become jumbled and confused when listening to important information in English.	1 (1.2)	16 (19.8)	28 (34.6)	29 (35.8)	7 (8.6)
22	I get worried when I have little time to think about what I hear in English.	1 (1.2)	8 (9.9)	22 (27.2)	38 (46.9)	11 (13.6)
23	I would rather not have to listen to people speak English at all.	10 (12.3)	31 (38.3)	25 (30.9)	13 (16.0)	1 (1.2)
24	I get worried when I can't listen to English at my own pace.	4 (4.9)	13 (16.0)	36 (44.4)	16 (19.8)	11 (13.6)
25	I keep thinking that everyone else except me understands very well what an English speaker is saying.	1 (7.6)	18 (22.2)	23 (28.4)	22 (27.2)	10 (12.3)
26	I get upset when I'm not sure whether I understand what I am listening to English.	5 (6.2)	9 (11.1)	15 (18.5)	33 (40.7)	17 (21.0)
27	If a person speaks English very quietly, I am worried about understanding.	4 (4.9)	7 (8.6)	18 (22.2)	37 (45.7)	14 (17.3)
28	I have no fear of listening in English as a member of audience.	2 (2.5)	11 (13.6)	35 (43.2)	20 (24.7)	11 (13.6)
29	I am nervous when listening to an English speaker on the phone or when imagining a situation where I listen to an English speaker on the phone.	5 (6.2)	11 (13.6)	31 (38.3)	28 (34.6)	5 (6.2)
30	I feel tense when listening to English as a member of social gathering or imagining a situation where I listen to English as a member of a social gathering.	3 (3.7)	16 (19.8)	33 (40.7)	24 (29.6)	4 (4.9)
31	It is difficult for me to listen to English when there is even a little bit of background noise.	2 (2.5)	8 (9.9)	20 (24.7)	32 (39.5)	18 (22.2)
32	English stress and intonation seem familiar to me.	5 (6.2)	7 (8.6)	46 (56.8)	18 (22.2)	4 (4.9)
33	It frightens me when I cannot catch a key word of an English listening passage.	3 (3.7)	8 (9.9)	14 (17.3)	38 (46.9)	17 (21.0)

*1 SD = Strongly Disagree, 2 D = Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 A = Agree, 5 SA = Strongly Agree

The statistics in Table 5 shows that for the listener's characteristics theme, the items in which the participants showed a high level of anxiety were item 33, 55 (67.9%), followed by item 27, 51 (63%), item 26, 50 (61.7%), item 31, 50 (61.7%), item 22, 49 (60.5%), item 21, 36 (44.4%), item 20, 35 (43.2%), item 29, 33 (40.8%) and item 25, 32 (39.5%). For item 19, 47 (58%), item 24, 36 (44.4%), item 28, 35 (43.2%), item 17, 33 (40.7%) and item 18, 27 (33.3%), the participants indicated a moderate level of anxiety. However, they reflected a low level of anxiety only for item 23, 41 (50.6%).

These results suggest that the participants believed that listener's characteristics could adversely affect listening comprehension. Certain listener's characteristics like confidence, confusion, and feeling worried, nervousness, tense, stressed and frightened made the participants anxious to face the listening task. Research on the role of listener's characteristics in listening comprehension highlighted that lacking these characteristics could contribute to listening comprehension (Elkhafaifi, 2005; Kim, 2000; Mills, Pajares & Herron, 2006).

DISCUSSION

This study was aimed at finding whether L2 learners faced listening anxiety. More specifically, the study was set to investigate which were the elements the participants faced the most anxiety. The results revealed that the participants indeed experienced a high level of anxiety when listening to English texts. The following are the issues that caused the most listening anxiety:

Background knowledge: What made the students most anxious were getting stuck with unfamiliar words, worrying over missing important ideas, having difficulty with unfamiliar topics, getting nervous and confused for not understanding every word and getting annoyed when coming across new words while listening to English texts.

Listening text and strategies: In this theme, what made the students most anxious during a listening comprehension task were listening to the passage only once, fast speeches, different pronunciation of words from the way the listener pronounced, not being able to differentiate the words from one another while listening and understanding the words but not quite sure of the speaker's purpose.

Listeners' characteristics: Anxiety stemmed from not being able to catch a key word of an English listening passage, being worried about a person speaking English very softly, getting upset for not being sure of understanding what is listened to in English, having a hard time listening to English when there is background noise, getting worried when having little time to think about what is heard in English, getting jumbled and confused when listening to important information in English, getting confused for not being able to remember what was heard, and getting nervous when listening to an English speaker.

According to the results, the students' anxiety was mostly caused by their lack of background knowledge particularly of new vocabulary and new information in the listening text, lack of repetition when listening to the English text, unfamiliar English pronunciation, speech rate and low level of self-confidence. The findings of this study are in line with Kim's (2000) study which found that unfamiliar pronunciation and speed of delivery were primary concerns of foreign language listeners while lack of background knowledge and learners' low level of confidence as well as misuse of listening strategies were the secondary concerns creating listening anxiety in Kim's study. In addition, Fang (2011) in his study also found similar results and emphasized that listening input characteristics such as nature of speech, level of difficulty and lack of repetition are the major sources of listening anxiety. Further, Fang emphasized that using proper listening strategies such as note taking during the listening process could increase the listeners' comprehension ability and reduce their level of anxiety. In addition, the findings of this study support Kimura's (2008) findings that found two types of listening anxiety which are self-focused apprehension and task-focused apprehension as the two main factors affecting listening comprehension process. The first one referred to the students' confidence and the latter to the listening input characteristics. Thus, the findings of this study add on to the research findings that FL/L2 listeners indeed experienced listening anxiety.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

An active listener is one who actively and strategically participates in the listening process within a low-anxiety classroom environment. It is impossible to make a listener that active unless the effect of his/her anxiety on listening is recognized and their sources of listening comprehension anxiety are found (Fang, 2011). Pedagogical implications based on the findings of the study are follows:

- Use learners' background knowledge of the material to guide them. In this study, lack of background knowledge relating to the listening topic was one of the major factors which created listening anxiety. Studies have also shown that having the appropriate background knowledge facilitates listening comprehension (Chang & Read, 2008; Othman & Vanathas, 2004) and that instructors need to integrate activities that activate learners' background knowledge in the listening classroom (Brown, 2006).
- Select the listening text appropriate to the level of the learners. Field (2008) pointed out that learners would feel more comfortable and motivated with authentic listening comprehension texts in cases whereby the instructor could provide texts according to their level. Difficult vocabulary and fast speech rate were the two major concerns of the students' anxiety in this study. So, selecting appropriate listening texts according to learners' level will help students to overcome their anxiety.
- Low level of confidence was another anxiety provoking factor. By creating a positive classroom climate before the listening activity, learners' level of confidence could be improved (Miller, 2011). Another way to increase learners' level of confidence is to have them list the sources of their listening anxiety on the board. After the learners see that listening anxiety is shared by nearly everyone and that most of the other learners experienced similar fears of failure, they would be motivated to overcome their own anxiety (Fang, 2011).
- Use appropriate listening strategies and activities such as note taking and note making and asking topic-related questions before, during and after the listening activity. The other major factor that most learners complained about in this study was related to misuse of listening strategies. Studies have shown that strategy use for listening skill is crucial for improving effective listening comprehension and alleviating listening anxiety in the classroom context (Gonen, 2009). thinking.

CONCLUSION

Listening anxiety is a factor that could affect L2 learners' listening comprehension performance. The findings of this study support the notion that L2 learners do face listening anxiety when listening to English texts. The participants in this study expressed a high level of listening anxiety particularly related to background knowledge, listening text and strategies. Pedagogical implications for these factors are suggested to alleviate the learners' anxiety.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The research was financed by Universiti Malaysia Pahang Graduate Research Scheme No. GRS130381.

REFERENCES

- Bekleyen, N. (2009). Helping teachers become better English students: Causes, effects, and coping strategies for foreign language listening anxiety. *System*, 37, 664–675.
- Brindley, G. & Slatyer, H. (2002). Exploring task difficulty in ESL listening assessment. *Language Testing*, 19(4), 369-394.
- Brown, S. (2006). *Teaching Listening*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Buck, G. (2001). *Assessing Listening*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Chang, A. & Read, J. (2008). Reducing listening test anxiety through various forms of listening support. *TESL-EJ*, 12, 1.
- Christenberry, B. (2003). *Listening comprehension in the foreign language classroom*. Retrieved from: <http://langlab.uta.edu/german/lana.rings/fall01gradstudents/2001paperchristenberry.htm>
- Dirkx, J.M. (2001). The power of feelings: emotion, imagination, and the construction of meaning in adult learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 89, 63-72.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Skehan, P. (2003). Individual differences in second language learning. In C.J. Doughty, & M. H. Long (Eds.), *The handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 589-630). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Dunkel, P. (1991). Listening in the native and the second/foreign language: Toward an integration of research and practice. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25, 431-457.
- Elkhafaifi, H. (2005). Listening comprehension and anxiety in the Arabic language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89, 206-220.
- Fang, X. (2011). Anxiety in EFL listening comprehension. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(12), 1-3.
- Field, J. (2008). *Listening in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: NY. Cambridge University Press.
- Gardner, R.C., Lalonde, R.N., Moorcroft, R. & Evers, F.T. (1987). Second language attrition: The role of motivation and use. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 6(1), 29-47.
- Goh, C. (2008). Metacognitive instruction for second language listening development: Theory, practice and research implications. *RELC Journal*, 39(2), 188-213.
- Gonen, M. (2009). The relationship between FL listening anxiety and FL listening strategies: The case of Turkish EFL learners. *EDUTE*, 9.
- Hang, Y. (2006). Listening comprehension anxiety: Students reported sources and solutions. *CELEA Journal*, 29, 5.
- In'nami, Y. (2006). The effects of test anxiety on listening performance, *System*, 34, 317-340.
- Ishler, J. (2010). *The listening strategies of Tunisian university EFL learners: A strategy based approach to listening to oral English texts*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
- Kim, J. H. (2000). *Foreign language listening anxiety: A study of Korean students learning English*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Texas, Austin.
- Kimura, H. (2008). Foreign language listening anxiety: Its dimensionality and group differences. *JALT Journal*, 30 (2), 173-196.
- Mills, N., Pajares, F. & Herron, C. (2006). A Re-evaluation of the role of anxiety: Self efficacy, anxiety, and their relation to reading and listening proficiency. *Foreign Language Annals*, 39, 2, 276-295.
- Miller, J. (2011). Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism: A nomological network analysis. *Journal of Personality*, 79, 1013-1042.
- Othman, J. & Vanathan, C. (2004). Topic Familiarity and its Influence on Listening Comprehension. *The English Teacher*, Vol. Xxxiv, 19-32.
- Oxford, R. L. (1999). Anxiety and the language learner: New insights. *Affect in language learning*, 58-67.
- Scarcella, R.C. & Oxford, R.L. (1992). *The tapestry of language learning: The individual in the communicative classroom*. Boston. Heinle & Heinle
- Slahshuri, S. (2011). The role of background knowledge in foreign language listening comprehension. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1 (10),1446-1451.
- Sparks, R.L., Ganschow, L. & Javorsky, J. (2000). Déjà vu all over again: A response to Saito, Horwitz, and Garza. *The Modern Language Journal*, 84(2), 251-255.
- Vandergrift, L. (2004). Listening to Learn or Learning to Listen? *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 24, 3-25.
- Vogely, A. (1998). Listening comprehension anxiety: Students' reported sources and solutions. *Foreign Language Annals*, 31, 67-80.
- Woldkowski, R. (1999). *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Yan, S. (2005). Effects of anxiety on listening performance and suggestions on improving listening teaching. *CELEA Journal*, 28. 1.
- Young, D. J. (1992). Language anxiety from the foreign language specialist's perspective: Interactive with Krashen, Omagggio Hadley, Terrell, and Rubin. *Foreign Language Annals*, 25, 157-172.

Zhang, X. (2013). Foreign language listening anxiety and listening performance: Conceptualizations and causal relationships. *System*, 41, 164-177.

