

Original Article

Needs Analysis of Listening Skills among Grade 9 Students in Secondary English Course in Nepal

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Abstract

Listening skills are primary source of linguistic input in language learning. Listening is recognized as a significant component of EFL classrooms and second language acquisition (SLA) research. This study examined the needs, challenges, and learning strategies of secondary-level students in developing listening skills. This study followed a basic qualitative research approach that used in-depth interviews and document study methods to collect the data. The study participants were eight secondary-level (class 9) students from two schools in the municipality of Rupandehi. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings of this study revealed that though students recognized listening as a crucial skill, its instruction remained mainly neglected due to irregular classroom practice, inadequate curricular emphasis, inadequate textbook activities, inadequate authentic resources, lack of assessment, and linguistic, contextual, and environmental obstacles, which hindered the development of listening competence. The findings also revealed that students viewed teachers' supportive and facilitative roles as central to effective listening instruction. The study recommended developing and implementing student-centered, innovative, and technology-integrated listening strategies for fostering better learner engagement and improving the English listening proficiency of the students at the secondary level in Nepal.

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Introduction

Teaching listening is a global issue as it is regarded as a difficult and under-practiced skill in English language teaching. Language proficiency depends on effectively improving and integrating the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening is a primary skill: the ability to understand spoken language. Speaking involves producing sounds, words, and sentences to convey ideas, which requires pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and conversational skills. Reading entails interpreting written text, understanding context, and extracting meaning through word recognition and comprehension. Writing is the ability to create coherent, grammatically correct content that incorporates spelling, grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and organized expression of ideas. Listening skills are generally essential to effective communication. Studies indicate that adults spend a significant portion of their communication time listening (45%), surpassing the time assigned to the other three skills: speaking (30%), reading (16%) and writing (9%) (Feyten, 1991; Nunan, 1998; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Siegel & Siegel, 2015). Listening plays an essential role in language acquisition and learning, particularly for second language learners. It enables students to comprehend spoken language that is essential for communicating in real-life situations.

In pedagogical terms, listening encompasses concepts such as recognition, perception, and understanding of spoken language (Huei-Chun, 1998). Listening involves several essential components, including distinguishing between sounds, recognizing words and their meanings, and identifying grammatical groupings (Tyagi, 2013). It also requires understanding expressions and utterances that convey meaning, linking linguistic, non-linguistic and paralinguistic signals, and using background knowledge to anticipate and confirm meaning (Ulum, 2015). Additionally, effective listening involves the ability to recall key words and ideas (Tyagi, 2013). Listening is an information-processing activity that plays a central role in facilitating language learning (Richards, 2008). By developing strong listening skills, students can comprehend discourses, lectures, discussions, instructions, dialogues, and other forms of oral communication. So, comprehension of listening is an important aspect of language acquisition and learning (Anderson & Lynch, 1988; Osada, 2004). Regular exposure to spoken English through listening comprehension helps students acquire correct pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm, which enhances the accuracy and naturalness of their spoken communication. (Graham, 2006). Therefore, teaching listening strategies is critical to foreign language learners because it exposes them to authentic

language, enhances their listening comprehension skills, promotes effective communication, helps in vocabulary and acquisition of grammar, nurtures cultural sociolinguistic understanding, and boosts confidence and motivation (Fathi, Derakhshan & Torabi, 2020; Krivosheyeva, Zuparova & Shodiyeva, 2020; Nunan & Miller, 1995). Listening plays a crucial role as a primary skill in both teaching and learning English (Sadiku, 2015). Listening has been taken as a 'Cinderella skill' (Mendelsohnthe, 1999; Nunan, 2003), a 'forgotten skill' (Burley-Allen, 1995), the Ignored Skill (Ulum, 2015), and an 'overlooked dimension' (Feyten, 1991) in second language learning or in the EFL context.

In second language (L2) learning, listening is a valuable source of input for language and content learning (Siegel, 2015). Listening is now recognized as a significantly more important aspect in EFL/ESL classrooms and second language acquisition (SLA) research (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). Listening has been emphasized through dedicated activities since the National Educational System Plan (NESP, 1971-1974) was implemented in Nepal. The National Curriculum Framework (2020) highlights the importance of developing listening skills among secondary-level learners as a critical component of language learning. The National Curriculum Framework (2020) integrates listening activities into language subjects such as Nepali, English, and other optional foreign languages. These subjects naturally include dedicated sections that emphasize listening comprehension. The curriculum emphasizes teaching various listening strategies to help students develop active listening. It includes a variety of listening resources such as audio recordings, videos, dialogues, speeches, and interviews (National Curriculum Framework, 2020).

Previous studies suggest that teaching listening skills has been neglected, overlooked, and ignored in EFL classes and in research, too (Ulum, 2015; Ghimire, 2019; Slimani & Moubtassim, 2023; Nazarieh et al., 2022) because it was not traditionally taken as a separate skill demanding explicit instruction, effective pedagogical strategies, inadequate teaching materials, and limited understanding of the nature of effective listening strategies (Bozorgian, 2012). Consequently, there is a noticeable gap in both explicit pedagogical practices and research related to listening skills. This can lead to a lack of explicit instruction and research that focuses on listening skills. Despite the realization of the significance of listening comprehension in achieving language competency, it has been largely neglected. However, recognizing the significance of listening skills for English language learning, they have been incorporated with other language skills in the English course in recent years. The secondary level curriculum in Nepal emphasizes the development of listening skills as part of the overall language-learning process. Although listening activities are included in the curriculum, it has not received satisfactory attention from the relevant stakeholders. The effective listening instruction receives insufficient attention from both teachers and students due to limited access to technology and audiovisual resources, large number of students in a class, insufficient exposure to authentic English outside the classroom and insufficient professional development opportunities for teachers. Due to these limitations in teaching listening skills, our students struggle with English in our school. Existing research on English language teaching in Nepal has primarily focused on broader language skills, particularly speaking and writing, while listening skills have received comparatively limited scholarly attention. We sensed a research gap in specifically addressing the teaching and learning of listening skills notwithstanding the significant challenges associated with teaching and learning listening skills in Nepalese secondary schools.

Secondary schools in Nepal remain to face significant challenges in enhancing students' listening skills. EFL listening is considered a challenging language skill primarily in foreign language settings where opportunities for concrete application are limited (Nowrouzi, Tam, Zareian & Nimehchisalem, 2015). Although listening is widely acknowledged as one of the four key language skills, it is often the most difficult for teachers to effectively address in the classroom and is frequently regarded by L2 learners as the most challenging skill to master (Field, 2008; Renandya & Farrell, 2011; Siegel & Siegel, 2015). Teaching listening skills can be challenging for teachers and equally difficult for students to master. For example, students who are proficient in speaking and reading may still struggle with listening, especially when presented with recordings of fast-paced conversations (Ghaderpanahi, 2012). The teaching methods and strategies presently used in secondary levels often fall short of meeting students' distinctive needs and preferences in terms of developing listening skills. Although listening skills are widely acknowledged as vital in language learning, the context of secondary schools in Nepal still lacks well-developed strategies and methods specifically designed to teach ELT students. Current pedagogical practices seem insufficient in effectively engaging learners, cultivating active listening skills, and addressing individual differences in learning.

The Grade 9 English curriculum has been revised and developed in association with the aims and objectives of the National Curriculum Framework for School Education, 2020 (Curriculum Development Center, 2020). This course addressed four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) adequately. The objectives of this curriculum is to enable students to communicate their ideas in English. This curriculum tries to incorporate recent trends and contemporary issues in the field of language learning and teaching. After the completion of this course, students are expected to have developed key competencies in English language listening skills like the ability to comprehend and respond to spoken English with reasonable accuracy, fluency, and coherence; extract essential information from clear standard speech and communicate confidently on familiar topics. The curriculum has taken listening skills as one of the obligatory courses at the secondary level. Listening activities are crucial as essential for EFL students and are frequently used in daily life. Though existing studies on language teaching in Nepal has primarily focused on speaking and writing skills, there remains a significant gap in both instructional practice and empirical research regarding teaching and development of English listening skills. This study examined students' needs in learning listening skills and comprehension at the secondary level. This study aimed to identify the challenges and problems Grade 9 students face in learning listening

skills. Therefore, given the importance of listening skills, this study explored the specific learning strategies Grade 9 students use to develop listening skills and comprehension.

Research Questions

- How do secondary-level students perceive their needs in learning listening skills and comprehension?
- What challenges and problems do learners face in the process of learning listening skills?
- What specific learning strategies do secondary-level students employ while developing their listening skills?

Literature Review

Listening as a Fundamental Skill

Listening plays a fundamental role in English language learning, as it is a complex and dynamic cognitive process. It serves as the foundation for all language skills. Listening has assumed a central role in language learning (Rost, 2005). It is an active process of interpreting and constructing meaning from both verbal and non-verbal messages (Nunan, 1997), and plays a dominant role in language learning and involves various forms of listener knowledge, including knowledge of phonology, vocabulary, semantics, cultural context, relevant life experiences, and the ability to predict and respond correctly (Le, 2019). It includes several key subskills, including listening for specific details, identifying the gist, making inferences, listening selectively, and making predictions before listening (Richards, 2008). It enhances understanding and knowledge while facilitating effective communication (Walberg, 2004) and education, consuming more daily communication time than other language skills and serving as the most frequently used language skill in classrooms (Coakley & Wolvin, 1997; Saraswati, 2018). Additionally, it provides a primary network for comprehensible input, which is essential for English language learning (Jafari and Hashim, 2015). Listening is the foundation of developing other skills like speaking, reading, and writing (Kumar & Shankar, 2021). It helps students to comprehend grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation in context. Effective listening skills improve our capacity to learn, adapt, and acquire new knowledge while enabling us to understand the world and fostering successful communication (Liubinienė, 2009). It is a critical skill that reinforces active language learning. It plays a crucial role in personal, educational, professional, and social life; improving one's ability to listen requires dedicated effort and repetition.

Learning Listening Skills

Listening is an essential skill of language learning, as developing effective listening skills enables students to become attentive and responsive listeners. The development of listening skills is crucial for second language learning (Kajiura et al., 2021). Listening skills not only facilitate positive interpersonal relationships and meaningful communication with other students but also enable students to develop an understanding of spoken language and social interactions that extends beyond the classroom. Among the four key skills in English, listening is very important because it can help improve other skills significantly (Darti & Asmawati, 2017). Listening activities enable students to take better control of their academic and personal lives by enhancing their ability to retain information and sustain attention (Kutlu & Aslanoglu, 2009). Learning listening skills is crucial for English learners because it exposes them to new grammatical structures and linguistic expressions, particularly when speakers use forms that are unfamiliar to listeners (Hayrapetyan, 2016). Listening exposes learners to new vocabulary in meaningful contexts and supports them in recognizing unfamiliar phonological patterns, including permissible sound combinations and phonemic clusters within words (Cheung, 2010). Students of English need to listen to the English language daily if they want to communicate appropriately (Darti & Asmawati, 2017). It may not be possible to acquire the English language without listening, as it provides second language learners with essential language input that plays a crucial role in language development (Alzamil, 2021). Therefore, developing listening skills is crucial for English language learners, as active listening includes the integration of various interrelated micro-skills, including discriminating sounds, recognizing words, identifying conversational functions, perceiving stress patterns, constructing meaning from linguistic cues, drawing on background knowledge to predict and confirm meaning, recalling key ideas, providing appropriate responses, and interpreting speakers' attitudes and intentions.

Teaching Listening in Second and Foreign Language Contexts

Teaching listening in second and foreign language contexts plays a crucial role in developing learners' communicative competence, strengthening comprehension abilities, cultivating intercultural awareness, facilitating the practical use of language in authentic contexts, supporting assessment and test preparation, and enhancing the overall quality of language learning experiences. Listening is fundamental to second language learning, as it is typically the first skill learned and provides the foundation for developing subsequent language skills (Hocaoglu & Ocak, 2024). Strong listening skills enhance Nepalese students' English proficiency and confidence in global communication. Listening is significant in the second language classroom because it provides input for students, and through listening, students receive information and gain insights (Yildirim & Yildirim, 2016). Rost (1991) emphasizes the significant role of listening in second language learning, arguing that it provides vital comprehensible input, exposes learners to the challenges of authentic spoken language, and enables teachers to draw attention to linguistic features, for instance, vocabulary, grammar, and interactional patterns. Developing listening proficiency in second language learning is often a complex and challenging process for non-native learners because instructional practices have a tendency to prioritize grammar, reading, and vocabulary over listening (Hamouda, 2013). Underwood (1989) recognized a number of challenges in listening instruction, including learners' inability to control the pace of spoken input, limited opportunities for repetition, restricted vocabulary, difficulty recognizing discourse cues signaling shifts between ideas, and insufficient background knowledge. Teachers and students

often neglect listening in EFL/ESL classrooms because they perceive it as less important, resulting in limited listening instruction and insufficient development of learners' listening ability (Osada, 2004). Listening in EFL contexts is considered an important, challenging language skill, difficult and less practised, ignored in the classroom, and hardest to teach effectively, particularly in foreign language settings where opportunities for practical application are limited (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Field, 2008; Nation & Newton, 2009; Ulum, 2015; Siegel, 2015). Teaching listening skills in EFL/ESL is an undervalued, understudied, and underappreciated skill; it has historically been overlooked and inadequately taught in many EFL classrooms, and problematic for many EFL learners (Wilson, 2008; Kassem, 2015; Ghimire, 2019).

The literature review found that listening is a fundamental yet complex and frequently neglected language skill in EFL contexts. Despite its fundamental role in language development and communication, listening has historically received less pedagogical attention and research than other language skills, particularly in contexts where learners have limited opportunities for authentic language exposure and practice. Previous studies also indicate that listening remains undervalued, inadequately taught, and challenging for both teachers and students in EFL/ESL classrooms. This concern is particularly relevant to the Nepalese context, where existing research has predominantly addressed speaking, writing, grammar, and other dimensions of language learning, though systematic research on listening pedagogy and learners' listening development remains limited. Consequently, there is a need for context-sensitive research that moves from identifying listening difficulties to examining learners' needs, challenges, and strategies for developing listening skills. Addressing this gap, the present study tried to investigate secondary-level students' needs and challenges in learning English listening skills and explore the specific strategies they employ to develop listening skills. The study therefore seeks to contribute contextually grounded evidence for strengthening the teaching and learning of listening skills in Nepalese secondary-level English classrooms.

Methodology

We used basic qualitative research, which seeks to understand how individuals interpret their experiences, construct their realities, and attribute meaning to their lives and experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). We selected two secondary schools from one of the Municipalities of Rupandehi, located in the semi-urban area of Rupandehi District in Lumbini Province. We then purposively selected eight class nine students from the selected schools, as this study was delimited to explore students' needs for developing listening skills (Bist & Kandel, 2025). The guideline questions related to the topic served as the primary research tool for this study. We used qualitative research tools such as in-depth interviews and document review to collect data. We used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyze data from in-depth interviews. We audio-recorded all interviews after obtaining participants' permission. The data were transcribed for analysis. Content analysis was employed based on the given codes in the text. We defined the main themes based on the given codes. We used multiple sources of data for triangulation and cross-checking the findings and increasing the validity of the results. The revision activities were done with the government documents, participants' engagement, and students' perception of the need for listening instruction.

Results and Discussion

This needs analysis study revealed the following findings related to listening instruction in the Class Nine English course, focusing on students' needs and level of understanding of the strategies they use while learning listening skills in the Class Nine listening skills course. They are presented under the following themes:

Practices in Learning Listening Skills in the Classroom

Improving listening skills plays an important role in mastering English in the EFL/ESL context. Secondary-level students in Nepal focused to learn only on simple, easy listening activities. They prefer only simple instructions. There are several approaches for mastering listening skills, which are also engaging for learners. The Grade 9 listening course is intended to improve language skills, comprehension abilities, interpretation proficiencies, critical thinking abilities, and analytical aptitudes and to develop confidence, preparing students for academic success and everyday communication. Similarly, the English listening curriculum of grade nine focuses on developing students' ability to comprehend, interpret, follow the standard, and respond to spoken English by understanding main ideas, specific information, extended discussion in speech, and instructions across a range of real-life contexts (Curriculum Development Centre Nepal, 2021). These outcomes collectively aim to strengthen listening comprehension, critical response and practical application of English in everyday contexts, aligning with CDC Nepal's wider goal of enhancing communicative competence of English in secondary education. These aims align with extensive communicative language teaching principles that assume listening as an active, interpretive, and meaning-making process rather than a passive skill (Field, 2008; Richards, 2008). Though listening skills are considered an important skill in the course of grade 9, but it is unheard of in real practice. In this context, participant SP8 reported that "We don't practice listening activities regularly in class, even though that was prescribed in the course with priority. I hardly practice listening skills in class; it usually happens once a week" (interview transcription SP8).

The data highlights that listening activities are not practiced regularly; they are limited to approximately once a week. Participant SP8 argued that listening instruction was not systematically integrated into daily teaching-learning processes but rather treated as an occasional or secondary activity. Similar practice is found in Bangladesh, where listening is formally prioritized in the secondary EFL curriculum but remains largely absent in practice, with listening activities rarely practiced and receiving minimal instructional focus (Patwary, 2019). Similarly, participant SP7 stated

We rarely practice English listening activities in class. To some extent, we study listening skills once a week in English class. We learn by listening through the teacher's voice as the teacher reads the text given in the book and we do the exercises as prescribed in the textbook (Interview transcription SP7).

The above data reveal a clear gap between the curricular importance of listening skills and their actual classroom practice. Although listening skills are recognized as a key component of the Grade 9 English curriculum prescribed by CDC Nepal, it is "rarely practiced" in real classroom settings, showing disconnect between policy and implementation. Additionally, the data highlights that listening activities occur only occasionally (about once a week), suggesting limited exposure and insufficient practice opportunities for students. The rare practice is also based on a structured, mechanical, and teacher-centered approach that does not fully align with the intended outcomes of the curriculum. Teachers, particularly in EFL contexts, are not aware of the process of listening and learners' problems in listening comprehension; as a result, the common practice in the class is that teachers and educators focus on the outcome of the listening rather than listening itself, i.e., the process of listening (Rezaei & Hashim, 2013). Moreover, the next participant, SP2, argued that they practiced listening only in the English class, mostly through oral activities in which the teacher read the script, students listened and did the activities given in the textbook

The intended outcomes of the curriculum of secondary level listening were unable to address the activities conducted in the English class. The students and teachers do not pay attention to learning and teaching listening in community schools of Nepal by thinking that listening is not important for examination purposes (Ghimire, 2019). In this regard, participant SP1 stated that

I sometimes study listening skills in my English class. I usually learn by listening to the teacher in my English class. Listening activities, I do in class are looking at the picture and guessing the answer to the following questions: listen and do the exercise, like answer the questions, fill in the blanks, listen to the audio and answer the following questions, true and false, guess the meaning of the words, choose the correct answers, etc. (Interview transcription SP1)

The data highlight a clear deviation between the intended curriculum outcomes and actual classroom practices in listening instruction. Avci (2023) found similar practices in Turkey, an incongruity between the teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching listening in a primary school, mainly due to limited time and a loaded curriculum. Though the curriculum focuses on the development of comprehensive listening skills, the participant's interpretation suggests that listening is only occasionally practiced and largely limited to structured, teacher-centered, and textbook-based activities such as listening to the teacher, answering questions, and completing structured exercises. These practices focus mainly on comprehension and recall rather than fostering interactive, authentic, and skill-integrated listening, which indicates a gap between curricular intentions and pedagogical implementation. Therefore, listening is recognized as an important skill in the course of the secondary level, but its implementation as practice remains insincere and insufficient, potentially hindering students' communicative competence in real-world situations.

Listening as an Ignored Skill

Listening is considered a foundation that supports all skills (Sularti, Drajiati, & Supriyadi, 2021). Listening is the least explicit among the four language skills at the secondary level in Nepal (Rana & Rana, 2019; Kadel, 2024; Panthee, 2024). This negligence affects students' listening proficiency negatively and consequently their speaking skills (Patwary, 2019). In this regard, participant SP8 stated, "we don't practice listening activities regularly in the class, even though that was prescribed in the course with priority. We hardly practice listening skills in class, and we do not have any practical test-related listening activities" (interview transcription, SP8).

The data above suggest that there is a systemic negligence of listening instruction, which is characterized by irregular practice, inadequate classroom emphasis, and the absence of assessment. It shows that there is a gap between the intended curriculum and actual classroom practice. It highlights that listening instruction is both under-practiced and under-assessed, which may hinder students' development of effective listening competencies. This reflects a systemic issue where curricular intentions are not translated into classroom realities, ultimately affecting students' communicative proficiency, as Ghimire (2019) claimed that listening skills are neglected in our school education.

In this regard next participant, SP3, reported that they usually studied listening skills once a week, which indicates that listening practice is occasional and limited in the classroom context, occurring only once a week. This negligence shows that insufficient exposure to listening activities could hinder the development of students' listening proficiency. Similarly, participant SP4 stated that they have less classes related to listening compared to other skills, which shows that learning listening skills is evidently the ignored skill. This data indicates that teaching listening is allocated significantly less instructional time than other language skills, which reflects an imbalance in skill development within the curriculum implementation. Findings of the previous studies revealed that teaching listening skills has been neglected, overlooked, and ignored in EFL classes and in research too (Ulum, 2015; Slimani & Moubtassim, 2023; Nazarieh et al., 2022) because it was not traditionally taken as a separate skill demanding explicit instruction, effective pedagogical strategies, inadequate teaching materials, and limited understanding of the nature of effective listening strategies (Bozorgian, 2012). Such limited exposure may restrict learners' opportunities to sufficiently develop listening skills, which affect students' overall language proficiency.

Effectiveness of Listening Course with Prescribed Listening Strategies and Materials

Effective listening courses have become increasingly significant in the context of globalization for communication in English. Developing effective listening skills is crucial for enabling learners to comprehend and participate successfully in global communicative circumstances (Ismail, 2013). In this context, the secondary level curriculum of Nepal aims at developing the communicative competence in students. The English listening course of class 9 aims to listen and respond to a variety of spoken English with reasonable accuracy, fluency, and coherence. Additionally, the listening text of class 9 aims to develop learners' ability to comprehend spoken English effectively by enabling them to understand intended meanings and respond appropriately; follow clearly articulated talks, announcements, and speeches; grasp the main points of extended discussions; extract specific information from short spoken texts; identify main ideas and supporting details from news and simple recorded materials on familiar topics delivered at a natural pace; and accurately follow multi-step instructions and detailed directions (Curriculum Development Center, 2078). Based on these goals and objectives, CDC prescribed audio text and different activities to conduct classroom activities of listening instruction. Student participant SP4 stated that "in the class, we sometimes practice listening through audio exercises, and the teacher and I listen to English songs, watch movies, and listen to the news in English. The listening exercises given in the course are helpful because they help us understand difficult words (interview transcription SP4).

The interview excerpt above highlights that listening instruction is practiced irregularly but includes a variety of multimodal resources, including audio exercises, songs, movies, and news, which can enhance learners' exposure to authentic language use. The structured activities given in the course, such as listening to audio texts, dictation, question-and-answer tasks, short stories and conversations, gap-filling, matching, and true/false exercises, helped with the gradual improvement of students' listening ability. This also suggests that teachers conduct such activities regularly, which contribute to vocabulary development and listening comprehension. However, the ignorance and inconsistent implementation of listening practices may limit the overall effectiveness of listening skills development. This shows that the lack of regular and structured listening activities may hinder constant progress in listening proficiency. The findings are consistent with a study in Saudi Arabia, as Ismail (2013) revealed that regularly conducting listening instruction using effective strategies significantly improved learners' listening comprehension skills. Similarly, participant SP3 stated:

The activities in our course include listening to audio text, dictation, question-and-answer, and listening to short stories and conversations. After doing these activities, my listening ability has improved a little. I can understand spoken English more easily than before. The listening text has helped me to recognize pronunciation, stress and new words. (Interview Transcription SP3)

The interview excerpt suggests that a variety of structured listening activities, for example, listening to audio text, dictation, question-and-answer tasks, and exposure to short stories and conversations are incorporated into classroom practice, reflecting a balanced approach to developing listening skills. The participant's opinion of slight improvement indicates that these activities contribute to enhancing listening proficiency that facilitate better comprehension of spoken English. Likewise, recognizing pronunciation, stress, and new vocabulary highlights the role of listening to texts in developing both linguistic and phonological awareness. This suggests that the effectiveness of the prescribed listening course depends not only on the quality of the curriculum and materials but also on the regularity and consistency of classroom implementation. Similarly, participant SP4 reported that their course included structured listening comprehension activities like question-answer activities and listening to short stories and conversations. Likewise, participant SP4 highlighted, "In the class, we sometimes practice listening through audio exercises, and the teacher and I listen to English songs, watch movies, and listen to the news in English. The listening activities given in the course are helpful because they help us to understand difficult words if done regularly" (Interview Transcription SP4).

The data above show that listening activities given in the course are executed rarely, relying on occasional audio exercises and exposure to authentic materials such as songs, movies, and news. This irregular practice of the activities given in the course may limit the effectiveness of listening skills development. However, the participant argued that course-based listening activities are helpful to understanding difficult vocabulary and support doing listening comprehension activities. It shows that the listening activities prescribed in the course can strengthen linguistic and phonological competence when students practice regularly, as meaningful exposure to authentic and curriculum-based listening materials promotes communicative language teaching (Field, 2008). In this context, participant SP7 reported that they practiced activities such as listening and answering questions, filling in the blanks, matching, and true/false items as given in the textbook. He further stated that engaging in these activities had improved their listening ability. Similarly, the next participant, SP8, reported that they usually listened to the chapter text and completed the exercises provided there. These data focuses that listening instruction requires integrating prescribed listening activities regularly with authentic listening resources to maximize learning outcomes. This revealed that the prescribed listening course is often pedagogically supportive but its success depends on regular implementation and constant classroom practice.

The Teacher's Role in the Development of Students' Listening Skills

In ELT classrooms, teachers can play a vital role in developing listening skills among the students for better learning experiences by giving equal attention to other skills (Bhagat, 2021). They can significantly facilitate students in achieving their learning goals related to listening skills. In this regard, participant SP2 said:

The teachers' role is very important for the development of our listening skills; not only this, but also other skills like speaking and writing as well. The teacher recites the script given in the book and asks us to listen and do the exercise given in the textbook in each lesson. (Interview Transcription SP2)

The interview expert shows the perceived significance of the teacher's role in fostering students' listening skills along with other language competencies, including speaking and writing. Teachers need to encourage students to develop stronger listening skills that allow them to comprehend and engage with spoken input more effectively, which is helpful to understand the meaning (Qasserras, 2025). It also indicates that teachers' role as main facilitators of input is predominantly reciting textbook scripts and guiding students to complete given tasks. This seems to be a structured and teacher-centered technique where listening practice is based on prescribed activities and materials from the course. Similarly, the next participant, SP1, argued, that "The teachers read the script from the book, and we listened to them, so we developed our listening skills in English. The teacher should pronounce correctly so we can learn correct pronunciation from him". (interview transcription SP1) The interview expert highlights the fundamental role of teachers in facilitating students' listening skills and comprehension. The data also suggest that listening activities are primarily teacher-centered, where the teacher reads aloud the audio script from the textbook and students passively listen, which reflects a traditional, teacher-centered pedagogy. Likewise, participant SP3 stated that their teacher explained the listening tasks given in the textbook clearly and motivated them to practice more, which had improved their listening skills.

Correspondingly, participant SP6 reported that the teacher had helped them in every way whenever they needed support and that in class they usually listened to the teacher and practiced the texts provided in the listening sub-chapters. These statements from the participants suggest that the teachers' supportive and facilitative role in learning listening skills, where they support whenever needed, contributes positively to the development of listening skills. A similar result was found in Vietnam, where students highlighted that teachers significantly influence students' attitudes toward listening comprehension, in which positive reinforcement and supportive behavior of teachers enhance motivation and engagement, while strict or critical feedback can discourage students and demoralize their confidence (Pham & Le, 2025). Though classroom practice in teaching listening activities depends on textbook-based listening activities, the teacher's role is found to be crucial and dominant. So, teachers play diverse roles in EFL listening instruction by organizing and managing learning activities, controlling classroom processes, evaluating learners' performance, providing resources and guidance, tutoring and scaffolding comprehension, probing learning progress, and actively engaging in listening tasks to create a supportive and interactive learning environment that enhances students' listening development (Harmer, 1991; Kandel, 2014; Macháčková, 2009).

Students' Problems in Developing English Listening Skills

EFL students face numerous problems while developing English listening skills. They frequently face challenges such as limited vocabulary, limited grammatical understanding, poor audio quality, and environmental distractions, which hinder their ability to develop listening skills (Rifai, Dibdyaningsih & Ummah, 2024). In relation to problems encountered in listening instruction, participant SP6 said:

We face the problems encountered when learning listening skills, such as not understanding the pronunciation of new vocabulary, difficulty with accents, a lack of enough materials (audio and video) for practicing, fewer activities for instruction and ignorance of teaching listening in the classroom practice. (Interview transcription SP6)

The data above highlights multiple interrelated problems that hinder the effective development of listening skills. The major problems faced by the students while learning listening are difficulty in understanding the pronunciation of new vocabulary and different accents, suggesting inadequate exposure to vary and authentic audio inputs, which are necessary for developing listening comprehension. Additionally, another problem encountered, lack of sufficient audio-visual materials, which indicates a resource constraint that limits meaningful practice opportunities. Azmi et al. (2014) identified the challenges in listening comprehension in Iraq as the quality of recorded materials, cultural differences, accents, unfamiliar vocabulary, and the length and speed of audio. Likewise, students in Iran encounter listening comprehension difficulties due to limited linguistic proficiency, insufficient vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, fast speech, unfamiliar pronunciation and accents, long listening passages, inadequate contextual and cultural knowledge, irrelevant listening materials, and unfavorable speakers (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Raskoti & Kandel, 2025). Similarly, the lack of instructional activities reflects a weak pedagogical approach to teaching listening, where listening skills are neglected in classroom practice. Similarly, participant SP2 stated:

The problems encountered in learning listening are that we usually don't have listening activities in class, usually once a week. The teacher only focuses on reading and writing activities from the book. We don't have any activities related to listening. We, all teachers and students, ignore the listening exercises given in the book. (interview transcription SP2)

The interview expert highlights the limited exposure of listening activities in classroom practices. It also reveals a negligence of listening as a core language skill, which leads to problems in understanding fast speech, unfamiliar accents, and new vocabulary. This negligence limits students' exposure to authentic auditory input, hindering the development of listening comprehension skills. Similarly, students of Indonesia experience listening problems due to insufficient exposure

to diverse listening materials, limited self-study time, ineffective learning strategies, and the absence of effective instructional strategies to address diverse classroom contexts (Saraswaty, 2018). In this regard, participant SP4 argued that she experienced problems in learning listening, mainly in understanding pronunciation, the meaning of the text in comprehending fast speech and unfamiliar vocabulary. This shows that students face multiple interconnected challenges in developing listening skills, mainly at the phonological level, lexical knowledge, and overall listening comprehension. Similarly, learners faced different problems in listening instruction in Indonesia due to inadequate language knowledge, particularly limited vocabulary and insufficient grammatical competence (Lengkoan, Andries & Tatipang, 2022), and difficulty understanding the meanings of words and phrases, alongside challenges related to the speaker, text, listener, and environmental or equipment factors.

Role of Listening in English Language Learning

Listening is a primary and important language skill to improve in second language learning. It is a significant language skill to develop in second language learning because it provides input for learners (Rost, 1994; Gilakjani, 2016). It is an essential skill in English language learning and is closely connected to other language skills (Abdimajitovna & Sobitaliyevna, 2021; Renukadevi, 2014). Regarding the perception of the role of the English language learning participant, SP1 said that "I believe that listening is very important for learning English. It is helpful for the improvement of our English as well as other skills, such as speaking and writing. I request that the teacher teach all the listening activities given in all lessons in the book" (interview transcription SP1). This response from participant SP1 reflects the perceived importance of listening skills in English language learning. This highlights the clear perception toward listening as a fundamental skill that not only enhances overall language proficiency but also supports the development of other language skills, mainly speaking and writing. This also indicates an understanding of the integrative nature of English language learning, where listening functions as a significant input mechanism.

Listening plays a primary role in language learning, positioning the foundation for the ensuing development of language expression and writing abilities (Hsu, 2024). Ali (2022) stated that no act of language can be possible without listening. Additionally, the data highlights the perceived gap between curriculum design and classroom practice. This shows the student's expectation for more structured and consistent engagement with listening tasks, implying that such activities are currently underutilized. The response underscores a positive attitude toward listening and emphasizes the need to include it more in instructional practice. Similarly, participant SP2 argued that they thought if learners learned English by listening well, they could improve their English proficiency easily. This argument reflects a strong belief in listening as a fundamental skill for overall English language development (Nunan, 2003). Listening is an input-driven procedure that supports learning of speaking, reading, and writing skills (Richards, 2008). Listening competency in the EFL context significantly contributes to learners' overall language development by enhancing their fluency in speaking, accuracy and speed in reading, and creativity and coherence in writing (Ali, 2022). Listening skills adopt significance and are important in the EFL/ESL classroom, where listening activities help students to create new vocabulary, grammar, and communication patterns in English easily.

Students' Expectations and Suggested Strategies in Listening Instruction Improvement

Developing listening strategies is important in listening instruction because it enables and empowers students to manage and assess their comprehension process and reactions to audio materials. Students believe that learning to listen is more interactive, regular, and meaningfully integrated into classroom practice rather than being neglected as a secondary skill. In this context, participant SP5 stated:

I think listening is crucial for learning English because it helps us understand it, improve pronunciation, and learn other skills. There needs to be some changes in the present teaching-learning process of listening to the interactive strategies, like the use of authentic materials and innovative strategies (Interview transcript SP5).

The interview expert highlights students' awareness of the importance of listening and their critical view of present listening-teaching practices. This focuses on the central role of listening in overall language development, which is positioned as the basis for comprehension and improvement of pronunciation and supports the learning of other language skills. Moreover, the data indicate dissatisfaction with the present process of learning instructions, which is characterized as passive or inadequately engaging. Likewise, the data has highlighted the need for a shift from traditional teaching-learning practices to more interactive and innovative approaches with the use of authentic materials and more learner-centered, dynamic, and contextually relevant instructional strategies.

It is necessary to help students improve their understanding of syntax, pronunciation, and vocabulary before teaching listening skills (Goh, 2000). Students expect exposure to authentic listening materials such as conversations, audio recordings, and multimedia resources, which can help them understand actual language use, including pronunciation, accents, and natural speech. In this context, participant SP6 stated, that "I think the unit-wise listening activities given in the textbook are not enough, so I would like to see changes in listening techniques lesson-wise with various new activities, and they should include ICTs in learning listening skills" (Interview transcript SP6).

The data above reflects a critical evaluation of current listening instruction and a strong commitment to pedagogical improvement. The participants' perception of unit-wise listening activities in the textbook is insufficient, showing a gap between prescribed learning materials and learners' actual needs for skill development. This suggests

students have limited exposure to diverse and sustained listening practice, which can hinder the development of effective listening competence. The data suggest a need to change lesson-by-lesson teaching techniques and a preference for more dynamic, technology-based instructional strategies for listening instruction. The data suggest that students support a shift from textbook-based listening practice to richer, technology-based strategies for listening development. Students need opportunities to participate in various listening activities and leave each one with new ideas and strategies (Ghafar, Sawalmeh & Mohamedamin, 2023). Similarly, participant SP7 showed the necessity for conducting listening activities regularly by modifying teachers' teaching techniques for listening skills and adopting innovative strategies to enhance listening instruction. Similarly, Graham (2017) stated that students develop effective listening strategies slowly, or not at all, without clear instructional activities; strategy-based instruction enhances their strategic competence and improves listening proficiency. Likewise, participant SP8 reported the necessity of the teachers to adopt innovative strategies for teaching listening and ensuring that listening classes are conducted regularly as prescribed in the syllabus, which gave emphasis on the use of ICTs for teaching and learning English listening skills. The data focus on students' expectations for pedagogical reform in listening instruction, emphasizing methodological innovation and instructional consistency. The data reveal that students expect more student-centered, innovative, and technology-integrated strategies in listening instruction to improve students' engagement and proficiency in English.

Conclusion

Improvement of listening skills plays an important role in mastering English in the EFL/ESL context. Listening skills are significant in academic and daily life contexts, which contribute to cognitive and communicative skills improvement, exposure to vocabulary and grammar usage. However, existing listening instruction methodologies and strategies in secondary schools may not adequately address students' specific needs and preferences. The findings of the study revealed that students recognized listening as an important skill at the course of secondary level, but its implementation as a practice remains elusive and insufficient, which hinders students' communicative competence in real-world situations. The study found that there is a systemic negligence of listening instruction, which is characterized by ignored, irregular practice, inadequate classroom practices and the absence of assessment. Similarly, the findings of the study revealed that though the structured activities prescribed in the course were designed to enhance students' listening proficiency, their occasional and inconsistent implementation by both teachers and students weakens the effective development of listening skills. It is found that students perceive teachers' supportive and facilitative roles as essential to promoting effective listening instruction and enhancing the development of EFL listening skills. The study identified the problems faced by students as insufficient curricular emphasis, limited authentic listening resources and practices, negligence on assessment, and linguistic, contextual, and environmental barriers that collectively hinder students' listening comprehension. Similarly, the study found that inadequate unit-wise listening activities in the textbook limit students' exposure to continued listening practice, delaying the development of listening competence.

Although the study was delimited to analyzing the needs of Grade 9 students in the English language course, the findings revealed that students expect innovative, student-centered, and technology-integrated listening strategies to enhance their listening competence and proficiency. Innovative strategies for teaching listening at the secondary level need to be developed and implemented. It is essential to enhance the importance of listening skills in regular teaching-learning activities and exams. This requires providing authentic resources for teaching listening effectively. This study highlighted the students' expectations for pedagogical reform in learning listening skills, which focused on methodological innovation and instructional regularity. The study recommends developing and implementing student-centered, innovative, and technology-integrated listening strategies to foster better learner engagement and enrich the English listening proficiency of students at the secondary level in Nepal.

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