

Analysis of the Design of Grade 9 Listening Lessons in the Student's Book and Teacher's Guide of English for Ethiopia

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Abstract

The study was conducted to examine the design of the listening lessons in the Grade 9 English for Ethiopia. The objective of the study was to see how the listening lessons were presented to identify if there were problems related to the design. The study employed a descriptive research design using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. It used content analysis as data gathering tool, where both the Student Textbook and the Teacher's Guide were analyzed based on the checklist adapted from NCLRC (2004) and Lingzhu (2008). The findings of the study have shown that the three stages of listening were not properly addressed in the materials evaluated, with the exclusion of the pre-listening activities in the majority of the listening lessons and the post-listening stage was missing in the majority of cases. The finding also showed that the input sources and the text types were not proportionally treated in the Textbook evaluated and the activities are comprehension exercises dominated, giving little attention to the other listening sub- skills. Hence, the study recommended that if the listening skill has to be taught effectively and the listening proficiency has to be properly addressed, the design of the listening lessons have to be reconsidered.

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INTRODUCTION

In real life, when students learn a second language like English, they need to learn to communicate with each other through the integration of the basic skills in a meaningful context. They are required to listen and understand, read what has been written, speak it out and be able to write with the standard and acceptable proficiency. To this end, teaching materials preparation and teaching the four language skills so as to help the learners get the required proficiency becomes the very focus of concerned bodies. Listening is one of the four basic language skills in which people gain valuable inputs –through a combination of extensive and intensive listening materials and procedures. Rost (1990) states that listening provides a basis for the development of other productive skills. In fact, listening comprehension production in all cases of language learning stands to reason that there can be no production unless linguistic input is provided and becomes comprehension intake for the learners. Thus, listening is a fundamental language skill and as such it merits a critical priority among the four skills area for language students.

The teaching of listening skills requires effective listening texts and activities of different types, with the different sub-skills, purposes and to which particular group of students they are suitable. Listening exercises that are meant to train students should be success oriented and build up students' confidence in their listening ability

(Harmer, 1991). Hence, the purpose of the listening activities in the textbook should be to enable students develop the different listening sub-skills. It is assumed that the listening activities in the textbook are designed in the way that promote students' listening comprehension skills, and help students perform the given listening tasks of each stage. It is due to this fact that students are required to perform something in response to what they hear that will show their understanding. Hence, the purpose of the listening activities in the textbook should be to enable students develop the different sub-skills of listening in order to promote students' listening comprehension skills.

Different bodies like the Ministry of Education, Parents and teachers complain that students at Grade 9, after even being exposed to English starting Grade 1, have poor listening proficiency. This may take us to investigate the listening activities available in Grade 9 English for Ethiopia. Harmer (1991) states that our use of different skills will frequently depend on what we are listening for: identifying the topic, predicting and guessing, listening for general understanding, listening for specific information, listening for detailed information and interpreting text. In addition, there are different sub-skills to be practiced by students of this grade level. For example, extracting specific information, note taking, comprehending the text, understanding lexis, dictation, identifying main points, following instruction and comprehending general

information are the major sub-skills. These are the skills to be practiced by the students of this grade level. If the listening activities and the skills to be practiced were properly designed with the three stages of listening in line with their listening activities to enable students comprehend the listening comprehension activities; such critical problem might not be observed.

Examining the design of listening lessons in English for Ethiopian Grade 9 Textbook is of paramount importance to see if there are challenges related to them. Therefore, this study was designed to examine how the lessoning lessons in the textbook are designed. In other words, it was designed to see whether the lessons were designed in a way they promote the effective learning of listening skills in English for Ethiopian Grade 9 Textbook.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

A descriptive survey design was employed in the study. The research used content analysis to gather the relevant data.

Content Analysis

The content analysis of Grade 9 Student Textbook and Teacher's Guide were made. Content analysis was used in order to obtain information whether the designed activities help students exercise the different sub-skills of listening or not. It was believed important to examine the Students' Textbook and Teacher's Guide so as to look at whether the three phases of listening and the activities to be performed at each stage were properly designed or not. Thus, the method also helped to examine just how far the listening practice texts used in the listening lessons provide a variety of the listening activities. Referring to students' textbook and analyzing the nature of the listening activities, an attempt was made to examine, list and quantify the input sources, text type, the activities and the sub-skills included in the textbook. This helped the researchers to identify how far the content, the input sources, the text type, the pre-listening, the while-listening, and the post-listening stages in line with their activities and the sub-skills of listening are properly included in the listening text. The researchers adapted a criteria from NCLRC (2004) Lingzhu (2008) as a checklist to analyze whether the pre-listening, the while-listening, and the post-listening activities designed in the way they could promote students listening comprehension skills. In the same way, content analysis of the Teacher's Guide was made to examine how far the theory of teaching listening skill is included; and to see the pre-listening, the while-listening, and the post-listening stages in line with their activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teaching materials have significant influence on language practice. Analysis of how the listening lessons are designed in English for Ethiopian Grade 9 Textbook was made focusing on whether the design could promote the students' listening comprehension skills. Hence, a brief analysis of the input source, text type and the types of activities in the textbook, in relation to the sub-skills have been made.

The Grade 9 English Textbook consists of 12 units. Each unit covers 11 periods based on a 34- week school year and consists of 10 teaching periods and one

assessment period, plus four revision units. Every unit is based on a topic and consists of several sections that cover a broad range of language.

The *Introduction* section introduces the topic and the aims to stimulate students' interest and curiosity. In each unit, there is usually at least one *reading* section (often two). The aim here is to develop students' reading skills, to read for different purposes and to increase one's reading speed.

Vocabulary also forms the focus in the *increase your word power* section in most units. In this section, students are encouraged to acquire new vocabulary, which are expected to be not yet acquired at Elementary level. The understanding and use of grammar rules is also included in the *language focus* section.

There is at least one speaking section which helps students develop the skills to communicate effectively in different situations. The writing sections, which are aimed to develop a variety of skills learners could develop in writing, are included. In most units, there is a *study skills* section that aims to develop students' independent study skills across the curriculum.

All units include a *listening* section, too. The exercises or activities in this section are intended to develop students' abilities to listen for general and specific information, as well as to comprehend what they hear. Students are also encouraged to listen for key words.

Analysis of the Student Textbook

The Grade 9 English for Ethiopia was first published in 2003 E.C. by Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Education. There are 28 listening lessons in the textbook. The listening activities are in the Students' Book; whereas the listening texts are appended at the end of the Students' Book.

The Design of Input Sources and Text Types

The input sources that the listening lessons consist of are 16 adapted materials to be read loudly, 9 teacher talk and 3 live which can be presented in the form of interview. Recordings and authentic materials were not used. Regarding the text types, 14 of them are static (description of things and following instructions), 13 of them are dynamic (story telling or recounting of incidents). Only one abstract (expressing opinions) text is included in the textbook. Therefore, there is no proportional treatment of the input sources and text types. This contradicts with what Anderson and Lynch (1988) argued for. According to these scholars, the first two that is the static and dynamic texts seem to be appropriate for lower grades and abstract text is for advanced learners.

As to the type of activities, of the 28 activities, 11 of them focus on comprehension questions, completing notes or paragraphs and labeling a diagram were treated 5 times each. Predicting what will come and discussing the illustration type of activities are presented 2 times and the retelling a story, following an instruction, and sequencing events are treated one time each. Thus, much emphasis is given to comprehension questions, completing notes and labeling a diagram or a chart. So, this shows the activities in the text book designed dominantly to enable students to practice extracting specific information from a given text.

Table 1: Summary of the listening activities in the textbook

No	Listening Exercises or Activities	Frequency	Section/s of the Textbook where the Activities are Presented
1	Sequencing things /putting things in order	1	Assessment 3
2	Following instruction	1	A1.2
3	Re-telling a story	1	A10.2
4	Discuss the illustration	2	A3.2, B12.1
5	Labeling/completing a diagram	5	A4.3, assessment2, A6.3, A9.2, A11.3
6	Completing notes/paragraphs/dictation	5	A1.2, B5.9, B7.2, S8.2, B11.1
7	Comprehension questions	11	Assessment 1, A2.2, A2.6, A4.5, A5.2, B6.3, summary unit 4-6, A7.3, B8.1, A12.2, A12.8, summary unit 10-12
Total		28	

Table 1 above shows the summary of the listening activities in the textbook. As one clearly see, comprehension questions were used in 11 listening lessons, that is, under sections: assessment 1, A 2.2, A2.6, A4.5, A5.2, B6.3, summary unit 4-6, A7.3, B8.1, A12.2, A12.8, summary unit 10-12. Labeling diagrams, charts and pictures were presented under sections: A4.3, assessment 2, A6.3, A9.2 and A11.3. Completing notes were presented under sections: A1.2, B5.9, B7.2, A8.2 and B11.1. In the same way, the discuss the illustration exercises were designed and presented under sections A3.2 and B12.1 whereas, the retelling a story, following instruction and sequencing or putting things in order were presented in sections: A10.2, A1.2 and assessment 3. Generally, one can infer that the activities of the listening text were not treated equally. However, practicing different exercises/activities systematically will depend on the textbook i.e., if the textbook has different activities in the listening text; thus, these help teachers let students practice the different sub-skills of listening.

Design of the 3 Stages of Listening and Text Types

This section presents the analysis related to how the three *listening stages* are designed and the *types of listening texts* included in the Students' Textbook and in the Teacher's Guide. There are 14 listening lessons in the six units, including the section on *Revision 2*. In the Textbook, a minimum of two listening lessons are designed for each unit. Under these listening sections the pre-listening activities are found only in four sections, namely sections A3.2, A4.5, B5.9 and Revision 2 (units 4-6). In the same way, in the listening text, the researchers could observe only 2 post-listening activities under section A3.2 which require the students to relate the listening text to their experience. All the listening sections have while-listening activities. There are 14 listening lessons in units 7 to 12. Here, the pre-listening activities are designed only under 7 sections, namely sections A7.3, B7.2, A9.2, A10.2, A11.3, A12.2 and B12.1; whereas, the while-listening activities were included in all of the listening sections. The post-listening activities were observed only in two listening sections, namely sections A3.2 and B7.2 of the 14 lessons of listening.

Generally, the content analysis revealed that the while-listening stage was included in all the 28 (100%) listening lessons while the pre-listening activities were designed only in 11 (39.3%) and the post-listening in 2 (7.14%) listening lessons of the 28 listening lessons analyzed in the textbook. From this fact, it is possible to observe that less attention was given to the pre and the post listening stages in the English for Ethiopia Grade 9 Textbook. Even compared to the pre-listening stage, the attention given to

the post-listening stage is very serious while the post-listening stage is an important stage to help learners learn thinking beyond the texts they listen to. Similarly, the theoretical framework of listening i.e., the pre-listening, the while-listening and the post-listening stages in line with their activities were not clearly designed.

The analysis has shown that the while-listening activities were presented in all listening sections of the textbook. Of the 28 listening lessons, 17 listening lessons have no pre-listening activities. And, the post-listening activities were almost not designed in the Student's Textbook. This contradicts with what ELT scholars (for example Ur, 1984; Underwood, 1989; Rost, 1990; NCLRC, 2004; Lingzhu, 2008) suggest about listening phases and listening activities. These scholars indicate that listening lessons go beyond the activity itself and need to have three main stages that is the pre-listening, the while-listening and the post-listening stages. This goes in line with the three categories of listening-activities that are prospective, online and the retrospective tasks. However, writers or designers of English for Ethiopian Grade 9 Textbook have forgotten to include the important theoretical and practical aspects of teaching and presenting listening skill in the listening texts. Especially, the three phases of listening are not designed in the listening section so as to enable learners identify the activities to be performed under each stage; and, the pre-listening and the post-listening activities are not consistently designed. Hence, the three listening stages suggested by ELT scholars should be taken into consideration in the development of teaching materials.

The design and effectiveness of activities in the three stages of listening (that is, the pre-listening, the while-listening and the post-listening activities) in the Student Textbook was analyzed using the checklist adapted from the National Capital Language Resource Center (NCLRC, 2004). The major purpose of the analysis was to see the extent to which the activities of each stages of listening were designed in the listening text promote students' listening comprehension skills.

As indicated in Table 2, 'activating students' prior knowledge' was not observed in 17 (60%) of the listening lessons from the 28 listening lessons designed in the Student Textbook. From those pre-listening activities provided, however, to 'activate students' prior knowledge', 'letting learners look at pictures', 'maps', and 'diagrams and guess what the picture is about' was included under sections A3.2, A4.3, A6.3. 'Letting students to predict what will come next' was also presented under sections

A4.5, B6.3, B7.2, A9.2, A10.2, A12.1; and 'dictating a list of words or letting teachers teach key words in context' were presented under sections A5.2 and A7.3. Thus, most of the listening lessons do not let students work on pre-listening activities and on the other hand the listening sections under chapter one, two, eight and eleven lack pre-listening activities. Generally, this shows that the listening activities designed for the pre-listening phase do

not match the listening lessons presented in the textbook. That means, 17 listening lessons lack the pre-listening activities. This might have significant influence on teachers' use of these listening stages in the actual teaching of listening which in turn affects students listening proficiency. When it comes to the while-listening activities, it is possible to observe that they were included in all the 28 listening lessons designed in the Textbook.

Table 2: The focus of the three listening stages

No	Stages of Listening	Sections of the Textbook where the Activities are Included	Frequency
I	Pre-listening activities		
1	Activate students' prior knowledge	The 11 listening lessons that have pre-listening activities	11
2	Make them looking at pictures, maps, and diagrams guess what the picture is about	A3.2, A4.3, A6.3	3
3	Let students predict what will come next	A4.5, B6.3, B7.2, A9.2 A10.2, A12.2	7
4	let teachers teach key words in context	A5.2, A7.3	2
II	While listening activities		
5	Let students listen and fill in graphs and charts	Summary (unit 1-3) A11.3	2
6	Let students Listen for gist	units1-3, A5.2, B6.3, B8.1, A12.8	5
7	Searching for specific clues/words and fill or answer	A2.2, A2.6, A4.5, summary 4-6, summary 7-9	5
8	Listen and fill the gaps	Assessment on unit 4 and 5	2
9	Listen and label the pictures with its descriptions	A1.2, A1.12, A4.3, A6.3, A7.3, A9.2	5
10	Listen and put in the correct order	Assessment on unit 7	1
III	Post-listening activities		
11	Let students discuss and reflect their answers/ relate to their own experience	A3.2, B7.2	2
12	Invite teacher to provide a related activity	NOT INCLUDED	*
13	Let teachers give feedback	NOT INCLUDED	*

It is clear that the post listening stage is a stage at which students show their reaction to the listening text and the lesson is integrated with other skills. It is also a stage at which students are made to relate the listening text to their own experience where the teacher lets them discuss, share and reflect their ideas. However, it was observed that the post-listening stage was not indicated or designed properly both in the Students' Textbook and in the Teacher's Guide. None of the listening sections of the listening texts in each unit talks about post-listening stage. This means that almost no post-listening activities were designed in the materials analyzed. The post-listening activities are implicitly stated only under sections A3.2 and B7.2.

Generally, from the content analysis of the Student Textbook, it can be inferred that the phases of listening were not separately stated in the listening text. Listening stages should be clearly explained in line with the activities to be performed under each stage. In line with this, Ur (1984), Underwood (1989), Rost (1990) and Harmer (1991) mentioned that the purposes of the pre-listening, the while-listening and the post-listening stages and the activities designed to develop the listening competency should be given attention at each stage and should be clearly indicated. Knowing the theoretical aspects helps learners to identify the purpose of each listening phase, the activities to be performed under each stage; and helps them to be involved and interact during the actual listening time. However, it can be inferred that from the content analysis of the textbook the pre-listening and the post-listening activities were not clearly designed.

The textbook analysis was also to see whether the input sources, text types, activities and sub-skills to be

practiced were designed in a way that they can develop or promote the students' listening comprehension skills or not.

As it can be seen from Table 3, out of the 28 listening lessons mentioned earlier, pre-listening activities were not included in the majority of the listening lessons. The pre-listening activities were included in only 11 (39.3%) listening lessons out of the total 28 listening lessons included in the Student Textbook. This clearly shows that proper attention was not given to the pre-listening activities in designing Student Textbook. Concerning the while-listening activities, the listening lessons and the activities included in the text were equal in number. In the post-listening stage, the post-listening activities were almost not included. The above table shows that only 2 (7.1%) post-listening activities were included in two listening lessons under the listening section A3.2 and B7.2. It is possible to conclude that the post-listening activities were not given attention in the Student Textbook.

Analysis of the Teacher's Guide

The Teacher's Guide of English for Ethiopia Grade 9 was first published by Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Education in 2002 E.C. At the beginning of the Teacher's Guide, the preview of the contents of the book for each unit was given in chart. A very brief explanation of how to manage each sub-section and a guide to lesson planning is also given. The objectives are also stated for each sub-section.

This Teacher' Guide was intended to serve teachers as a guide: to lesson planning, by showing what steps to

follow in order to teach successfully; and by giving suggested further reading. It was also intended to let teachers focus on all language skills equally; make students develop their survival skills as well as to help learners build confidence and learning strategies through skills practice and specific activities. Moreover, it was intended to let teachers think about and prepare supplementary activities and adapt the text when needed; letting teachers plan how they will conduct ongoing assessment during the unit; and techniques of classroom management is also included.

The major focus of the analysis of Teacher's Guide was to examine whether the activities are properly included or designed in the pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening stages and to see whether the activities were appropriate to let teachers present these skills

properly. Besides these, it was aimed to see whether the phases of listening, the activities to be performed at each stage of listening, theoretical ways of presenting this skill are clearly indicated in the ways they could let teachers present effectively in practical classroom lessons or not.

As it has been stated, the Teacher's Guide was intended to equip teachers with the theoretical procedures and on how listening skill is practically employed in the classroom, and in order to teach listening skill successfully. Accordingly an attempt was made to examine whether English for Ethiopian Grade 9 Teacher's Guide had the pre-listening, the while-listening and the post-listening stages in line with the appropriate activities. The criterion used to examine the effectiveness of the listening activities was adapted from Rees (2008), Lingzhu (2008) and Rost (1990).

Table 3: Summary of the use of stages of Listening in the Textbook

No	Phases	Activities	The listening section and sub-sections where the activities are included	Frequency
I	Pre-listening stage	Look at the picture and discuss	A3.2, A4.3, A6.3	3
		Asking students to predict	A4.5, B6.3, B7.2, A9.2 A10.2, A12.1	6
		Teach key words in context	A5.2, A7.3	2
Total				11
II	While-listening stage	Listen and perform the action	A1.12	1
		Listen and fill the blank space	Assessment on unit 4 and 5	1
		Listen and put in the correct order	Assessment on unit 7	1
		Listen and write	A1.2, A2.2	2
		Listen and complete the chart	Summary (unit 1-3) A11.3	2
		Listen and predict	A10.2, B12.1	2
		Label the picture with its description	A4.3, A6.3, A7.3, A9.2	4
		Listen and answer	A3.2, Summary (1-3), A4.5, Summary (4-6), B8.1, Summary (Units 7-9)	6
	Listen and make note	A2.6, A5.2, B7.2, A8.2, B11.1, A12.8, B12.1, Summary(Unit10-12)	8	
Total				27
III	Post-listening stage	Relate to your experience and discuss	B7.2	1
		Work in group and discuss	A3.2	1
Total				2

The Design of Listening Stages

The pre-listening activities were designed for the 17 listening lessons in the Teacher's Guide under sections: A1.12, A2.2, A2.6, A3.2, A4.3, A4.5, A5.2, B5.9, A6.3, B6.3, A7.3, B7.2, A9.2, A10.2, A11.3, A12.2, and B12.1. For the rest 11 listening lessons, the pre-listening activities were not designed in the Teacher's Guide in order to help teachers to activate their students' prior knowledge or schemata. The while-listening activities were presented in all the listening texts designed in the Teacher's Guide. However, the post-listening activities were included only in two sections, namely A3.2 and B7.2. This shows that the pre-listening and the post-listening activities were not properly designed in the Teacher's Guide. From the very beginning, the Teacher's Guide was prepared with the intention of equipping teachers with the theoretical and practical aspects of how language skills are practically employed in the classroom. Nevertheless, the results of the analysis of the Teacher's Guide revealed what the content analysis of the textbook revealed. That is, for example, in the content analysis of the textbook; the stages of listening were not designed, the pre-listening activities were not designed for most of the listening

lessons and the post-listening activities were not designed for almost all the listening sections in the textbook.

In sum, from the content analysis of the Teacher's Guide, one can deduce that the theoretical frameworks of listening were not included in the Teacher's Guide to equip teachers with the theory of teaching listening. That is, what is to be done at each stage of listening, what activities should be focused on at the pre-listening, the while-listening and post-listening stages. In addition to these, the pre-listening, the while-listening and post-listening activities are intended to be included in the three stages of listening. However, the pre-listening, the while-listening and post-listening stages were not designed in the Teacher's Guide to let teachers present/address the listening skill practically in the classroom to properly promote students' listening comprehension skills. This contradicts with what different authors/ELT scholars suggested about phases of listening and listening activities to be performed at each stage. Concerning this, NCLRC (2004) and Rost (1990) state that the activities should go in line with the ways that fit the purposes intended at each listening stage.

CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of the study was to investigate the design of Grade 9 listening activities. To this end, content analysis was used to collect data for the study. The information gathered through content analysis was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Accordingly, the study has shown that:

1. The three stages of listening were not designed in line with their listening activities in the listening text of the materials analyzed to let teachers employ the activities. The content analysis made revealed that the three stages of listening was not explicitly stated in the Teacher's Guide and the Student Textbook. It is with this regard that without any prior identification of the pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening stages and its theoretical aspects that most parts of the listening sections let teachers present the listening activities. Of the while-listening activities, all teachers were involved in reading the text aloud ignoring other while-listening activities.
2. The pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening stages were not totally indicated in the Student Textbook to let students aware of the phases of listening. In the same way, it does not let students aware to some important theoretical aspects of the phases of listening and the purposes of each phase of listening in line with the activities that should be performed by the students.
3. The content analysis of the textbook revealed that the input sources and text types were not proportionally treated in the textbook i.e., 16 adapted materials to be read loudly, 9 teacher talk and 3 live which can be presented in the form of interview. Concerning the text types, 14 static, 13 of them dynamic and only one abstract text was included.
4. Many of the activities in the textbook are comprehension questions, completing notes and labeling a diagram/ chart. However, the activities were not designed under each stages of listening in the ways to be presented without distorting the phases in order to let learners able comprehend what was intended. In addition, in the actual listening the activities practiced were restricted to reading aloud the listening text to the class since the activities were not designed in their turn i.e., the pre-listening, the while-listening and the post-listening activities as suggested by ELT scholars.

Generally, listening lessons have been included in English for Ethiopian Grade 9 textbook; however, the design of the listening stages and listening activities in the textbook do not enable students to practice the various sub-skills of listening, and they do not help students identify the activities to be performed at each stage.

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The study confirmed that the listening activities in the listening text are not designed in the way that let teachers employ the activities in the three stages of listening.
2. The content analysis of the textbook confirmed that the phases of listening suggested by ELT scholars haven't been included in the textbook.

3. The listening inputs in the listening text lack variety i.e., adapted materials and teacher talks were used dominantly, neglecting the other three i.e., recording, authentic and live. Similarly, the text types do so. Static and dynamic texts were mostly used in the text, while almost no abstract text used.
4. The prospective and retrospective activities should be included or designed for all listening lessons in pre and post-listening stages, but they were not designed for all listening lessons.

Based on the conclusions made above, the following recommendations have been made.

- The pre-listening activities should be designed consistently in the students' book with clear instruction on how to perform the activities. Similarly, the post-listening activities should be designed briefly in the students' book.
- The pre, while and post-listening stages in line with their purposes and procedures to be employed to teach listening skill need to be included in the teacher's guide.
- The theoretical part of teaching listening skill needs to be presented to the students from the very beginning.

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