

オーディオ機器使用のリスニングにおける
学習者のネガティブな情意面とファシリテーターとしての教師の役割

Negative Affect under Audio-Aids Listening &
Teachers' Roles as Facilitators

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I. Introduction and Background

Listening is a mental process happening in our consciousness and teachers often struggle when trying to enhance their students' listening abilities. Graham (2006) argues that listening skills are thought to be the most difficult and least acquired of the four skills. Especially in EFL countries like Japan where English is not practically used

in their daily lives, learners have difficulties in developing their English skills in general and listening in particular. English classes are considered to be the main, or only place to cultivate English competence, and audio-aids listening¹ can be frequently used for developing listening abilities. Katanoda (2007) stated that listening tasks administered in class without visual cues make listening more difficult than in situations with interlocutors. Moreover, cases where listening questions are played only once, listeners have no chance to compensate for their listening performance, which can impose a tremendous burden on listeners.

Oxford (1990) insists that the affective side of the learner is probably one of the very biggest influences on language learning success or failure, adding that good language learners are often those who know how to control their emotions and attitudes about learning. Furthermore, a negative correlation between learners' level of anxiety and their listening performance has been reported (Yang, 1993; Elkhafaifi, 2005). However, research on the negative affect specifically under audio-aids listening is so far rather neglected.

II. Methodology

1. Study objects and goals

The purpose of this research is to explore:

- 1) Specific areas of negative affect which hinder audio-aids listeners' performance through a questionnaire.
- 2) Teachers' roles as facilitators of audio-aids listening in conjunction with how they either facilitate or hinder student progress.

2. Participants

The participants were non-English major Japanese students who were enrolled in a private university and taking an elective class for the preparation of the TOEIC test. The number of students was 52. The class met once a week for 90 minutes over a semester of fourteen weeks in spring, 2008.

3. Procedures

3.1 Listening questions

A listening test with 30 questions² of the Part 2 type of listening for the TOEIC test in which students listened to a question followed by three responses and chose the best response was given in the first class of the course. Those questions and responses were

not printed on the answer sheet. Each statement ran for two to three seconds with four to five seconds of pause time interval before answering, and was played only once. The answers were marked out of 30. The result is shown in Table 1.

Table1. The result of listening questions

N	Mean	SD	Mode
52	15.13	3.66	15

Full marks: 30

3.2 Questionnaire

Following the listening test, a questionnaire, which consisted of five items based on the responses of the open-ended questionnaire conducted in a study by Katanoda (2007), was distributed in order to ask about negative affect during audio-aids listening. Students were supposed to answer using a five-point Likert Scale response ranging from “Strongly agree”, five points, to “Strongly disagree”, one point. Higher scores explain a higher degree of each factor corresponding to the following labels: “lack of concentration”, “rushed feeling”, “unwillingness”, “loss of confidence”, and “tension or anxiety” (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire was completed using their real names for the purpose of follow-up in cases where further clarification was deemed necessary.

III. Results of Questionnaire

Among the items of negative affect based on the Likert Scale were “lack of concentration” (4.06) ranked highest followed by “rushed feeling” (3.5), “unwillingness” (3.48), “loss of confidence” (3.44), and “tension or anxiety” (2.77) in descending order.

In order to investigate correlations between affective factors and listening performance, and among the affective factors, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated. This analysis was carried out with the use of *SPSS 15.0J for Windows* (see Table 2).

Table2. Correlation matrix between affective factors and listening performance, and among affective factors

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 listening performance	1.00	-.37**	-.14	-.34*	-.08	-.09
2 unwillingness	-.37**	1.00	.32*	.100	.06	.01
3 lack of concentration	-.14	.32*	1.00	.04	.04	.12
4 tension or anxiety	-.34 *	.10	.04	1.00	.36**	.41**
5 loss of confidence	-.08	.06	.04	.36**	1.00	.34*
6 rushed feeling	-.09	.01	.12	.41**	.34*	1.00

**=p<.01, *=p<.05

From Table 2 moderate or relatively strong negative correlations were observed between “tension or anxiety” and listening performance ($r = -.34$, $p < .05$), and between “unwillingness” and listening performance ($r = -.37$, $p < .01$) (see Figure 1 and 2). Among the affective factors, Table 1 shows moderate correlations between “unwillingness” and “lack of concentration” ($r = .32$, $p < .05$), and between “loss of confidence” and “rushed feeling” ($r = .34$, $p < .05$) (see Figure 3 and 4). Furthermore, a relatively strong correlation between “tension or anxiety” and “loss of confidence” ($r = .36$, $p < .01$), and a strong correlation between “tension or anxiety” and “rushed feeling” ($r = .41$, $p < .01$) were observed (see Figure 5 and 6). Overall, affective factors are thought to be interconnected.

Figure 1: Correlations between “tension or anxiety” and listening performance

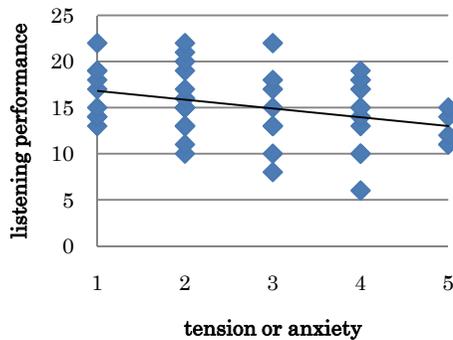


Figure 2: Correlations between “unwillingness” and listening performance

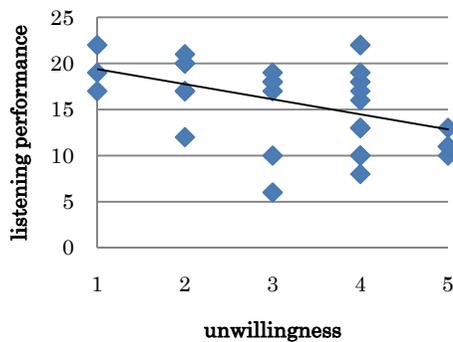


Figure 3: Correlations between “unwillingness” and “lack of concentration”

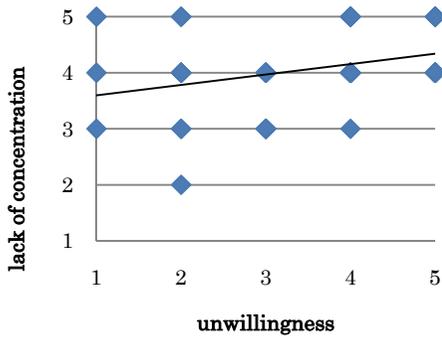


Figure 4: Correlations between “loss of confidence” and “rushed feeling”



Figure 5: Correlations between “tension or anxiety” and “loss of confidence”

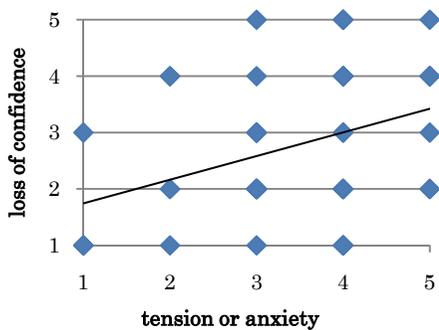
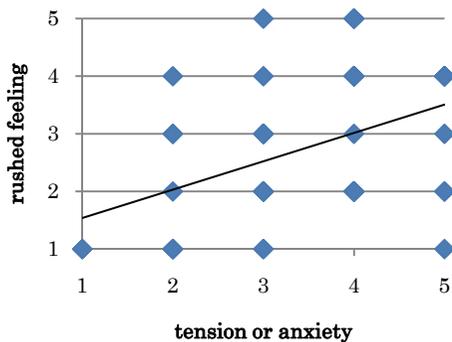


Figure 6: Correlations between “tension or anxiety” and “rushed feeling”



IV. Correlations among affective factors

1. “Unwillingness” and “lack of concentration”

The technical terminology related to “unwillingness or willingness” has been researched as ‘achievement motive’ since a study by Murray (1938). Following him, McClelland (1953) forwarded this field by advocating three factors as attributes of ‘achievement motive.’ Those factors are as follows: (1) Competition with a standard of excellence, (2) Unique accomplishment, and (3) Long-term involvement.

Yamashita (1988) quoting McClelland’s study, also mentions the presence of mixed feelings of a fear of failure and an expectation of success or others’ support that appear in mind on the way to achieving one’s goal. Therefore, people’s behaviors towards aiming at goals can include not only positive but also negative aspects. And depending on the level of anxiety, some tend to be able to concentrate on the task at hand, and some are deprived of concentration owing to too much fear of failure. Moreover, Yamashita (1988) concludes that “achievement motive” would correlate to “concentration.” “Achievement motive” described as a related term to “unwillingness” in the present study showed moderate correlations to “lack of concentration”, which was consistent with Yamashita’s statement.

2. “Tension or anxiety” and “rushed feeling”

Manita (1978) points out that “rushed feeling” is related to “anxiety” in the sense that one would bear it in mind that a disadvantage might happen if some task is not done in time. Also, Horino (1994) mentions “rushed feeling” would be equivalent to “struggle” for escaping from anxiety. Horino (1994), therefore, continues that although “rushed feeling” and “tension or anxiety” are not exactly the same, but they are still similar. Moreover, from a different viewpoint from the above, Horino (1994) builds a hypothesis regarding situations where “rushed feeling” would be raised as follows: (1) Level of “rushed feeling” would be increased when one cannot accept his/her past, and (2) an unpleasant image towards one’s future would grow into a “rushed feeling” because some higher standard would be set in order to overcome that unpleasant image created in the mind.

Audio-aids listeners without chances to ask for repetition or slower speed have to keep listening and answering by the start of the next question, where they have “rushed feeling” as well as “tension or anxiety.” Besides, it is thought that as listening tasks are proceeding, listeners’ anxiety about the past answers’ correctness is being accumulated, as a result of which their “rushed feeling” would be raised. At the same time, anxiety of

the next coming question and a negative image of the listening results would still increase “rushed feeling.” Those reasons illustrate why “tension or anxiety” and “rushed feeling” showed strong correlation in the present study.

3. “Tension or anxiety” and “loss of confidence”, and
“loss of confidence” and “rushed feeling”

Dörnyei (2001) argues that “confidence” is closely related to concepts like ‘self-esteem’, ‘self-efficacy’, and ‘anxiety’, adding that with most creative motivational ideas, learners will be unable to display their abilities if they have basic doubts about themselves. In the present study, relatively strong correlations were observed between “tension or anxiety” and “loss of confidence.” Also, considering the statement by Horino (1994) that “rushed feeling” and “tension or anxiety” are similar, which was quoted earlier, it is significant that “loss of confidence” and “rushed feeling” were correlated in the present study.

V. Teachers’ roles as facilitators

1. Care for “unwillingness”: Promotion of ‘effort attributions’

‘*Attribution theory*’ by Weiner (1992) states that individual’s explanations (or ‘causal attributions’) of why past successes and failures have occurred have consequences on the person’s motivation to initiate future action. ‘Causal attributions’ include the notion of whether one’s past failures are attributed to *ability or effort*. People with a high achievement motive tend to think their failures are attributed to their efforts, so that they tend to continue to have an achievement motive. On the other hand, those with a low achievement motive tend to think their failures are attributed to their lack of abilities which cannot be controllable, so that they tend to lose motivation to keep trying. Dörnyei (2001) recommends the promotion of ‘effort attributions’ and refusal of ‘ability attributions’ in class.

Teachers should estimate students’ efforts rather than their results. At the same time teachers’ expectations towards their students’ capabilities drive them to develop (Dörnyei, 2001). Those positive attitudes of teachers will help students grow “willingness.”

2. Care for “lack of concentration”: Refrain from daunting attitudes

Yamashita (1988) mentions “lack of concentration” occurs when willingness is lacking. At the same time, she states that one sometimes feels difficulty to concentrate

on a task at hand even with willingness (Yamashita, 1988). There are times when one tries to concentrate as eagerly as possible, but they cannot do so. It may safely be said that a state of concentration can be created when one is not too conscious about concentrating. In other words, a state of concentration requires not only willingness but also moderate relaxation. Teachers' daunting attitudes will make students anxious. Oppositely, supportive attitudes will be effective for inducing an ideal state of mind between concentration and relaxation among students.

3. Care for "loss of confidence": Success breeds success

Teachers' belief that it is sufficient to simply employ as many listening tasks as possible can result in accumulation of a sense of failure in some students. Dörnyei (2001) stresses the importance of providing experiences of success while saying success breeds success.

Teachers in EFL countries have to keep in mind that English is not heard all the time in these countries. It is difficult for students to make a sudden switch to grasp English sounds immediately after coming to English class. There is a need to take a minimum step at the beginning of lessons in order that teachers may get their students used to English sounds. Classes should start with a relaxing atmosphere with the use of English songs or listening games, for example, which will contribute to a more gradual shift to the English world. Main listening tasks followed by those warm-up ones will lead to more successful listening performance, which will benefit students in raising their levels of confidence.

4. Care for "tension or anxiety" or "rushed feeling": Vent of negative feelings

Larsen and Prizmic (2004) quote in their study that Freud taught that negative emotions, when not expressed, built up tension and ultimately produced symptoms, so that the discharge of negative emotions through expression was thought to rid the psychological system of tension. Similarly, Zautra (2003) argues that expression of stressful experiences was efficacious for one's mental health, while exemplifying the research of Pennebaker (1990) among college students.

Teachers have to take care not to evoke negative feelings automatically as soon as audio-aids listening starts. There is a need for teachers to show attitudes such as 'acceptance', 'empathy' and 'congruence' to their students, which were advocated by Rogers (1957) who had a great influence on the development of learner-centeredness. When students feel free anytime to vent their negative feelings including "tension or

anxiety” or “rushed feeling” to their teachers, they will be able to develop their listening skills more easily.

VI. Conclusion

In EFL countries, listening performance under audio-aids can greatly influence a listeners' future in times of, for example, taking such tests as TOEIC for promotion in the workplace or TOEFL for continuation onto higher education. The present study suggests that students' listening performance under audio-aids is affected by their mental states. At the stage of regular classes, through making efforts to understand students' difficulties, teachers could give practical advice before sending them to more serious listening tests. When teachers become more skillful facilitators, their students may self-actualize and realize their own greater potential.

Notes

- 1 Audio-aids listening means listening through CD or tape recordings without visual cues.
- 2 This listening test was excerpted from the “TOEIC Test Shin Koushiki Mondaishu vol.2” published by the official institution of the TOEIC test: Educational Testing Service, in 2007.
- 3 “Unwillingness” means here a decline in willingness to listen which may stem from mental or physical causes.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire items for affective difficulties under audio-aids listening

*The items were originally written in Japanese.

1. Do you sometimes feel “lack of concentration” under audio-aids listening? (CD リスニング中、集中力に欠ける事がありますか)

SD	D	Neither A nor D	A	SA
1	2	3	4	5

2. Do you feel sometimes “tension or anxiety” under audio-aids listening?
(CD リスニング中、緊張や不安を感じる事がありますか)

3. Do you sometimes feel “loss of confidence” under audio-aids listening?
(CD リスニング中、自信がなくなる事がありますか)

4. Do you sometimes feel “rushed feeling” under audio-aids listening?
(CD リスニング中、焦りを感じる事がありますか)

5. Do you sometimes feel “unwillingness” under audio-aids listening?
(CD リスニング中、やる気がなくなる事がありますか)