CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Four sections are covered in this chapter. First of all, population, location, and the sampling technique are introduced in detail. Following are the instruments used in this study. Then, the third section describes the procedures taken, and finally, the fourth section explains the statistical treatment adopted for analyzing the collected data.

Participants

The participants in this study come from six classes of 8th-grade junior high school students in a junior high school in Taipei. Although this research is to discover what junior high school students' English listening needs are, the 7th-graders were excluded for not having enough time to experience English listening training themselves.

As for the participants chosen, each of the classes among the 8th grade comprised 33-35 students, both male and female. They share similar background: first, they grew up and received education in Taiwan; second, with an average of 14.5 years of age, they had the experience of at least 5 years of English learning, starting from the 3rd grade in elementary school; third, having learned English as a foreign language for more than 5 years, they had approximately a basic level of EFL (Note: based on the GEPT); fourth, judging from their language skills, all of them had received English listening instruction about sounds, intonations, and the comprehension of simple conversation or daily dialogues for at least 1 year, starting from the 7th grade in

junior high school, yet the listening comprehension ability was mostly acquired through certain listening training workbook meant for tests. The listening proficiency of the participants was based on their grades on the average scores in the listening comprehension section obtained in the three monthly exams in the 95th academic year. Out of the full marks, 40, students who scored more than 30 belonged to the 'high' level, 10-20 belonged to the 'intermediate', and the rest belonged to the 'low.'

The similar listening training background as well as the received listening comprehension ability strengthened the validity of this study, since such noise as different prior knowledge had been ruled out. Besides, the participants being 8th-graders also assures that at least basic level of listening comprehension skills has been introduced, which further enhance their understanding of their real personal English listening needs.

Generally, the descriptive statistics for the 202 participants' background were presented in Table 2. In terms of listening proficiency, more than half of the participants (125 out of 202) fall into the high listening proficiency group (62%), a little more than a quarter of the participants (68 out of 202) belong to the intermediate (34%), and only 9 are categorized into the low listening proficiency group (4%). In terms of gender, 97 participants are males (48%), while 105 are females (52%).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for the Participants' Demographic Background (N=202)

Items	Groups	Frequency	Percent(%)
Gender	Male	97	48
	Female	105	52
Listening Proficiency	High	125	62
	Intermediate	68	34
	Low	9	4

Instruments

Questionnaire is the instrument utilized to derive the data from the junior high school students about their English listening needs. The questionnaire employed in this research is based on the taxonomy of listening comprehension skills proposed by Richards (1983) who reviewed a substantial body of literature related to English listening, analyzed learners' listening needs, brought forth the micro-skills pertaining to listening comprehension ability, and established objectives for the instruction of these skills. Richards' categorization of listening comprehension abilities have been frequently referred to, if not mostly relied on, in research about English listening, such as Yan's (1988), Ferris and Tagg's (1996), and Teng's (2000). The present writer did not make any modification of Richards' taxonomy while using it as the content of the questionnaire instrument because such taxonomy includes detailed description of English listening comprehension skills and each description is clear and understandable. In the fear that any change would influence the validity and reliability of the instrument, Richards' taxonomy was left intact while being utilized.

In this questionnaire, five-point Likert Scale is employed and corresponding scores are counted. Generally speaking, the questionnaire consists of two sections— 51 items altogether. The first section includes 33 items pertaining to 'conversational' listening comprehension abilities, and the second section includes 18 items pertaining to 'academic' listening comprehension abilities. Such questionnaire asks each of the participants to choose an appropriate scale of importance for each listening comprehension ability, depending on situations and purposes the listener would encounter.

Procedures

This assessment was carried out as the planned procedure shown in Chart 1:

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│           Curriculum              Student         │
│                                                   │
│       (National Standards)   (Ability/Prior Knowledge) │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Needs Assessment                     │
│                                                   │
│                (Questionnaires)                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│           Content              Process            │
│     (The selected teaching  (The selected instruction │
│       materials or plans)    procedures or pedagogy) │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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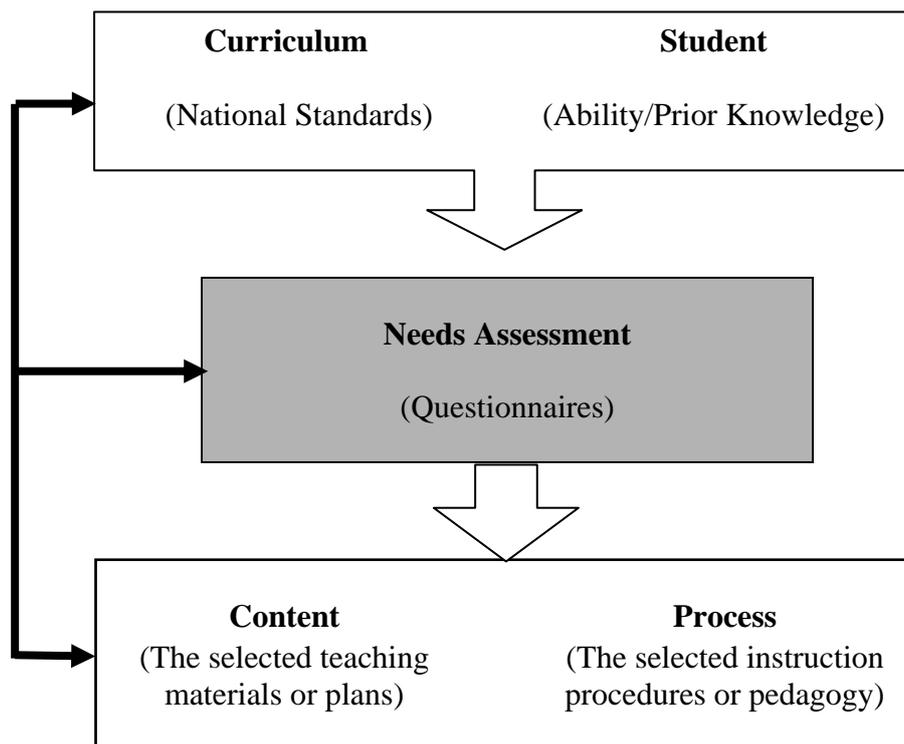
Chart1 The illustration of the needs assessment in this research

More specifically put, in most teaching situations, either the selected teaching

materials or the instruction pedagogy depend mainly on the national standardized

curriculum as well as students' prior knowledge or abilities about a certain subject or

skill. Therefore, needs assessment was implemented so that both the content and the

process would have good chance to be modified. Moreover, by doing so, such

questionnaires could even influence the standardized curriculum ultimately and boost

students' ability.

As for how this needs assessment was done, the researcher basically followed

these steps:

1. the questionnaires were delivered to all the 8th-graders, class by class within a

    week;

2. the students were reminded to respond to each item truthfully and not to

    worry about the results since such will not influence their academic grades;

3. the questionnaires were distributed to the students;

4. after 40 minutes, the total 208 copies of the questionnaires were collected from all the 8th-graders;

5. among the whole 208 copies of questionnaires, 5 copies were excluded due to the incomplete information, and 1 was discarded because of the student's unique background of six-year primary education in the US;

6. the responses of the exactly 202 valid copies of questionnaires were analyzed to explore the participants' general needs for the two major categories—conversational and academic;

7. for more detailed analysis, the questionnaires were divided into three groups based on the mean scores the students obtained on the three L2 listening comprehension exams held by the school in the 95 academic year; those participants who were scored more than 30 out of 40 points on the exam were categorized into the 'high' listening proficiency group, those whose mean scores were lower than 10 points were ranked in the bottom and placed in the 'low' listening proficiency group, and the rest of the participants, with the average scores between 10 and 30, belonged to the 'intermediate;'

    (Note: Those exams were given merely to measure the 8th-graders' achievement in listening comprehension skills after each period of English instruction. The purpose of them was not for labeling students or dividing them into different ability classes. As a result, with only the basic skills being tested, plenty of the students could score high.)

8. the questionnaires were also divided into two groups by genders for another more specific analysis.

Data Analysis

For the scoring of questionnaire, first, the scale range for each item is 1-5, i.e. from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). Second, the respective mean score of each item was calculated, since the purpose of this questionnaire is to find out which is considered more necessary, the conversational or the academic ability category. Third, the mean score of each specific item in the questionnaire was compared as well to find out which of the 51 listening comprehension abilities, either conversational or academic, would be considered important by the participants. Fourth, the three levels of English listening proficiency—high, intermediate, and low—were analyzed by comparing the respective mean scores of academic and conversational comprehension abilities and by computing what are on the Top 5 necessary listening abilities for each level of participants. Fifth, such analyses were likewise conducted to realize the needs of different genders. In brief, the quantitative method was used to analyze the participants' responses to English listening needs through SPSS 10.0 for Window. As for the first two parts of the study, t-test and descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were utilized in presenting the results. By an independent t-test, the researcher analyzed the questionnaires comparing the conversational and academic needs generally and each of the 51 items respectively. For the last two sections about the needs for conversational and academic listening ability categories, while the participants were divided into three different levels of proficiency or into two different genders, F-test, which is based on ANOVA, was adopted as the method of data analysis.