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**Investigation on the Factors Triggering Difficulty in Listening
Comprehension from the Perspectives of both Students and Teachers**

The Case of Third Year Students of English at Mohammed Seddik Ben

Yahia University/ Jijel.

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillments of the requirements for the degree of
Master in English Language Sciences.

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Dedications

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

I dedicate this humble work to:

my late mother;

my dear father;

my sisters: Saliha, Saida, Fairouz, and Hiba who have never left my side;

my brothers: Abdelali, Samir, Farouk, and RabeH for their continuous encouragement

and support;

my brothers in law Djamel and Lotfi;

my adorable nieces and nephews:

Oumeima, Alaa, Ritadj, Rimas, Iliass Abderahmane, and Abdelwakil;

all my friends without exception.

Razika

To my beloved mother, for her whole-hearted support;

to my dear father, for his endless encouragement;

to my brothers Khaled, Bilal, and Soufiane;

to all my relatives and friends;

I dedicate this work.

Hassina

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Abstract

Undeniably, listening comprehension plays a significant role in both English as a Foreign Language learners' daily communication and their learning process. Yet, comprehending listening passages in the foreign language is not an easy task for EFL learners. Based on the assumption that many factors cause difficulty to third year EFL students in listening comprehension in the classroom at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel, the present study aims chiefly at probing into these factors from the perspectives of both students and teachers. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers made use of a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) to data collection. Two questionnaires have been administered to both sixty third year EFL Licence students and seven oral instructors. Besides, two focus group discussions have been conducted with fourteen students from the sample which answered the questionnaire. The findings of the study showed that the major factors triggering difficulty in listening comprehension mainly encompass fast speech rate, lack of vocabulary knowledge, idiomatic expressions and slangs, and reduced forms.

List of Abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

e. g.: For example

ESL: English as a Second Language

IAAL: International Association of Applied Linguistics

i. e.: That is to say

L1 : First Language

L2: Second/foreign Language

Q: Question

Vs: Versus

%: Percentage

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General Introduction

Introduction

Traditionally, learning English entails the overall mastery of the linguistic system. Accordingly, the ultimate goal behind learning a foreign/second language was to develop learners' linguistic competence. The advent of communicative approaches to language teaching, however, stressed the notion of communicative competence, which is the learners' ability to communicate effectively in the foreign language when communicative situations arise, as the main goal of English language learning. Such a competence seems to be primarily predicated upon speaking. However, listening is also of critical import since when listening accurately learners are much more likely to be able to reproduce language stretches more equally accurately. Hence, developing proficiency in listening is of key importance to achieving proficiency in speaking.

It is commonly believed that listening is probably the most important skill because it is the most widely used skill in normal daily life. Moreover, in successful communication, the ability to listen plays an equal role as the ability to speak or more. Unfortunately, until the last decades, listening was the least researched and the most neglected skill. Researchers, teachers, and even students viewed listening as an ability that can be developed automatically, without assistance, and acquired during grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation practice. However, despite the mastery of the basic elements of English grammar and vocabulary, students often have serious difficulties in listening comprehension.

In order to have a sterling listening proficiency, the problematic areas of listening should be identified and addressed so that potential ways to facilitate it could be easily stipulated. Factors causing Listening comprehension difficulty can be defined for the sake of the current study as those obstacles and challenges learners encounter in situations when

listening to English without having the opportunity to interact with the speaker, i.e. in unidirectional settings as in the case of listening to a recording. This piece of research, therefore, mainly aims at investigating and identifying the different factors that cause listening comprehension difficulty to third year EFL Licence students from the perspectives of both students and teachers. It also aims at introducing some suggestions for improvement.

2. Background of the Study

Gigantic efforts have been made to investigate the problematic **areas** of second / foreign language listening comprehension. In order to arrive at comprehensible understanding of the factors triggering difficulty in listening comprehension, many researchers carried out a range of studies in different settings. They employed various research instruments, mainly questionnaires, interviews, diaries, and retrospective verbalization.

At Nanyong Technological University of Singapore, Goh (2000) carried out a study on listening comprehension difficulties from a cognitive perspective where she examined the difficulties in the three phase's model of listening comprehension proposed by Anderson. The researcher employed three forms of data collection techniques, namely learners' diaries, small group interviews, and immediate retrospective verbalization. The results of the study showed the occurrence of ten problems during perception, parsing, and utilization. Five of which were linked to word recognition and attention failure during perceptual processing while other difficulties are related to inefficient parsing and failure to utilize the mental representation of parsed input.

Recently, in an Iranian context, Nourouzi, Tam, Zarlian, and Nimehchisalem (2015), adopting the same cognitive perspective to listening comprehension, sought to explore the listening comprehension problems of EFL learners at the tertiary level. The researchers collected data by means of Listening Comprehension Processing Problems Questionnaire.

The findings strongly agreed with Goh's, revealing that learners experienced difficulty in the three phases of listening comprehension namely perception, parsing, and utilization. Perception problems encompassed distraction and misperceiving sounds and words; parsing problems embraced chunking difficulties and sentence forgetting; and utilization problems lay in learners' confusion about the main idea.

Tackling the same issue at a Malaysian university, Juan and Zainol Abidin (2013), conducted a qualitative study to determine Chinese students' English listening comprehension problems that occur in the three phases of listening comprehension, namely pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. The researchers employed an interview in addition to experiences and documents' analysis as data collection tools. The findings revealed that the main problems Chinese students faced are the lack of prior knowledge in English vocabulary, different accents of native speakers, the Chinese learning habits as well as the short span of concentration. The latter was highlighted in the previously mentioned studies as a major perception problem.

In a similar vein, Hamouda (2013) explored the issue of listening comprehension problems experienced by first year students of English at Qassim University in Saudi Arabia. Data was gathered by means of questionnaires and interviews. The results obtained supported what Juan and Zainol Abidin arrived at, i.e. highlighting the lack of concentration and insufficient vocabulary as real hindrance to listening comprehension. The researcher went further to suggest that accent, pronunciation, anxiety, and bad quality of recording also pose challenges to students of English language.

Taking a careful look at the four mentioned studies, one will inevitably notice that all the researchers highlighted the lack of concentration as a common problem EFL learners encounter when listening to spoken English which hinders their comprehension. Nevertheless, they referred to it differently; Goh termed it as "attention failure" whereas

the Iranian study chose “distraction”. It is also noticeable that, when conducting their research, most of the researchers adopted either a qualitative or a quantitative method for collecting data. Besides, all of them have dealt with the obstacles EFL learners encountered in listening comprehension from the learners’ perspectives without seeking to attain insights and further information about the issue from teachers’ perspectives.

Apparently, the previous studies on EFL learners’ listening comprehension difficulties were able to sufficiently detect the actual difficulties EFL learners encounter. However, being conducted in different contexts hinders generalizing the findings of these studies to other contexts; thus, calling for further researching other different contexts like the Algerian EFL setting seems crucially needed.

The study at hand, then, is an attempt to get clearer insights about the factors triggering problems to EFL learners in listening comprehension from the perspectives of both students and teachers. It will adopt a both qualitative and quantitative approach to data collection.

3. Statement of the Problem

It is worth mentioning that second/foreign language research, in general, paid little attention to the listening skill in comparison with speaking, reading, and writing. Similarly, there is a scarcity of research that endeavoured to shed light on listening comprehension at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University of Jijel. The few available studies were mere attempts to enhance listening. The researchers who conducted these studies, actually, departed from no prior diagnoses of the problematic aspects of this skill such as the factors that may hinder students’ listening comprehension. Thus, the current research work aims at identifying the factors that may trigger listening comprehension difficulty to third year Licence students of English language at the University of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel.

4. Hypothesis

The current research study is mainly based on the following hypothesis:

There would be various factors that hinder third year EFL Licence students' listening comprehension in English oral classes.

5. Research Questions

In order to guide the study, the researchers find it necessary to pose the following questions:

1. Do third year students of English at the University of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel, encounter any difficulty in listening comprehension in oral classes?
2. What are the factors that trigger difficulty in third year EFL students' listening comprehension in oral classes?
3. Are there any strategies do third year students of English use to overcome the difficulty they encounter in listening comprehension?
4. Are teachers aware of the factors affecting their students' listening comprehension in oral classes?
5. What suggestions can teachers offer to help third year students of English overcome their listening comprehension problems?

6. Aims of the Study

Owing to the fact that encountering difficulty in listening comprehension is chiefly a major hindrance to acquiring communicative proficiency, it becomes a requirement to take action and investigate the factors triggering such difficulty. Accordingly, the current study mainly aims at exploring deeply the factors that may hinder third year English language students' listening comprehension at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia university, Jijel, taking into consideration both students' and teachers' perspectives on the issue. It also intends to check students' use of any strategies to cope with their difficulty in listening

comprehension as well as to check teachers' awareness of their students' listening problems and to provide their suggestions for overcoming such troubles.

7. Significance of the Study

Listening comprehension is vital for second/foreign language learning. Revealing the potential factors that cause listening comprehension difficulty to EFL learners will ultimately offer immense benefits for many groups. Firstly, the findings of the current study might permit learners of English to meticulously locate their listening comprehension weaknesses, and accordingly relevant strategies can be adopted, under teachers' guidance, to enhance their listening abilities and become successful listeners. Furthermore, in the light of the findings, EFL teachers might be able to have the chance to get a better understanding of the factors hindering their students' listening comprehension. Consequently, effective measures can be taken to better students' listening comprehension. Lastly, the findings might be considered as a base for future research.

8. Research Design

In order to achieve the objectives of the study set up by the researchers and arrive at significant results, two research instruments will be used: two questionnaires and focus group discussions. One questionnaire will be administered to third year students of English to identify the factors that cause difficulty to them in listening comprehension as well as to disclose their personal strategies for eradicating such difficulty. The other questionnaire, on the other hand, will be administered to third year oral instructors at the department of English to get useful data about their students' listening comprehension obstacles, in addition to their suggestions for diminishing such obstacles. Besides, two focus group discussions will be conducted at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel, with a number of third year students of English to triangulate and expand on the data to be obtained from the questionnaire.

9. Structure of the Study

In addition to a general introduction, this research work will include two main chapters and a general conclusion. The first chapter will encompass two sections, and will be devoted to the literature review. Its first section will present the theoretical basis for listening comprehension, whereas the second one will deal with the factors interfering with students' listening comprehension. The second chapter, on the other hand, will be concerned with the practical part of the study. It will include a detailed description of the research methodology as well as a detailed analysis and discussion of the results to be obtained from the questionnaires and the focus group discussions.

Chapter One:
Listening Comprehension and the Factors
Triggering its Difficulty

Section One: The Listening Skill

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1.1.8.1.2. Metacognitive strategies

1.1.8.1.3. Socio-affective strategies

1.1.8.2. Oxford's Classification

1.1.8.2.1. Direct strategies

1.1.8.2.2. Indirect strategies

1.1.8.3. Some other Effective Listening Strategies

1.1.9. Stages of Listening Activities

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1.1.9.3. Post -Listening

1.1.10. Principles for Listening Comprehension

Chapter One: Listening Comprehension and the Factors Triggering its Difficulty

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the theoretical part of the present study. It is divided into two main sections. The first section will highlight some basic issues about the listening skill. It will start with reviewing a background to listening comprehension followed by its definition and significance. It will subsequently draw a distinction between listening in L1 and L2 and will then expand on the L2 listening process as well as its different processing models. After that, some of the prominent types of listening and the strategies that are deemed to be helpful for learners comprehension of listening passages will be brought to the fore. This section will eventually mention the stages of listening activities and some principles that underline the teaching of listening comprehension. The second section, however, will draw on the prominent factors triggering difficulty in listening comprehension in the classroom. They will be discussed in relation to the listener, the speaker, the listening texts, and the physical setting.

Section One: The Listening Skill

1.1.1. Background of Listening

Casting a glance at the history of listening comprehension, one will by no means notice how listening has long been overlooked in the domain of foreign language teaching and learning. Indeed, until recently, listening comprehension did not enjoy much interest in comparison with other language skills.

As Mendelsohn (1994) stated, many EFL programmes paid little attention to the teaching of listening comprehension for a long period of time despite its notable role in foreign language learning (as cited in Hamouda, 2013). Following the same line of thought, Morley (2001) maintained that both language learning theories of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s and the language teaching programmes of those times neglected

listening. On the one hand, the prevailing theories of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s relative to language learning attributed little attention to listening beyond the sound discrimination associated with the learning of pronunciation. The British situational approach and the American audiolingual approach, on the other hand, paid little interest to listening beyond its role in grammar and pronunciation drills and learners' imitation of dialogues.

Though listening featured in language teaching in the audiolingual method more than it did in the previous methods mainly the grammar translation method, which excluded listening totally from its teaching of the foreign language (Flowerdow & Miller, 2005), it is believed in the audiolingual method that listening comprehension can be improved through experience when students listen to the target language all day long (Osada, 2004). It is, then, probably due to the fact that the listening skill was considered to be automatic that it went unnoticed and was poorly taught for a long period of time.

Arguments for listening comprehension began to be voiced in the mid-1960s and early 1970s by Rivers, who had long been an advocate of listening comprehension, and others who argued for listening comprehension to be developed as an independent skill rather than merely a means for the development of speaking (Morley, 2001). Interestingly, the shift into considering listening as vital for foreign language teaching and learning can, in addition to other factors, mainly be traced back to the Second International Association of Applied Linguistics (IAAL) conference in 1969 in Cambridge, England. In fact, the conference held new views regarding many aspects of language study, mainly emphasizing communication via authentic language use in the classroom as well as listening comprehension as a basic skill (Morley, 2001). It is, then, mainly due to the Second IAAL conference that listening started to gain interest and turned to be considered as central rather than a peripheral skill.

Indeed, as **Morley (2001)** reported, from the 1970s on, the status of listening started to change steadily from neglect to increasing importance. Parallel to reading, writing, and speaking, the listening skill was incorporated within the contemporary instructional programmes. Functional approaches and communicative approaches brought the importance of listening in foreign language teaching and learning to light during the 1980s. The 1990s marked a dramatic increase in acknowledging the pivotal role listening played in language classrooms, which was evident in the emergence of “aural comprehension” as an important area of study in second/foreign language acquisition.

Lately, as **Brown (2000)** asserted, listening has widely become recognized as a critical component in foreign language learning and teaching. Recent teaching practices consider the development of listening as a main goal in any language teaching course. **Morley (2001)**, however, noted that in spite of the gradual increase in acknowledging the need for listening comprehension in the foreign language classrooms, many ESL/EFL programmes have not yet set the stage for accurate teaching of this basic skill. Besides, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) maintained that “many factors are assumed to influence L2 listening, but there is still very little research to provide empirical evidence for a casual relationship” (p. 57). Therefore, it is high time that second language research undertook studies to uncover the different factors that may hinder learners from good listening performance, especially during unidirectional listening which appears to be “under-researched”, as Macaro, Venderplank, and Graham (2005) argued, which is the subject of the current study.

After reviewing the history of listening comprehension in the field of English language teaching and learning, it seems suitable to define what is meant by listening.

1.1.2. Definition of Listening Comprehension

When listening is referred to during discourse, it tends to be connected automatically to comprehension. This is due to the fact that “comprehension is often considered to be the first-order goal of listening, the highest priority of the listener, and sometimes the sole purpose of listening” (Rost, 2002a, p. 59). Differently stated, when listening, one obviously aims at nothing but comprehending what the listening passage constitutes.

Different attempts have been made by a multitude of researchers to define what listening comprehension is. Joiner (1984), actually, stated that the complex nature of listening and the fact that it is a covert skill make it difficult to arrive at a thorough definition of it (as cited in Jeon, J., 2007, p. 48). Richard and Schmidt (2002) reduced the definition of listening comprehension to “the process of understanding speech in a first or second language” (p 313). Thomlison’s (1984), in a more detailed way, defined listening as the listener’s capability to simultaneously understand the speaker’s accent, grammar and vocabulary as well as meaning comprehension (as cited in Hamouda, 2013, p.117). Moreover, Widdowson (1978) defined listening as the process of identifying the role of sentences and their communicative value in an interaction. Listening, in this sense, is the medium through which one can really decipher the communicative function of what he/she hears rather than being only able to understand what the individual sentences mean.

Some researchers, however, viewed listening comprehension as a multi-level dynamic process that involves a range of mental operations. To consider Rost’s (2002) definition, listening is a dynamic process which involves different cognitive operations. In order to fully understand listening, a number of interrelated forms of processing has to be considered, namely neurological, linguistic, semantic, and pragmatic processing. For Rost (2005), listening comprehension entails the listener’s activation of his/her prior knowledge about the topic at hand, representation of propositions in his/her short term memory, and

making logical inferences from what he/she hears. In the same vein, Purdy (1991) described listening as an active and dynamic process of “attending, perceiving, interpreting, remembering, and responding” to the information offered by the speaker, and his/her verbal and non-verbal needs (as cited in Jeon, 2007, p49). Listening, then, is the aural medium through which one can capture the real intentions of other human beings so that to respond appropriately.

In order for listening comprehension to be effective, the listener should be actively engaged in the listening process; he/she has to construct his/her own understanding of the received input through making use of different types of knowledge. In line with this view, Littlewood (1981) acknowledged that listening comprehension requires the listener's involvement in an active process of listening in which he/she seeks to get meanings through exploiting both the linguistic cues and his/her nonlinguistic knowledge. To adopt Littlewood's view, these clues though seem of equal value, they should be critically thought of as having unequal contributions to the understanding of the message. In almost the same way, Anderson and Lynch (1988) stated that listening comprehension is a complex process where the listener should be able to simultaneously detect spoken signals, identify individual words in a stream of speech, grasp the syntax of the utterances, and respond appropriately. An array of non-linguistic knowledge and skills should also be possessed, namely appropriate background knowledge, social and cultural knowledge and skills as well as having a reasonable purpose for listening (as cited in Nunan, 1989, p. 23). This undoubtedly implies that relying only on his/her knowledge of the linguistic system will never allow the listener to fully grasp the meaning he/she listens for.

In short, it is widely admitted that listening comprehension is not merely a passive process of receiving sounds or words; rather it is an active, complex, dynamic, interactive process in which the listener plays a central role. Indeed, in order for him/her to get the

message of the talk, the listener is required to concurrently use his/her knowledge of the various facets of the language such as grammar, vocabulary, structure, prosody and culture. Therefore, any deficiency at the level of the listener's linguistic or non-linguistic knowledge could lead to a break in listening comprehension.

Certainly, listening comprehension is an arduous activity that needs much effort on the part of the listener. Its complex nature makes it, most of the time, a difficult task for listeners to carry out and even problematic. EFL learners, in particular, are highly prone to suffering from problems in listening comprehension especially when they do non-reciprocal listening tasks, where they lack the opportunity to interact with the speaker, which the current study revolves around.

After the concept of listening comprehension is brought to the fore, it is of great importance to highlight the central role it plays in listeners' daily life communication as well as in improving their English language proficiency as EFL learners.

1.1.3. Significance of Listening

Generally, listening is an essential skill that is present in most of the activities we carry out throughout our daily lives. White (2008) acknowledged that listening is a permanently important skill in people's lives in both first and second language. It is the first skill children develop when they begin to acquire the communicative ability by means of language. Nunan (1998) pointed out that research has revealed that in the foreign language classroom, students spend over 50 percent of their time functioning in the foreign language in listening (as cited in Nation & Newton, 2009, p. 37). Indeed, a high portion of learners' time, both abroad and in their own countries, is devoted to listening than to speaking as they need, in addition to their comprehension of face to face interaction, to understand the messages directed to them through a multitude of external channels such as radio, television, and announcements. In doing so, listeners go through a period of quietness so

that to process the incoming information (Littlewood, 1981). Truly, listening is of such high importance that it takes priority in use over speaking both in the foreign country and in the learner's own country.

In point of fact, listening is not only important in the sense that it allows learners to understand the messages they receive; rather, it permits them to acquire different aspects of language. Pertaining to this, Harmer (2007) maintained that listening presents a valuable source for the improvement of pronunciation. In other words, the more students are exposed to spoken English, the more they absorb appropriate pitch and intonation, stress and sounds of words and sentences. He also suggested that the listening texts in particular are a good means for developing learners' pronunciation. In a similar vein, **Broughton, Brumfit, Flavell, Hill, and Pincas (1980) asserted that** it is far above students' power to produce sounds and accurate sentences in the foreign language without being exposed to models that present the specific features of its stress, rhythms and intonation. It is, therefore, through listening that achieving oral fluency or accuracy may be possible.

In addition to the palpable role of listening sessions in improving listening per se, Morley (2001) stated that "listening comprehension lessons are a vehicle for teaching elements of grammatical structures and allow new vocabulary items to be contextualized within a body of communicative discourse" (p. 70). In other words, learners can have the advantage of learning various grammatical structures and making use of the newly acquired vocabulary items after taking a listening comprehension course.

Krashen (1985) argued that human beings acquire language via receiving comprehensible input. Moreover, he argued for what he called "the silent period" where children learning a second language construct their competency by listening by means of comprehensible input. Therefore, listening is basic for making input comprehensible and thus for language acquisition to take place. Following the same stream of thought, Rost

(1994) maintained that an effective way to provide input in the foreign language classroom, which is useless unless understandable, is to involve learners in listening activities (as cited in Brown, 2000). Hence, listening is regarded as fundamental to speaking.

On the whole, it seems adequate to state that listening plays a significant role in both daily communication and the educational process. Truly, it is used as a primary medium of learning at all stages of education. Interestingly, listening is the skill through which learners receive input, develop their linguistic competence (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc.) as well as other language skills mainly speaking. Hence, it is worthwhile to explore how learners can overcome the difficulty they may encounter in listening so that to truly benefit from this vital activity.

Knowing the difference between listening to one's mother tongue and listening to another language, which is nothing like the native one, might help determining the source of difficulty EFL students usually face in listening comprehension. Accordingly, the element to be discussed next is listening in L1 and L2.

1.1.4. L1 and L2 Listening

Significant distinction can be drawn between listening in the native language and listening in the second / foreign language. According to Rost (2005), the acquisition of the listening ability occurs at the same time that the child develops his/ her cognitive abilities. The development of L2 listening processes, however, happens after the L1 cognitive processing skills have been established. For him, it is evident that the learner who passes the critical period has little chance to benefit from some aspects of phonological and grammatical processing in achieving a native-like performance. In other words, the critical period is pondered as the golden period where learners gain much linguistic knowledge which could be useful in developing the L2 listening proficiency.

Flowerdew and Miller (2005) maintained that unlike L1 listeners who would naturally spend a considerable period of time doing passive listening before actually starting to listen attentively, L2 listeners have to attend to what a speaker is saying to them right from the beginning of his talk because being attentive to acoustic passages is considered as crucial to learning. In reality, despite the fact that L1 and L2 processes could be technically similar, L2 listeners usually encounter various obstacles in their attempt to arrive at comprehension. Hence, it is of extreme significance to explore what potential barriers may make comprehension of a listening passage difficult.

In the next element, the researchers will turn into disclosing the process of listening comprehension.

1.1. 5. The Process of Listening Comprehension

The complex nature of listening makes it a difficult task for listeners, especially those listening to foreign speech, to comprehend what they listen to. Interestingly, crucial to understanding why EFL students usually encounter listening comprehension problems is to reveal the process according to which listening comprehension works.

Wipf (1984) recognized that when listening, one has to discriminate between the sounds he/she receives, understand vocabulary; grammatical structures; as well as the speaker's intention within the sociocultural context, and interpret stress and intonation. It follows then to say that the listener should not only be able to detect sounds, and be knowledgeable in terms of grammar and lexis but should also be pragmatically competent so that to capture the real intension of the speaker.

According to Rost (2005), listening comprehension encompasses three main phases which operate concurrently, which are “decoding”, “comprehension”, and “interpretation”. Sometimes, “listener response” is added as a fourth phase.

- **Decoding**

Decoding involves attention, perception, word recognition, and grammatical parsing. In attention, the listener is guided where to place his attention when given the auditory input. In the perception phase, he segments the incoming strings of speech. During this perception phase, speech rate affects how listeners perceive the speech string. Being too fast makes it difficult to process information. The word recognition phase entails segmenting and processing the speech strings into identifiable words or expressions. In grammatical parsing phase, processing occurs at sentence as well as discourse level. This is the phase where the listener's grammatical knowledge and ability to apply that knowledge in real time are used as syntactic and morphological cues aid meaning processing.

- **Comprehension**

Comprehension is the second phase in which the listener identifies the basic information so that to create a concept in his memory, updates his/her memory with incoming information that has been processed, and activates his/her schemata to make sense of information, infers the relationships between propositions and uses pragmatic knowledge to decipher meaning.

- **Interpretation**

Interpretation is the final phase of listening comprehension which encompasses comparing meanings with what the listener has expected.

Brownell (2010) suggested another model for the listening process called Brownell's HURIER model which stands for six components that make up the listening process namely Hearing, Understanding, Remembering, Interpreting, Evaluating, and Responding.

- **Hearing**

Hearing is the first step to listening. It is the stage where, according to Verderber, Verderber, and Sellnow (2009), the listener selects which sounds to focus attention on among the distracting stimuli he/she is exposed to.

- **Understanding**

Understanding is the stage where the listener can distinguish words from the sounds he/she receives and match them to their literal meanings.

- **Remembering**

The third step in the process of listening is remembering in which the listener is required to retrieve the meanings of what is heard from memory as well as to store what he/ she has received so that to later provide the speaker with feedback.

- **Interpreting**

In so far as this phase is concerned, the listener is required to infer the speaker's intended meaning rather than the literal meaning of sentences through relating the heard input to the context. Critical to the right interpretation of the speaker's words is to exploit not only the linguistic cues but also the non-linguistic ones as the tone of voice and posture.

- **Evaluating**

It is the phase where the listener compares what is said with his/her previous knowledge in order to assess the credibility of the message he/she has received.

- **Responding**

Responding is the last phase in the listening process. At this stage, according to Brownell's, it is for the listener to provide a feedback for the speaker, and therefore to prove that he/she was really listening to what was being said rather than only hearing it.

After discussing the process of listening, the researchers will delve into the different models of processing which are part and parcel of any listening process, without which any comprehension will not simply be achieved.

1.1.6. Models of the Listening Processes

Various models have been constructed to explain the way in which the listening process functions in a foreign language. Generally, there are three well-known models which are the bottom-up, the top-down, and the interactive model.

1.1.6.1. Bottom-up Processing Model

It is a model developed by researchers in the 1940s and 1950s. It assumes that listeners construct their own understanding of the received messages in a gradual manner. Particularly, the process of comprehension, which occurs in a linear fashion, begins by decoding sounds and phonemes which are joined together into words which make up sentences. These sentences, in turn, are linked together to generate ideas and notions (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005, p. 24). This signifies that meaning is arrived at, bottom to top, based on the incoming data, commencing by decoding the smallest meaningful units (phonemes).

Following the same line of thought, Nunan (2002) suggested that in bottom-up processing, “phonemic units are decoded and linked together to form words, words are linked together to form phrases, phrases are linked to form utterances, and utterances are linked together to form complete meaningful texts” (as cited in Richards and Renandya 2002, p. 239). In other words, the listener analyzes the acoustic message at successive levels of organization (sounds, words, clauses, and sentences) until he/she gets the intended meaning.

In fact, the listener has to bear in mind that being mindful to the message he/she receives as well as possessing a bank of knowledge about the foreign language is of great

import. In this regard, Morley (2001) emphasized the listener's role in being extremely attentive to each and every detail of the listening text. Furthermore, Richards (1990) maintained that the listener's "lexical and grammatical competence" in a foreign language is considered as fundamental to bottom-up processing. This implies that listeners should not involve themselves in any listening unless having a rudimentary knowledge of the different aspects of the foreign language mainly grammar and vocabulary.

1.1.6.2. Top-down Processing Model

Unlike the bottom-up processing in which sounds and words are the base for processing an auditory text, the top-down processing model stresses the role of prior knowledge in understanding acoustic messages. In fact, Flowerdew and Miller (2005), when conducting their experiments, asserted that the advent of the top-down model was attributed to the researchers' recognition of the pivotal role the surrounding context plays in helping the subjects identify truncated words and sounds. **In other words, listeners may rely on the context of a particular situation as a source from which they derive the information necessary to comprehend any piece of listening.**

Nunan (1989) suggested that in top-down processing, the listener, supported by his prior knowledge of the context and situation where the listening takes place, is able to reconstruct the meaning of the verbal message he receives as it is exactly intended by the speaker (p. 239). This certainly implies that if the listener is unable to make use of top-down processing, he will, by no means, fail to comprehend the acoustic message directed to him. Nunan further asserted that the knowledge of context and situation any listener should possess involves his/ her knowledge of the speakers and the relationships between them as well as their relation to the situation and the topic at hand.

In an attempt to further clarify the notion of background knowledge, Flowerdew and Miller (2005) claimed that, in order to appropriately interpret the utterances they receive,

learners rely on their memories from which they retrieve pre-established patterns of knowledge or what is referred to as “structures of expectation”(p. 25). Following the same stream of thought, Morley (2001) asserted that the listener needs to make use of a range of background information about what he/she is listening to so that “to make predictions about what the incoming message is expected to be at any point, and how the pieces fit into the whole” (p. 74). That is to say, the previous knowledge possessed by the listener paves the way for him/her not only to understand what he/she has already heard but also to anticipate what the speaker will utter next.

1.1.6.3. Interactive Model

In an attempt to overcome the shortcoming of solely using either the bottom-up or the top-down processing model in listening for reaching comprehension, Rumelhart (1975) developed the interactive model to account for both the bottom-up and the top-down processing models. He suggested that, in this model, language is processed at the same time in which different kinds of information including phonological, syntactic, semantics, and pragmatics information act together; however, the way these information interact is still ambiguous (as cited in Flowerdew & miller, 2005, p. 27). It follows then to say, in order to have a maximum benefit of this model, listeners have to hold and develop a wide range of the foreign language abilities.

Indeed, the fact that the interactive model permits individual learners to vary their linguistic processing makes it more advantageous to them than the bottom-up and the top-down hierarchical models. That is, the interactive model takes into consideration both the individual learning styles and the group needs in the sense that some individuals may choose to use the bottom-up processing, whereas others may prefer to rely on the top-down processes. However, beginners are more likely in need to develop their bottom-up skills.

(Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Hence, the interactive model supplies a good room for learners to follow the model that better fits their styles and needs.

All in all, the three models of listening processing seem of great support for learners in their endeavour to comprehend the acoustic input. However, the interactive model is considered as a good alternative model to both the bottom-up and top-down models as it has succeeded to compensate for their deficiencies. Interestingly, Learners use these models as strategies to reach a good understanding of the acoustic messages they receive.

Looking at the complex nature of the listening comprehension process and the different processing models it entails, it is easy to infer that it must be challenging for EFL students to do a listening task, a fact that teachers should be aware of in order to facilitate their students' listening comprehension. Therefore, it seems quite appropriate to explore the factors causing such difficulties which prevent students from successfully comprehending auditory texts.

The next aspect of listening that is deemed of significance and relevance for this research study is "the listening types".

1.1.7. Types of Listening

It is worth mentioning that listening has differently been addressed by various researchers in terms of its categorization. Generally, the criteria for such categorization vary from considering the setting where the listening task occurs to the interactive role the listener plays in the listening process, which results in having two main types of classification.

With regard to the setting criterion, listening has been viewed as consisting of two main types: intensive listening and extensive listening.

- **Intensive Listening**

Intensive listening is the kind of listening that occurs within the confines of the classroom or in language laboratories where students seek to develop their listening skill as well as studying the way in which English is spoken. In fact, teachers play a central role in this type of listening in that they direct their students' learning through providing assistance in times of need (Harmer, 2007). Hence, in intensive listening, students tend to mostly depend on their instructors as sources of guidance in order to develop their own listening.

- **Extensive Listening**

Extensive listening, on the other hand, refers to the type of listening that takes place outside the classroom: in students' homes, cars, or MP3 players. When doing extensive listening, listeners are not interested in enhancing their listening skill as much as their passion to enjoy themselves. Accordingly, in this type of listening, students are highly motivated as they are free to make their own choices about what to listen to. Interestingly, in contrast to reading, there is a lack of materials for extensive listening. The situation, however, might undergo a change in the foreseeable future. Actually, students can benefit from watching films with sub-titles as a way to get them involved in extensive listening because the sub-titles help them absorb the language they hear (Harmer, 2001). Though intensive listening seems to solely account for developing listening proficiency, extensive listening is also of great help as it arouses learners' interest in listening. Thus, a combination of both types is recommended.

Pertaining to the criterion that considers the listener's interactive role in the listening process, Anderson and Lynch (1988) claimed that listening is of two types: non-reciprocal listening and reciprocal listening.

- **Non- reciprocal Listening**

Non-reciprocal listening is the type of listening which does not allow the listener to take part in the talk as in the case of listening to the radio or to a formal lecture. It is, then, an only one way process of data transferring.

- **Reciprocal Listening**

Unlike the aforementioned type of listening where the listener is deprived of the valuable opportunity of exchanging talk with the speaker, reciprocal listening makes it possible for him to interact with the speaker and share his own ideas and thoughts (as cited in Nunan, 1989, p. 23).

Despite the fact that non-reciprocal listening seems to be more difficult for the listener to deal with as there is no room for him to negotiate meaning with the speaker, it is considered, together with reciprocal listening, as highly active and participatory activity.

In fact, looking at the literature of listening, one will by no means recognize the wide diversity in the types proposed by different scholars for listening. Nevertheless, while most of the types are differently labeled, most of them, in fact, denote the same. This is why the researchers find it appropriate to only consider the main prominent types of listening.

Owing to the fact that not using or misusing the strategies of listening comprehension can make listening difficult, it is necessary for EFL students to be aware of these strategies. Thus, “listening strategies” is the next element to be discussed.

1.1.8. Listening Strategies

Recently, second language listening research has placed much interest on understanding how learners manipulate the language input, particularly various literature have stressed the role of explicit training in improving students’ academic listening skills. In other words, learners who make use of certain listening strategies have a good opportunity to cope with the difficulties they may encounter while listening. According to Peterson

(2001) listening strategies are the techniques and activities learners tend to use in order to guide and examine their own comprehension. It is worth mentioning that, in general, there are different categorizations of second language learning strategies with the ones specific to listening being derived from these general lists. Hence, the most prominent ones are to be discussed.

1.1.8.1. Omalley and Chamot's Classification

Omalley et al. (1985) have divided language learning strategies into three main categories, namely cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies.

1.1.8.1.1. Cognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies are those strategies used by learners to skillfully control the language input and facilitate comprehension. They entail the use of both the linguistic knowledge (bottom-up) and contextual information (top-down) in addition to surmising the meanings of unknown words and predicting the topic of a piece of listening. Besides, listeners, adopting cognitive strategies, are more likely to draw inferences about the missed information, and visualize the situation they are listening to (White, 2008). Peterson (2001) suggested some cognitive strategies as elaboration, summarizing, and organizing. Elaboration, as recognized by Omalley, Chamot, Kupper, and Sabol (1987), is the principal strategy where learners match the new information to information that have already been stored in their long term memories.

1.1.8.1.2. Metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies are those strategies listeners use while thinking about the learning process as it takes place. They also involve planning for learning, monitoring one's own comprehension, and evaluating learning after a particular activity. Interestingly, skilled learners, in contrast to unskilled ones, tend to use "metacognitive strategies" when doing a listening comprehension task (Omalley et al., 1987). For White (2008), these strategies also involve focusing attention, note taking, and being aware of the purpose for which one listens. Indeed, metacognitive strategies often

have a long-term benefit as listeners are continuously seeking ways to improve their listening abilities.

1.1.8.1.3. Socio-affective strategies. Generally, little attention has been paid to socio-affective strategies; nevertheless, they are of great importance especially during bidirectional listening situations in which the listener has the chance to negotiate meaning with the speaker. This kind of strategies requires affective control over learning such as asking questions for clarification and cooperation between students to reach a specific learning goal (Omalley et al., 1987). White (2008) added that learners, using these strategies, motivate themselves to listen and attempt to minimize anxiety as well as to verify their understanding. Truly, by adopting socio-affective strategies, learners create an appropriate atmosphere which paves the way for comprehension to take place.

1.1.8.2. Oxford's Classification

Oxford (1990) developed a language learning strategies taxonomy that comprises two major categories: direct strategies and indirect strategies. The latter are in turn subdivided into six subcategories.

1.1.8.2.1. Direct strategies. Direct strategies include memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. They involve dealing with the target language in a direct way. Oxford (1990) stated that "all direct strategies require mental processing of the language" (p. 37). Firstly, memory strategies enable learners to process new input, store it, and retrieve it in times of need. Accordingly, they include: creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing action. Secondly, cognitive strategies are those strategies that entail handling, classifying as well as analyzing the target language. In fact, they fall into four sets, viz. practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output. Lastly, compensation

strategies, which involve making intelligent guesses, refer to using any linguistic or contextual clues to get over any expected break in communication.

1.1.8.2.2. Indirect strategies. Indirect strategies, on the other hand, comprise metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Metacognitive strategies are the type of strategies that allows learners to control their own cognition by coordinating the planning, organization, and evaluation of the learning process. Examples of metacognitive strategies embrace selective attention, setting goals and objectives, self-monitoring, self-evaluating. Strategies that permit learners to manage emotions, motivation, and attitude are referred to as affective strategies. Additionally, during their career of leaning a foreign language, learners are in need for interacting with others and practicing the language. To do so, the type of strategies known as social strategies serves as an effective tool. Asking questions, encouraging oneself, and cooperating with others are good instances of social strategies.

1.1.8.3. Some other Effective Listening Strategies

In order for effective listening to take place, Childs, Acott-Smith, and Courtis (1999) suggested some useful strategies. For them, learners should never engage in any listening with a negative attitude towards what they are going to listen to because, as they claimed, “if you have a negative attitude, your brain will automatically pay less attention” (p. 37). Therefore, having a positive attitude about the incoming data of the acoustic message will by no means contribute to learners’ continuous concentration. Actually, prior to any listening, listeners should remove distraction and make sure they are comfortable and physically fit so that to maximize concentration. Besides, learners should make no judgment before they listen to the whole text. Additionally, listeners may benefit from the speaker’s use of transitions and other structural devices as they provide guidance on where the speaker is moving next. Through putting the speaker’s ideas into their own words, listeners may ensure that they have understood what has already been said. Truly, despite

the simplicity of these strategies, they could be applied as key **steps** to facilitate comprehension.

In short, it seems adequate to state that there is no unanimous consensus among researchers in terms of second language learning strategies' classification. Each researcher handles these strategies from his own perspective. Nonetheless, they all aim at facilitating learning. In point of fact, while metacognitive strategies appropriately direct learners to achieve comprehension, cognitive, memory, and compensation strategies provide the needed intellectual support for comprehending spoken messages. Additionally, the social and affective strategies are of great psychological support to listeners.

After reviewing the strategies the researchers deem as useful for effective listening comprehension, the stages through which learners go in a listening course are to be tackled.

1.1.9. Stages of Listening Activities

Usually, a listening task consists of three steps where the learner is required to prepare for the new material, interact with it, and recycle it. In aural comprehension, these steps are referred to as pre-listening stage, while-listening stage, and post-listening stage. Each stage has its own purpose, activities, and advantages.

1.1.9.1. Pre-listening

It is the first phase in which learners are provided with some warm-up activities pertinent to what a listening activity comprises. According to Rost (2002b), pre-listening activities are chiefly designed because they step up readiness and make a listening task effective. In a similar vein, Wilson (2008) asserted that this stage helps students to prepare for what they are going to hear, which provides good opportunities for them to succeed in whatever task. Moreover, Donaldson and Haggstorm (2006) considered pre-listening as the stage where learners are to be familiarized with the language as well as the content of the listening passage they are going to listen to. That is, before actual listening takes place,

students should be informed about the characteristics of the listening text such as its genre length.

In fact, this stage primarily involves activating students' background knowledge, setting up a purpose for listening as well as providing linguistic knowledge for students. The activation of prior knowledge, which could be achieved through various ways including brainstorming a particular topic, using pictures and realia and learners' opinions, has the power to get students to predict the content of the acoustic message to be received. Establishing a purpose for listening, which has to be realistic and achievable, can be accomplished by asking students some questions about the topic (Wilson, 2008). Furthermore, as Rost (2002) suggested, "the pre-listening step may include explicit pre-teaching of vocabulary, grammatical or rhetoric structures, specific pronunciation of phrases or ideas to be contained in the upcoming input" (p. 20). In other words, having some linguistic knowledge about the listening topic beforehand helps learners decide what to listen for and may, then, possibly better their comprehension.

1.1.9.2. While-listening

It is the most important and taxing stage as the listener has to choose the elements he/she is going to focus on. Lynch (1986) pointed out that, since they do not hear all what a speaker utters in the native language, second language learners should never be forced to understand everything in a particular classroom listening activity (as cited in Donaldson & Haggstorm, 2006). According to Wilson (2008), by this stage, learners firstly receive the input in order to understand the speaker's general communicative intention or what he referred to as "listening for gist" before any aspect of language is examined. Differently stated, students have to find out the main idea the listening passage revolves around when listening for the first time. Accordingly, as Wilson suggested, listening for the second time will usually be devoted to listening for details or for specific information where students

are asked to make inferences and take notes. Briefly, while-listening is the phase in which listeners attempt to selectively interpret the messages to construct meaning relying on the information obtained from the pre-listening activities.

1.1.9.3. Post-listening

This stage, which appears after few minutes of attending to the text, permits students to make use of the knowledge obtained from the actual listening in developing general L2 proficiency. According to Donaldson and Haggstorm (2006), the purpose of post-listening activities is to reuse the structures, vocabulary, and even the topic of the listening text; therefore, students' linguistic knowledge will be enlarged. Additionally, Rost (2002b) pointed out that this stage allows listeners to develop their L2 memory and raise their motivation for listening a second time which enables them to try out other strategies to reach comprehension. In fact, listeners, in this phase, have the opportunity to bring out any conflicting interpretations of the input. In a similar vein, Wilson (2008) maintained that post-listening is the stage where all learners, in pairs or groups, verify their answers, discuss the encountered problems, and respond to the content of the listening material orally or in a written form. He further proposed some creative listening activities which entail both speaking and writing such as exchanging information, transforming a text into different genres, and summarizing. Truly, the post-listening stage provides significant practice of the knowledge being learned while listening and therefore helps learners to retain it.

On the whole, the most common approach to the teaching of listening is based on following the successive pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening stages. By going through the various activities of these stages, listeners are highly likely to reach comprehension. Moreover, the post listening stage in particular allows students to learn many aspects of the foreign language such as new vocabulary items and grammatical structures as well as to practice language.

The next item to be discussed in this section is some principles to be followed in the classroom during listening sessions.

1.1.10. Principles for Listening Comprehension in the Classroom

According to **Morley (n. d.)**, listening comprehension lessons, which have to be ranged from simple to more complex activities, must have definite goals that correspond with the overall curriculum (as cited in **Paulston & Fruder, 1976**). In fact, listening comprehension sessions, have to aim at increasing students' memory spans. This could be done by focusing on strengthening their immediate recall of the information because, as **Morley (n. d)** suggested, listening, thinking, and remembering are inseparable. Additionally, listening comprehension sessions should teach listening rather than testing it. That is, when checking students' answers, teachers should focus on showing them how they are progressing rather than relating their achievements to the criteria of success and failure.

In order to keep learners actively and purposefully engaged in a particular listening task, **Morley (n. d)** stated that a listening course should be relevant to students' levels as well as to their real lives. Sometimes, it is necessary for the teacher to modify the way the material is presented and the questions directed to students when it does not correspond with their levels. Also, the more the lessons reflect real life situations, the more students are motivated to listen. Additionally, a listening activity should focus both on language use tasks and language analysis tasks. The former aims at providing students with practice in listening for information followed by immediate use of that information in doing something else such as summarizing and solving problems as riddles. The latter intends to provide students with opportunities to analyze some aspects of both language structures and language functions as well as to develop some personal strategies to make their learning easier (as cited in **Paulston & Fruder, 1976**).

According to Peterson (2001), listeners, especially beginners and low-intermediate ones, should firstly listen to language input before they speak, read, or write about it. Besides, teachers have to incorporate global listening where students look for the main idea, topic, setting, and situation as well as selective listening in which students pay more attention to details. Interestingly, these principles present useful guidance that teachers may benefit from in teaching aural comprehension and making the listening session more structured, effective, and advantageous to students.

Section Two: Factors Triggering Difficulty in Listening Comprehension

1.2.1. Factors Attributed to the Listener

1.2.1.1. Level of Proficiency

1.2.1.1.1. Lack of vocabulary knowledge

1.2.1.1.2. Lack of background knowledge

1.2.1.1.3. Lack of individual practice

1.2.1.2. Cognitive Ability

1.2.1.2.1. Weak working memory capacity

1.2.1.2.2. Non-use of metacognitive strategies

1.2.1.2.3. Short span of concentration

1.2.1.3. Affective Factors

1.2.1.3.1. Anxiety

1.2.1.3.2. Lack of interest and motivation

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Section Two: Factors Triggering Difficulty in Listening Comprehension

As stated earlier in this study, listening is a basic skill to which much attention should be paid by students, teachers, and even researchers. Its pivotal role in both everyday life communication and proficiency level enhancement makes it an interesting area to investigate. Actually, in parallel with other language skills, students of English continuously seek to develop their listening comprehension which is, sometimes, hindered by various factors. The latter should be an issue learners have, at least, to be aware of.

Although research on the listening skill is relatively limited, some valuable studies have offered valid comments on the problems EFL learners often encounter in comprehending acoustic messages. In fact, looking at the complex nature of the listening process, it may seem that its complexity is the primary source of difficulty. Nonetheless, there are many factors that may trigger difficulty in listening comprehension beyond the listening process itself. Despite the fact that such factors have differently been classified by various researchers such as Dunkel, 1991; Yagang, 1993; and Rubin, 1994, most of which seem to overlap.

In what follows, the researchers will delve into discussing the most prominent difficulty provoking factors in listening comprehension when no interaction is to take place between the speaker and the listener. These factors encompass factors attributed to the listener, the speaker, the auditory text, and the physical setting.

1.2.1. Factors Attributed to the Listener

Research has far shown that the difficulty in comprehending auditory messages is related to some characteristics of listeners themselves including their proficiency level, their general cognitive abilities as well as other affective factors.

1.2.1.1. Level of Proficiency

It is an indispensable fact that learners' proficiency level in the foreign language can, to a high degree, determine the extent to which they experience difficulty while listening to spoken language. Doubtlessly, lacking vocabulary and background knowledge about the topic to be listened to in addition to insufficient practice of listening apart from the formal setting will inevitably bring about incomprehension of the listening passage in the classroom.

1.2.1.1.1. Lack of vocabulary knowledge. It is widely acknowledged that vocabulary knowledge is a significant indicator of the learners' language proficiency. Definitely, having a large repertoire of vocabulary can greatly help learners comprehend what meanings an auditory material may carry. In this regard, Milton (n. d.) asserted that "learners with small or poorly developed vocabularies could not be proficient nor as fluent in performing through the foreign language" (p. 74). Hence, learners have to aim at enlarging their vocabulary knowledge so that sterling command over the foreign language would be permitted.

Actually, poor knowledge of vocabulary is deemed to be a serious obstacle to reaching comprehension. Underwood (1989) claimed that unfamiliarity with words that students have no chance to listen again to is one of the difficulties EFL learners encounter when listening. Staehr (2009) empirically found out that vocabulary knowledge is a crucial factor for successful listening. Additionally, the findings of his study proposed that a lexical coverage of 98% is required to cope with a spoken text. More simply put, the more vocabulary a student possesses, the better his/ her comprehension of a listening message will be.

1.2.1.1.2. Lack of background knowledge. Undeniably, having prior knowledge about the listening topics in the foreign language classroom can help learners better comprehend the content of the target auditory messages. Interestingly, teachers may begin listening sessions with some preliminary activities where they provide students with the necessary knowledge about the topics to be listened to so that students would be more motivated and would use the provided information as a reference while listening. In line with this, Brown (2006) acknowledged that in order to enhance listening comprehension, a listening session has to make use of students' prior knowledge.

In fact, one of the basic assumptions of the schema-theoretic approaches to language comprehension is that the spoken text is only a medium that directs listeners or readers to the way they should construct the intended meaning relying on their previously acquired knowledge (Adams & Collins, 1977). Hence, efficient comprehension of a particular acoustic passage requires the listeners' ability to relate the textual material to one's own knowledge because the text does not carry meaning by itself.

Conversely, students' lack of prior knowledge may render it difficult for them to comprehend a listening passage. Underwood (1989) stated that lacking the background information is a real hindrance to listening comprehension. For him, while students could understand the meanings of words and sentences, they actually failed to capture the speaker's intended meaning. In his study, Rinehart (1994) deduced that background knowledge in the form of topic familiarity appeared to be an influential factor that facilitates comprehension (as cited in Alidoost, 2014). Therefore, topics about which students have only sketchy information can pose serious difficulties in the classroom.

1.2.1.1.3. Lack of individual practice. It is often claimed that the best way to master anything is to do it regularly for an extended period of time. Likewise, having a mastery over listening requires gigantic efforts from the part of the learner because mere

dependence on the teacher and the formal context is not enough to develop a good listening ability. Broady (2005) maintained that while learners should benefit from extensive practice of listening, it behoves teachers to encourage their students to incorporate listening for meaning in the foreign language into their everyday lives through, for example, listening to the radio or watching television in the foreign language. Relying on the results obtained from their study, Chang and Millet (2013) concluded that rather than simultaneous reading and listening to a recording, only extended listening practice was the key to enhancing fluency. This implies that the more students do individual listening outside the classroom, the less difficulties they will experience in listening comprehension in the classroom.

1.2.1.2. Cognitive Ability

Strong cognitive abilities permit learners to manage their learning and, then, to easily retain and retrieve information they receive while listening. Hence, any deficiency at the level of these abilities could lead to a break in comprehension. The problems pertaining to cognitive abilities chiefly embrace working memory capacity, metacognitive strategies, and short span of concentration.

1.2.1.2.1. Weak working memory capacity. It has been suggested that the ability to learn a foreign language is immeasurably related to working memory. According to Baddely (2010), working memory refers to the system or systems that are supposed to be helpful to store information in the mind when performing complex tasks such as reasoning and comprehension. In fact, the capacity of working memory varies significantly from one individual learner to another such as the students' ability to remember and make inferences about the new information while listening. Wayland et al. (2013) found out that individuals with higher working memory capacities were able to comprehend the listening passages more accurately. Therefore, it is far more challenging for students with low working

memory capacities to easily remember and retrieve information that an auditory message contains.

1.2.1.2.2. Non-use of metacognitive strategies. Recently, researchers' attention has shifted to how learners process the input. Accordingly, understanding the strategies learners use and the difficulties they undergo becomes an integral part of foreign language listening research. The existing literature supports the role metacognitive abilities play in learning as they permit learners to be acutely aware of the learning processes taking place. According to Vandergrift (2003), it is clearly evident that effective use of metacognitive listening strategies plays a great role in successful listening comprehension. Hence, the non-use or the misuse of the metacognitive strategies will lead to a break in the listening comprehension process. Furthermore, while weak listeners usually decide not to listen any more when comprehension fails, good listeners endeavour to redirect their attention again to the activity and actively continue listening (Omalley et al., 1987). Therefore, it is worth noting that teachers should strive to develop students' own meta-cognition because it helps students to select appropriate strategies for a given listening activity so that to be able to cope with any potential difficulty.

1.2.1.2.3. Short span of concentration. Concentration span refers to the amount of time one can concentrate when performing a task before his/her thoughts wander. Naturally, listening comprehension is affected by the amount of attention directed toward the input. Owing to the fact that English is a stress-timed language, EFL learners have to pay close attention to the content of the message so that accurate understanding of individual sounds and words would be possible. Otherwise, learners' listening activity will be no more than hearing a torrent of sounds. Hence, inability to concentrate really impairs listening comprehension. In this regard, Flowerdew and Miller (1996) found out that the difficulty to concentrate was an obstacle EFL learners encountered when trying to comprehend

spoken language (as cited in Yahia, 2007, p. 28). Similarly, Hamouda (2013) considered the lack of concentration as one of the major listening comprehension problems. Thus, students should seek appropriate strategies to expand their concentration spans and therefore to successfully comprehend spoken texts.

1.2.1.3. Affective Factors

It is a widely admitted fact that the learner's psychological status can either support or distract their listening process; therefore, being in a good mood is crucial to the overcoming of any listening barrier that might interfere with comprehension. Conversely, being anxious, uninterested, or demotivated will, by no means, hinder comprehension.

1.2.1.3.1. Anxiety. It is worth noting that anxiety negatively affects foreign language learning. More particularly, it is quite conducive to affecting the listening comprehension process. MacIntire and Gardner (1991) maintained that foreign language anxiety has to do with "the feeling of tension and apprehension associated with second language context including speaking, listening, and learning" (p. 2). Differently stated, when anxiety is present in the classroom, students are more likely to feel nervous and worried which contributes, in a way or in another, to poor performance. In a similar vein, Vogely (1999) asserted that one of the most debilitating types of anxiety is the one related to listening comprehension (as cited in Gonen, 2009).

Actually, L2 listeners may feel anxious before or while listening to an auditory text because of various reasons. Scarcella and Oxford (1992) suggested that listening anxiety occurs when learners, before actually begin to listen, think that they do not own sufficient listening abilities for the understanding of the incoming information, and are afraid the task would be too difficult or unfamiliar to them. More simply put, the lack of confidence is a factor that makes listeners anxious. Moreover, Vendergrift and Goh (2012) maintained that listeners undergo high levels of anxiety because they do not only have to show how much

they have understood, but also to respond appropriately to what a person is saying. Gonen (2009) found out that high anxious students generally do not employ effective listening strategies compared to low anxious students. Briefly, anxiety is a dire problem students usually face when doing listening activities.

1.2.1.3.2. Lack of interest and motivation. Fundamental to successful listening comprehension is the interest one has in what he/ she listens to. It is an indisputable fact that listeners have to process spoken language while simultaneously attending to new input at a speed controlled by the speaker. They may, however, just continue listening pointlessly when they no longer feel motivated or interested in the listening topic. Dornyei (1998) stated that “without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals” (p. 117). Hence, losing interest will preclude learners from being attentive to the incoming information, which may possibly bring about incomprehension of the text.

1.2.2. Factors Attributed to the Speaker

Interestingly, EFL learners may experience difficulty in comprehending what a listening passage means basically because of the speaker. Indeed, many factors which are directly related to him/her have the power to deteriorate listeners’ understanding and are mainly fast speech rate, reduced forms, unfamiliarity with English stress, rhythm, and intonation in addition to accent.

1.2.2.1. Fast Speech Rate

Speech rate, as defined by Richards and Schmidt (2002), is the speed at which a person produces words and sentences. A speaker’s speed of delivery varies depending on his personality in addition to some particularities such as the subject matter and the audience. For Griffiths (1991), speech rate is of two types: a “normal rate” at which spoken texts are easily understood, and a “threshold rate” at which comprehension begins to decline (as

cited in Rubin, 1994, p. 200). It is, thus, clear that the faster the spoken text is perceived to be, the more difficult it is for EFL learners to comprehend.

In fact, while some researchers claimed that speech rate is not really an issue for second/foreign language listeners, a host of researchers included the rate of speech within the factors interfering with EFL learners' comprehension when listening to spoken texts. Basically, every language learner thinks that native speakers speak too fast. Among many others, Underwood (1989) placed speed of delivery **at the top** of the seven factors he believed to cause difficulty in listening comprehension, and stated that many EFL learners perceive their failure to control how quickly **speakers are** as the greatest challenge they face in listening situations. Indeed, most EFL learners suffer when they cannot catch up with the very fast utterances native speakers produce.

In line with what Underwood arrived at, Osuka (2008), in his investigation of the factors that interfere with students' listening comprehension, reported that the most significant factor that impairs EFL learners' listening comprehension is fast rate of speech, whereas a slower speech rate had a positive effect on their listening comprehension. Most interestingly, it is mainly because rapid speech negatively affects clarity of pronunciation, as it makes it ambiguous, that it is perceived by listeners to be problematic. In line with this, Mc Bride (2007) acknowledged that pronunciation is clearer and more careful with slower speech. Boulfelfel (2007) claimed that rapid speech is really problematic for EFL learners. It causes difficulty recognizing syllable and word boundaries which results in perceiving completely different words and sentences from those uttered by the speaker, which in turn results in distorting meaning which misleads the L2 listener.

1.2.2.2. Reduced Forms

Listening comprehension is usually considered as one of the most difficult language skills to EFL learners due to the unavoidable presence of reduced forms in authentic

speech. Indeed, it is highly challenging for non-native learners listening to native speakers of English to really grasp the meanings of the messages they receive. In fact, reduced speech poses difficulty recognizing non prominent words and word boundaries. In line with this, Khaghaninezhad and Jafarzadeh (2014) pointed out that many researchers (e.g. Brown, 1987; Brown & Yule, 1983; Henrichsen, 1984; and Ur, 1984) considered reduced forms to be one of the reasons that make comprehension inaccessible as it seriously prevents dividing the stream of speech. Certainly, it is really complicated for learners to listen to foreign language talk in which they are unable to recognize word beginnings and endings.

In an attempt to diagnose the source of difficulty perceived when listening to English, which is known for its reduced forms, Brown (2000), who attributed reduction of speech to four aspects of language, viz. phonology, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics, hinted that the difficulty of coping with reduced forms may originate from the fact that learners were used to listening to the full forms of English in the language classroom.

1.2.2.3. Unfamiliarity with Stress, Rhythm, and Intonation

Listening comprehension is basically concerned with spoken language which immensely differs from the written one. In fact, spoken language is characterized by possessing specific features which intonation, stress, and rhythm are part of. Learners of English often find difficulty listening to spoken language as unfamiliarity with those features impairs their comprehension of the passages they are exposed to.

The fact that English is a stress-timed language makes it critically difficult for EFL learners to comprehend. According to Brown (2000), “English speech can be a terror for some learners as mouthfuls of syllables come spilling out between stress points” (p. 254). More simply put, the source of difficulty in understanding spoken English lies in the foreign students’ inability to cope with the ambiguity of the received utterances caused by

stressed syllables being produced taking the same amount of time as unstressed ones. Moreover, for Harmer (2001), listeners usually misunderstand the messages from intonation, or what he referred to as “music of speech”, when speakers use it in an “idiosyncratic way”.

1.2.2.4. Accent Unfamiliarity

Accent, which is a particular way of speaking that has the power of informing the listener about the speaker’s background, is believed to cause comprehension difficulty for EFL learners. An examination of the literature on correlating accent familiarity with listening comprehension showed that most researchers agreed that comprehension of spoken English is highly affected by accent. Among others, Bloomfield et al. (2010) pointed out that accent can negatively influence L2 listening comprehension rather than L1 listening since non-native speakers are less familiar with accent because of fast speech rate and noise. In their investigations on the issue, Moinzadeh, Rezaei, and Dezhara (2012), found out that subjects (Iranian EFL learners) were able to comprehend the Persian accent (non-native) more than they did with the American one (native). This unavoidably confirms the assumption that the native accents of English are really problematic for EFL learners to deal with.

1.2.3. Factors Attributed to the Auditory Text

Sometimes, the difficulty in listening comprehension is neither related to the listener nor to the speaker, but to the acoustic message itself. The factors attributed to the listening passage embrace cultural accessibility as well as length and information density.

1.2.3.1. Idiomatic Expressions and Slangs

Undeniably, having a good proficiency in the foreign language entails, by no means, one’s awareness of the target language culture due to the fact that culture and language are inexorably linked to each other. Therefore, when EFL learners are unfamiliar with

culturally specific vocabulary, slangs, and idioms present in a colloquial language, they are more likely to fail in comprehending the meanings an auditory material carries.

In this regard, Wilson (2008) argued that “certain concepts simply do not exist in some cultures, so the situations and context of some recordings may be incomprehensible” (p. 23). In other words, it is far too challenging for EFL students of Africa, for instance, to understand what “thanks giving day” might mean because such a concept does not exist in the African culture. Furthermore, Brown (2000) suggested that “learners who have been exposed to standard written English and, or sometimes “textbooks” language find it surprising and difficult to deal with colloquial language” (p. 253). Differently stated, the more time learners are exclusively exposed to formal English, the less their understanding of the colloquial language will be. Besides, Ur (1984) maintained that it is quite clear that learners listening to foreign language speech are more likely not to understand a word they have not yet learnt. Briefly, listeners need to learn culturally specific idioms and slangs so as to be able to cope with the difficulties resulting from the specific characteristics of the foreign language.

1.2.3.2. Length and Information Density

The length and the amount of information a spoken text contains pose a great difficulty to learners comprehending its meaning. Wilson (2008) claimed that “if the speaker continuously moves on to the next point, without stopping to clarify, this places a great burden on the learner” (p. 24). That is, the speaker’s ongoing production of information makes the listener overwhelmed by the content, which brings about tiredness in the classroom. In addition, Wayland et. al (2013) found out that participants recalled more words accurately when spoken texts were short other than long and when their density was medium rather than high. Getting overloaded by the input threatens listeners’ comprehension as their thoughts are very much likely to wander.

1.2.4. Factors Attributed to the Physical Setting

Listening comprehension difficulties do not only stem from the factors related to the listener, the speaker or the message, but may also be attributed to the environment which surrounds students. The obstacles related to the surroundings have basically to do with the lack of visual support as well as distortion and noise.

1.2.4.1. Lack of Visual Support

Actually, watching the speaker while listening to a recording can immeasurably help learners to understand what he/she is saying. Broady (2005) argued that “through the visual channel, a video provides rich and accessible contextual information for the interpretation of the language” (p. 61). He further suggested that by looking at the setting, the speaker’s clothing, his/her gestures and facial expressions, the listener can frequently guess the main idea of the talk. Suevoshi and Hardison (2005) found out that seeing the speaker’s gestures provided the best result for lower proficiency students as it gave them signals to meaning that compensated for the parts which were not understood (as cited in Vandergrift & Goh, 2012, p. 221). Undeniably, incorporating visual media in listening instruction has the power to make comprehension easier for L2 listeners while providing audios alone deprives students from extra contextual information and may, therefore, hinder comprehension.

1.2.4.2. Distortion and Noise

Acoustic distortions can have a deep negative effect on EFL learners’ ability to understand what a native speaker is saying. Actually, it is even challenging for people listening to their native language to comprehend others in unfavourable conditions. The latter make students uninterested in recognizing speech, which according to Common European Frame of Reference for Languages (2001), is “made much more difficult, by noise, interference and distortion” (p. 47). In other words, when noise and distortion share

phonological features with the foreign language, it becomes far demanding for listeners to distinguish the sounds relevant to the listening passage from those that are part of the competing noise.

Truly, studies into the factors contributing to EFL learners' difficulty in listening comprehension revealed that noise and distortion are among the barriers to comprehension. Teng (2002) investigated Taiwanese EFL learners' listening comprehension difficulties, discovered that the main problem in relation to the context factor was noise and interference (as cited in Chao, 2013, p. 75). In a similar vein, Yagang (1994) maintained that noises resulted either from the surrounding environment or from the listening equipment itself, i.e. the bad quality of the recording, prevents students from easily discriminating sounds, which in turn hinders comprehension.

In short, the factors that are believed to cause difficulty to EFL students when listening to speakers with whom no interaction is allowed are mainly related to the listener, the speaker, the auditory text and the physical setting. In order for effective measures to be taken, which would possibly contribute to the enhancement of listening, both students and their teachers need to be aware of such obstacles.

Conclusion

This chapter was concerned with some key issues about listening comprehension in EFL listening classes. It has firstly reviewed a historical background to listening comprehension, its definition, its significance, its process as well as the models of the listening process. Besides, it has drawn on the common types of listening and the different classifications of its strategies. It has also dealt with the stages learners go through when performing listening activities and some basic principles of the teaching of listening. Additionally, it expands on the major listening comprehension difficulty provoking factors.

Chapter Two:
Research Methodology, Data Analysis, and
Data Discussion

Section One: Research Methodology

2.1.1. Research Paradigm

2.1.2. Population and Sampling

2.1.2.1. Students

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2.1.3. Research Design

2.1.3.1. Research Instruments

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2.1.3.2. Data Collection Procedure

2.1.3.3. Data Analysis

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Chapter Two: Research Methodology, Data Analysis, and Data Discussion

Introduction

The previous chapter of this study has dealt with the theoretical aspects of listening comprehension as well as the factors triggering its difficulty. This chapter, however, aims at investigating the obstacles encountered in listening comprehension from the perspectives of both third year License students and their teachers. The chapter is divided into three main sections: (1) the research methodology which comprises a detailed description of the research paradigm, population, research design, data analysis as well as the limitations of this study; (2) data analysis, in which the results yielded by the research tools are to be reported and analyzed; and (3) data discussion which attempts to interpret the results and, thus, answer the research questions.

Section One: Research Methodology

This section outlines the methodology used in this study. It seeks to provide a detailed description of the research paradigm, the population, the research design as well as the limitations of the current study.

2.1.1. Research Paradigm

The current study attempts to investigate the different factors that pose difficulty to third year EFL learners when listening to spoken English (audios and videos) in the classroom. In order to arrive at a comprehensible understanding of these “non-observable” obstacles, the researchers made use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection. The quantitative data is derived from the two questionnaires administered to both third year EFL learners and their oral instructors, whereas the qualitative data is obtained from the focus group discussions.

The researchers employed a mixed (quantitative and qualitative) method which, according to Creswell (2003), entails simultaneous or sequential collection or analysis of

both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study. It also involves the integration of the data at one or more stages in the research process. (as cited in Borrego, Douglas, & Amelink, 2009, p. 57). In fact, opting for a mixed method is justifiable in the sense that it was done for the sake of crosschecking the results obtained from the different research instruments. Most importantly, the qualitative data is of great support to the quantitative one in that it permits the researchers to get clearer and detailed information about the topic under study.

2.1.2. Population and Sampling

The sample of this study includes both students and teachers whose perspectives on the factors triggering difficulty in listening comprehension are to be investigated.

2.1.2.1. Students

The researchers targeted 60 third year students of English as the sample of their study which took place at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahya, Jijel. Selecting third year students in particular other than students from other levels is justified by the fact that third year students at this level are expected to develop a good listening ability; an ability that, at least, allows them to cope with the difficulty they face when listening to English audios and videos.

2.1.2.2. Teachers

In order to get clearer insights about the factors that trigger listening comprehension difficulty for third year students of English, the researchers selected seven oral expression teachers who are, or have been, teaching oral expression to third year students at the Department of English to whom a questionnaire was administered. It seems adequate to state that targeting oral instructors as informants for the current study is for checking teachers' awareness of the factors causing students' listening comprehension difficulty as well as getting their suggestions on how to overcome these problems.

2.1.3. Research Design

2.1.3.1. Research Instruments

In order for the current study to achieve its aims, the researchers made use of two questionnaires; one for third year students and the other for oral instructors, in addition to focus-group discussions with students.

2.1.3.1.1. Questionnaires. This study intends to use the questionnaire to achieve its objectives because it is regarded as the most popular and suitable tool of collecting data from a large number of respondents in a limited time which the researchers find useful as the current study is required to be fulfilled within time constraints. According to Nunan (1992) questionnaire is “an instrument for the collection of data usually in written form consisting of open and /or closed questions and other probes requiring a response from subjects” (as cited in Mebitil, 2011, p. 54). In addition, Brancato et al. (n. d.) suggested that questionnaire should reflect the variables the researcher intends to measure into a language that participants understand. Simply put, the questionnaire should be formulated in a way that can either confirm or reject the supposed relationship between the variables of the study.

2.1.3.1.1.1. Description of student questionnaire. The present questionnaire, whose foundation is the theoretical part, is made up of two sections. The first section aims at collecting some background information about the participants, including their choice to major in English as well as their listening ability. The second section, however, is much broader in scope in the sense that it seeks to gain detailed information about the factors contributing to informants’ listening comprehension difficulty.

Student questionnaire used in this study consists of 21 questions which are of two types: closed and open questions. Closed questions, which require informants to only tick the appropriate answers from pre-determined ones, include Q 1, Q 2, Q 3, Q 4, Q 5, Q 7, Q 8,

Q 14, Q 15, Q 17, Q 18, Q 20, and Q 21. Hence, they can quickly and easily be analyzed. Actually, the researchers willingness to get further details about some of the participants' choices rendered it necessary for them to insert "other (s) specify", "please justify", and "explain more" which represent open questions together with a question where the researchers queried the participants to provide their free answers without any restrictions. These open questions include Q6, Q 9, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q16, Q 19, and Q 22. According to Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec, and Vehovar (2003), while close-ended questions limit the participants to the set of options being offered, open-ended questions provide a large room for respondents to express their opinions without any influence of the researcher. Therefore, the researchers posed a relatively large number of open-ended questions.

2.1.3.1.1.2. Description of teacher questionnaire. In order to get useful insights about teachers' perspectives on the factors that make comprehending auditory materials difficult for students, the researchers found it quite appropriate to administer a questionnaire to seven oral instructors. The questionnaire consists of 20 questions ranged between closed (Q1, Q3, Q 5, Q 8, Q 11, Q 13 and Q 15) and open questions (Q 2, Q 4, Q 6, Q 7, Q 9, Q 10, Q12, Q 14, Q 16, Q 17, Q18, Q 19, and Q 20).

Similar to student questionnaire, teacher questionnaire comprises two sections. The first section entitled "background information" consists of two questions about teacher's choice as well as their experience regarding the teaching of oral expression. The second section, on the other hand, entitled "factors triggering difficulty in listening comprehension" and includes eighteen questions. It sought to gain knowledge about teachers' views concerning the factors provoking listening comprehension difficulty for students in the classroom in addition to discerning any other acts that teachers may adopt in listening comprehension

sessions which might cause difficulty for students in comprehending the target listening texts.

2.1.3.1.2. Focus group discussions. In order to arrive at a thorough understanding of the factors triggering difficulty in listening comprehension, the researchers used focus group discussions as another research tool. According to “Customers in Focus”, focus group is used to “understand how people feel and think about a programme, service or issue” (p. 6). In other words, focus group is mainly appropriate to gain rich data about opinions and perceptions of participants who are encouraged to talk to one another and answer a limited number of open questions.

From the subjects who participated in answering the questionnaire, 14 students were invited to join the focus group discussions. Interestingly, the focus group was conducted as a follow-up to student questionnaire so as to both crosscheck the results obtained from it and to get informants indulged in a kind of introspection since the factors causing listening comprehension difficulty are not observable. According to “Customers in Focus”, focus group has the power to divulge information and nuances that other research tools as surveys usually cannot, and it increases face-validity because data collection is based on individual contributions. In other words, the discussions raised in the focus group, unlike questionnaires, provide valuable opportunities for students who share the same experience to clarify and expand on their perceptions in a short period of time.

2.1.3.2. Data Collection Procedure

In order to get further insights about the factors that may hinder students’ listening comprehension which are not mentioned in the review of the literature, the researchers firstly conducted a preliminary work with third year students of English at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahya, Jijel. The data obtained from the preliminary work contributed to the construction of the questionnaire in that some questions were added. It is

worth noting that, before being administered, the questionnaire was piloted with a sample of ten students who have been randomly selected. The aim behind doing the pilot study was to ensure the clarity and relevance of the questions to be asked in the main questionnaire and to get a clear idea about the participants' reaction to them. In fact, results gained from the pilot study render it necessary to amend some questions.

After piloting the questionnaire, it was administered to sixty third year students of English who were randomly selected. Besides, the researchers administered the questionnaire personally so as to provide any possible clarification for participants who pleasurably handed it back on the spot. Simultaneously, another questionnaire was issued to seven third year oral instructors who did not hand it back on the spot because of having other duties.

Afterwards, the researchers selected 14 students who volunteered to participate in focus group discussions. The subjects were divided into two equal groups which consisted of females only due to males' refusal to join the discussions. Participants were informed beforehand about the time and location where to conduct the focus group discussions as well as the nature and aim of the study. Besides, in order for falsified responses to be reduced, informants were assured that their identities would be kept anonymous and that their answers would only be recorded for the sake of research. Thus, the participants welcomed the chance to talk about the factors that render it difficult for them to comprehend listening passages in the English language classroom.

2.1.3.3. Data Analysis

The results obtained from the research instruments were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. With regard to the data obtained from the questionnaires, the researchers counted manually the frequency of the provided items and then presented them in tables. However, the data yielded by open questions were thematised and reported in percentage

terms. Also, the data gained from focus group discussions were grouped into themes and cited whenever necessary.

2.1.3.4. Limitations of the Study

During the process of carrying this study, the researchers encountered some constraints which are listed below:

- Because of the inability to get useful and relevant resources for the current study, the researchers resorted to second-hand references.
- The researchers intended to use diaries in which participants, after doing a listening activity, would note down all the factors that contributed to difficulty in comprehension. However, the fact that this study should be carried out in a limited period of time obliged the researchers to opt for “focus group discussions” as an alternative as it saves time.
- Because of the insufficient number of teachers to whom the questionnaire was to be administered, the researchers did not only administer it to third year oral instructors, but also to other teachers who have already taught the module of oral expression to third year students.

This section was dedicated to a detailed presentation and description of the research methodology used in this study. It highlighted the research paradigm, population, research design, data analysis, and limitations of the study.

Section Two: Data Analysis

2.2.1. Analysis of Questionnaires

2.2.1.1. Analysis of Student Questionnaire

2.2.1.2. Analysis of Teacher Questionnaire

2.2.2. Summary of the Results Obtained from the Focus Group Discussions

Section Two: Data Analysis

This section is mainly concerned with the presentation and analysis of the results obtained from the research tools employed namely, questionnaires, and focus group discussions. It begins with the analysis of student questionnaire followed by that of teachers. It finally ends with the analysis of the data yielded by the focus group discussions.

2.2.1. Analysis of Questionnaires

In what follows, the full results of both student and teacher questionnaires will be presented and important issues arising from them will be highlighted.

2.2.1.1. Analysis of Student Questionnaire

Students' responses to the questionnaire are presented in tables and reported in form of percentages or numerals as appropriate.

Students' responses to Q 1 (Was it your choice to major in English?)

Table 1

Students 'Choice to Major in English

Options	Percentage %
Yes	78%
No	22%
Total	100%

Based on the assumption that majoring in a particular subject for which students do not opt by themselves would make them highly prone to encountering difficulty in learning, this question is meant to disclose whether participants' choice to major in English was a personal desire or it was out of their will. As the above table shows, the vast majority of participants (78%) chose to major in English of their own free will.

Students' responses to Q 2 (What do you think of your listening ability?)

Table 2

Students' Views of Their Listening Ability

Options	Percentage %
Very good	12%
Good	42%
Average	43%
Poor	3%
Total	100%

As it is plainly shown in the above table, a high portion of students (85%) admitted that they have an average / good listening ability.

Students' responses to Q 3 (what do you think of the listening skill?)

Table 3

Students' Awareness of the Importance of the Listening Skill

Options	Percentage%
Very important	92%
Little important	6%
Not important	2%
Total	100%

As it is displayed in the table, a vast majority of 92% of the participants indicated the primacy of the listening skill. **In other words, students are adequately aware of the significance of the listening skill.**

Students' responses to Q 4 (How often do you have listening sessions in the classroom?)

Table 4

Frequency of Having Listening Comprehension in the Classroom

Options	Percentage%
Always	2%
Sometimes	62%
Rarely	36%
Never	0%
Total	100%

The results from the above table indicate that more than half of the participants (62%) reported that they “sometimes” have listening sessions. Another group with a percentage of 36% revealed that their teachers “rarely” incorporate listening comprehension lessons **in the speaking classes**. This can be explained by the fact that teachers have only one session per week for teaching oral expression which is mostly devoted to speaking. This variation in results might be due to the teaching methods adhered to by different teachers.

Students’ responses to Q 5 (How do you find listening to videos and audios in the English classroom?)

Table 5

Students’ Perceptions on the Degree of Difficulty of the Listening Materials

Options	Percentage%
Very difficult	5%
Difficult	67%
Easy	26%
Very easy	2%
Total	100%

As the above table illustrates, while only 26% of the respondents pointed out that the listening materials provided in the classroom are easy, a high portion of 67% stated that the listening activities are “difficult”.

Students’ responses to Q 6 (Does your teacher usually introduce the topic of the listening material before you are invited to listen to it?)

Table 6 (a)

Teacher’s Introduction of the Listening Topic

Options	Percentage %
Yes	62%
No	38%
Total	100%

The above results suggest that the **majority of teachers provide some information about the topic to be listened to (62%)**. Yet, a significant rate of 38% of informants stated that their teachers do not provide such information.

In order to get further insights about the issue, the participants were asked to provide explanations in both cases. However, only 47% of them provided explanations to this question. Their answers are thematised and presented in the following table:

Table 6 (b)

Students' Explanations about Teachers' Introduction of the Listening Topic

Yes	Number	No	Numbe
-Supplying the main idea	15	-Allowing students	5
-Supplying the title	5	to guess	
-Providing hints about the speaker's accent	3		

Results from the above table imply that although some teachers try to prepare their students for the listening tasks through doing some top-down processing, it seems limited to superficial hints about the topics.

Students' responses to Q 7 (How often do you listen to English outside the classroom?)

Table 7

Students' Frequency of Listening to English outside the Classroom

Options	Percentage%
Always	12%
Sometimes	56%
Rarely	32%
Never	0%
Total	100%

The aim behind asking this question is to reveal whether experiencing difficulty in listening comprehension can be attributed to the lack of practice or not. As it is shown in the table, while more than half of the respondents (56%) stated that they "sometimes" listen to English outside class, only a minority of 12% said that they "always" do extensive

listening. It can be said that though some individual practice of listening is done, it seems to be insufficient.

Students' responses to Q 8 (While listening to audios and videos in the classroom, do you find it difficult to quickly remember information you have just heard?)

Table 8

Students' Ability to Recall the Heard Information

Options	Percentage%
Yes	38%
No	62%
Total	100%

This question is meant to uncover whether students' working memory affects their ability to comprehend acoustic messages or not. As it is shown in the above table, the majority of participants (62%) noted that they have no problem recalling information they hear when listening to English in the classroom. Yet, the rest stated that they suffer from this problem (38%). **Students' working memory, then, seems to have little bearing on their ability to comprehend listening texts.**

Students' responses to Q 9 (When you listen to audios and videos in the classroom, do you aim at...?)

Table 9

Students' Purpose of Listening

Options	Percentage%
Getting the main idea	71%
Understanding every single detail	29%
Total	100%

As it is plainly expressed in the above table, the majority of students (71%) listen for the gist rather than trying to understand every single word which is the case for 29% of

them. In order to explore any other aims informants may listen for, they were asked to supply such aims. However, none of them supplied answers to this question.

Students' responses to Q10 (If you fail to comprehend the listening material in a listening comprehension session, do you...?)

Table 10 (a)

Students' Behaviour when Failing to Comprehend the Listening Material

Options	Percentage%
Stop listening	13%
Redirect your attention and try to focus more	87%
Total	100%

As the above table shows, the overwhelming majority of students (87%) admitted that they redirect their attention and try to focus more when they fail to comprehend the listening material. **Implied in their answers is that most of participants are able to control their listening when incomprehension occurs.**

In an attempt to explore any other strategies the researchers did not mention which students would use in such a case, they were asked to supply other answers. Surprisingly, only a percentage of 3% answered this question. Their answers are thematised and presented in the following table:

Table 10 (b)

Other Strategies Students Use when Failing to Comprehend the Listening Material

Students' responses	Number
Seeking answers to assigned questions	1
Learning new vocabulary items	1

Results from the above table show that looking for specific information and trying to retain new vocabularies are some of the used strategies but only by two participants.

Students' responses to Q 11 (When your teacher tells you that you are going to do a listening activity, do you feel?)

Table 11 (a)

Students' Feelings before Engaging in a Listening Task

Options	Percentage%
Motivated	67%
Anxious	10%
Indifferent	23%
Total	100%

As the above table suggests, more than half of the participants pointed out that they feel motivated when their teacher tells them that they will do listening.

For further insights, informants were asked to explain more. In fact, while 45% of the participants tried to explain, more than half of them did not. Besides, those who opted for "indifferent" did not provide any explanation. Answers of the participants who provided explanations are thematised and presented in what follows:

Table 11(b)

Students' Explanations for their Feelings

Motivated students	Number	Anxious students	Number
-Learning new vocabulary	7	-Fear of comprehension	1
-Saving students from speaking tasks	3	Failure	
-Practicing listening for improvement purposes	4	-Difficulty of RP	3
		-Difficulty of the nature of listening itself	9

The above table shows that among those who provided explanations, the highest number of students attributed their feelings of anxiety to their perception about listening comprehension to be difficult in nature, a perception which goes hand in hand with what most of the participants previously revealed in this questionnaire when asked about their views on the degree of difficulty they experience in listening classes.

Students' responses to Q 12 (Are the listening texts your teacher usually provides interesting?)

Table 12 (a)

Students' Perspectives on the Listening Texts their Teachers Provide

Options	Percentage%
Yes	55%
No	45%
Total	100%

As shown in the above table, more than half of the participants (55%) believed that the texts their teachers provide are interesting while 45% of them viewed the listening texts as uninteresting. Looking at students' answers waving between "yes" and "no", it can be inferred that the topics their teachers bring to the classroom are not always interesting in the eyes of students.

When asked to further explain, only 45% of the respondents provided explanations. The latter are thematised and presented in the following table:

Table 12 (b)

Students' Explanations for the Provided Listening Texts in the Classroom

Topics are interesting	Number	Topics are uninteresting	Number
Songs and films are Motivating	12	Songs and films are boring	11
Topical topics	13	Political speech is very boring	15

Shown in the above table is that a total of fifteen subjects related their views on the listening topics provided in the classroom as being uninteresting to political speech which, according to them, is boring. Another notable result is that participants seem indecisive with regard to songs and films; while twelve participants perceived them as interesting, eleven students viewed them as boring. This implies that it is not an easy task for teachers to cater for the many and varied interests of their students.

Students' responses to Q13 (which accent do you find more difficult to understand?)

Table 13 (a)

Students' Stance on the more Difficult Accent

Options	Percentage%
British accent	55%
American accent	45%
Total	100%

As it is plainly shown in the above table, more than half of the participants (55%) reported that the British accent is more difficult for them to comprehend than the American one while 45% of them stated the opposite.

For further insights, subjects were asked to explain more. About half of them (48%) supplied explanations which are thematised and presented below:

Table 13(b)

Students' Explanations for their Stance on the more Difficult Accent

British accent	Number	American accent	Number
-Familiarity with American English	22	- Familiarity with British English	10
-Features of connected speech	8	-American slangs and idioms	5
-Rhotic accent	8	-Fast speech rate	13

As participants' explanations suggest, unfamiliarity with either the British or the American accent plays a notable role in making students unable to comprehend spoken English. Simply put, **accent unfamiliarity can be added to the factors the researchers believe to hinder students' listening comprehension.**

Students' responses to Q 14 (In a listening session, does your teacher usually allow you to listen to the recording or video...?)

Table 14

Opportunity to Get the Listening Material Repeated

Options	Percentage%
Once	3%
Twice	50%
Three times	45%
More than three times	2%
Total	100%

As it is displayed in the table, the overwhelming majority of participants (95%) stated that their teachers permit them to listen to auditory materials neither once, nor more than three times, but usually twice or three times which sounds acceptable for them as advanced students. **This implies that the opportunity to listen again to the provided listening materials does not seem to be among the factors that interfere with students' comprehension.**

Students' responses to Q 15 (In order to comprehend a listening text in the classroom, do you need to listen...?)

Table 15

Number of Listening Required for Students' Comprehension

Options	Percentage%
Once	2%
Twice	25%
Three times	50%
More than three times	23%
Total	100%

Results from the above table show that half of the participants acknowledged that they need three times of listening so that comprehension of the message takes place, whereas only a very small percentage of 2% claimed that they need to listen solely once in order to

comprehend. Simply put, being unable to comprehend a listening material from the first or second time implies that students experience difficulty in listening comprehension.

Students' responses to Q 16 (Do you understand better when you listen to...?)

Table 16 (a)

The more Comprehensible Listening Material

Options	Percentage%
Videos	78%
Audios	22%
Total	100%

As it is patently shown in the above table, a high percentage of participants (78%) claimed that they comprehend listening passages when they are in the form of “videos” while 22% opted for “audios”.

Aiming at getting further insights about the issue, participants were asked to provide justifications. It is noticeable that 70% of them provided justifications which are thematised and presented in the following table:

Table 16 (b)

Students Explanations for the more Comprehensible Listening Material

Videos	Number	Audios	Number
-Support of physical context	25	-Maximum concentration	9
-Videos are motivating	8		

As the above table illustrates, a relatively high number of participants' responses (33) were of the view that videos are more helpful in comprehending listening passages. Those who claimed the opposite, however, considered videos as a source of distraction. Thus, it seems adequate to say that preferring videos to audios by the majority of students may be explained by the fact that the majority of them have visual learning styles.

Students' responses to Q 17 (Have you ever discussed with your teacher the factors that cause difficulty for you in listening comprehension?)

Table 17

Students' Discussion of their Difficulty in Listening Comprehension with their Teachers

Options	Percentage%
Yes	28%
No	72%
Total	100%

The table shows that the majority of participants (72%) admitted that their teachers had never talked to them about any listening comprehension difficulty they might encounter in the classroom.

Students' responses to Q 18 (Do you lose concentration when...?)

Table 18

Students' Concentration Breaking Factors

Options	Percentage
The text is too long	28%
There is noise around	72%
You focus attention on understanding unfamiliar words	0%
Total	100%

As the table illustrates, while the majority of the participants (72%) opted for “noise” to be the source of distraction which breaks their concentration, 28% of them claimed that they lose concentration when the listening text is too long, something which causes them to get lost. It seems, then, appropriate to state that **noise and lengthy texts can interfere with students' comprehension of the listening texts in the English classroom since these two factors seem to really affect their concentration.**

Students' responses to Q 19 (When you fail to comprehend the listening material in the classroom, is it because of...?)

Table 19

Factors Causing Students' Incomprehension of Listening Materials

Options	Percentage%
Fast speech rate	80%
Reduced forms	63%
Too many unfamiliar vocabulary items	67%
Complex grammatical structures	3 %
The lack of background knowledge about the topic	25%
Idiomatic expressions and slangs	75%
English language stress, rhythm, and intonation	16%
Lack of concentration	25%

As the above table shows, fast speech rate received the highest percentage of students' responses (80%) followed by idiomatic expressions and slangs (75%). Besides, lack of vocabulary knowledge (67%) and reduced forms (63%) were among the major factors that cause difficulty for students in listening comprehension. **Strangely, English grammar knowledge appears to have slight effect on students' comprehension.**

It is worth noting that informants were asked to specify any other factors. Yet, none of them answered.

Students' responses to Q 20 (Have you ever been taught listening comprehension strategies?)

Table 20

Students' Familiarity with Listening Comprehension Strategies

Options	Percentage%
Yes	20%
No	80%
Total	100%

Results from the above table suggest that the vast majority of participants (80%) acknowledged that they have never been taught listening comprehension strategies. Hence, unfamiliarity with such strategies may be one of the causes which contribute to students' difficulty in listening comprehension

Students' responses to Q 21 (Has it ever happened that no student in your classroom understands the listening material?)

Table 21

Experiencing Complete Failure of Understanding of the Listening Material

Options	Percentage%
Yes	38%
No	62%
Total	100%

As it is shown in the above table, a considerable percentage of 62% of respondents stated that they have never come across a situation where no student comprehended the listening material in the classroom. Yet, 38% of students indicated that they are familiar with such a situation which might reflect the fact that some teachers provide their students with difficult listening texts.

Students' responses to Q 22 (If your answer to question "21" is "yes", what was your teacher's reaction?)

Table 22

Teachers' Reaction when Complete Comprehension Failure Occurs

Students' responses	Number
Opportunity to listen again	11
Getting angry	12
Total	23

As it is clearly exhibited in the above table, a relatively significant number of teachers were not able to successfully handle the situation as they got frustrated and angry. This

behaviour may be a source of anxiety for students which they claimed to experience before doing any listening in the classroom.

In summary, student questionnaire shows that fast speech rate, idiomatic expressions and slangs, lack of vocabulary knowledge, reduced forms, and lack of practice are the major factors that lead to difficulty in listening comprehension. Additionally, lack of interest, weak working memory capacity, unfamiliarity with the native accent, lack of background knowledge about the topic as well as lack of concentration were identified as partly problematic for students when listening to acoustic passages in the English classroom. Unfamiliarity with stress, rhythm, and intonation is another factor which has appeared to slightly interfere with students' listening comprehension. Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of students claimed that they have never been taught listening strategies, most of them tend to focus attention when comprehension failure occurs.

2.1.1.2. Analysis of Teacher Questionnaire

Teachers' answers to the questionnaire are presented in tables and reported in form of percentages or numbers as appropriate.

Teachers' responses to Q 1 (Was your teaching of oral expression...?)

Table 23

Teachers' Choice to Teach Oral Expression

Option	Percentage%
A personal desire	86%
Assigned to you by the administration	14%
Total	100%

As the above table illustrates, the overwhelming majority of teachers (86%) admitted that their teaching of this module was entirely of their own free will, while only 14% of the informants stated that it was not their choice to teach oral expression.

Teachers' responses to Q 2 (How long have you been teaching oral expression?)

Table 24

Teachers' Experience in Teaching Oral Expression

Option	Percentage%
≤ 3 years	57%
≥ 5 years	43%
Total	100%

Looking at the above table, it is noticeable that this question has divided the informants into different groups. It is shown in the table that more than half of the participants (57%) have taught oral expression for three years at most, whereas 43% of them stated that they have been teaching this module for at least five years. **This suggests that more than half of the teachers are not experienced in teaching this module.**

Teachers' responses to Q 3 (What do you think of the listening skill...?)

Table 25

Teachers' Views on the Importance of the Listening Skill

Option	Percentage%
Very important	100%
Little important	0%
Not important	0%
Total	100%

This question was designed for the sake of checking teachers' awareness of the critical importance of the listening skill because being able to recognize its importance can pave the way for more attention to the teaching of listening comprehension. As it can be clearly noticed in the above table, all the respondents opted for "very important" to be their stance on the listening skill. It is worth noting that teachers' full awareness of the importance of the listening skill is also shared by the overwhelming majority of students. **It can, then, be said that any potential problem in listening might not be justified by any perceived wrong belief held by either teachers or students about the importance of listening.**

Teachers' responses to Q 4 (How often do you teach listening comprehension...?)

Table 26

Frequency of Teaching Listening Comprehension

Option	Percentage %
Always	29%
Sometimes	57%
Rarely	14%
Never	0%
Total	100%

Concerning this question, it intended to implicitly disclose whether listening enjoys some interest from the part of teachers or not. As the results from table 26 suggest, more than half of the participants (57%) reported that they “sometimes” teach listening comprehension while 29% of them acknowledged that they “always” teach listening comprehension. Yet 14% of teachers admitted that they “rarely” insert listening comprehension in their courses. **These results support what has been revealed in student questionnaire where the teaching of listening seems to receive inadequate attention from the part of teachers. Teachers were asked to justify their answers. Yet, none of them did.**

Teachers' responses to Q 5 (Do your students encounter any difficulties in listening comprehension?)

Table 27

Teachers' Awareness of their Students' Listening Comprehension Difficulties

Option	Percentage%
Yes	86%
No	14%
Total	100%

As the results from the above table suggest, the option “Yes” took the lion’s share with a percentage of 86% which means that teachers are strictly aware of the fact that their students face difficulties when listening to spoken English in the classroom.

Teachers' responses to Q 6 (When presenting a listening task, do you ...?)

Table 28

Procedures Teachers Follow when Teaching Listening Comprehension

Option	Percentage %
Follow the successive pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening stages	86%
Directly make your students listen to the text followed by its discussion	14%
Total	100%

Looking at the above table, it is noticeable that the vast majority of informants (86%) stated that they follow the successive pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening stages. Implied in this is the fact that students must be informed about the topic of the talk before they are invited to listen which would certainly make listening easier for students. **This result suggests that the difficulty students encounter in listening comprehension might not be attributed to the lack of background knowledge.**

In order to know any other procedures teachers might follow which the researchers did not suggest, teachers were asked to supply other options. Yet, none of them provided answers.

Teachers' responses to Q 7 (Do you think that introducing the listening topic helps students comprehend the listening material?)

Table 29 (a)

Teachers' Perspectives on Introducing the Listening Topic

Option	Percentage%
Yes	100%
No	0%
Total	100%

As it is displayed in the above table, all the participants agreed on the fact that introducing the listening topic helps students' comprehension.

It is worth noting that participants were queried to provide explanations if they opted for “Yes”. Their answers are thematised and presented in what follows

Table 29 (b)

Teachers’ Explanations for Introducing the Listening Topic

Teachers’ responses	Number
Raising students’ interest and Expectations	1
Familiarising students with key words	6
Total	7

Looking at the above table, it is clearly shown that nearly all the participants agreed on the fact that the power of introducing the listening topic to students lies in familiarising them with key words which may facilitate their comprehension of listening passages.

Teachers’ responses to Q 8 (Do you encourage your students to practice listening to English outside the classroom?)

Table 30

Teachers’ Encouragement for Practising Listening

Option	Percentage%
Yes	100%
No	0%
Total	100%

As the results from the above table suggest, all the participants opted for “Yes” to be their answers claiming that they all encourage their students to do extensive listening. Hence, students are likely to practice listening outside the classroom; however, **as Q7 in student questionnaire revealed, most of students do not sufficiently practice individual listening.**

Teachers' responses to Q 9 (Have you ever discussed with your students the difficulty they encounter in listening comprehension?)

Table 31

Teachers' Discussion of their Students' Difficulty in Listening Comprehension

Option	Percentage%
Yes	86%
No	14%
Total	100%

As it is plainly displayed in the above table, the vast majority of teachers (86%) reported that they enquire about the obstacles their students encounter when listening to English in the classroom. **It seems adequate to note that this result contradicts what has earlier been revealed in student questionnaire where the majority of informants claimed that their teachers have never tried to discuss their listening comprehension problems.**

It is worth mentioning that the participants were asked to explain more. However, none of them provided any explanation.

Teachers' responses to Q 10 (If your students have troubles comprehending the materials you provide them with, do you think it is because of...?)

Table 32

Teachers' Views on the Factors Causing Students' Listening Incomprehension

Options	Percentage %
Lack of vocabulary	86%
Fast speech rate	86%
Aspects of connected speech	43%
Idiomatic expressions and slangs	43%
Anxiety	0%
Lengthy texts	29%
Lack of concentration	0%

Answers to this question, as displayed in the above table, show that similar to students' views, teachers considered fast speech rate and lack of vocabulary knowledge to be the most hindering factors to students' listening comprehension. However, they viewed aspects of connected speech and idiomatic expressions to partially affect students' comprehension rather than being major obstacles. Interestingly, teachers believed that anxiety and lack of concentration have no bearing on students' listening comprehension.

Teachers were queried to provide any other factors which they think may inhibit their students' comprehension. Yet none of them answered.

Teachers' responses to Q 11 (Which accent of English do you usually expose your students to...?)

Table 33

Accent of the Provided Listening Materials

Option	Percentage%
British	0%
American	14%
Both of them	86%
Total	100%

As it is plainly expressed in the above table, the majority of informants (86%) claimed that they do not restrict their students neither to the British nor to the American accent. Rather, they provide them with listening materials of both accents. **This variation seems to help familiarising students with both the British and the American accent.**

Teachers' responses to Q 12 (Which accent do you think is more difficult for your students to comprehend...?)

Table 34 (a)

Teachers' Perspectives on the most Difficult Accent

Option	Percentage %
British	57%
American	43%
Total	100%

Results from the above table suggest that while 43% of subjects believed that the American accent is the most difficult accent for their students to comprehend, more than half of them (57%) thought that the British accent creates more difficulty for their students. This result is compatible with students' views on the issue in which 55% of them perceived the British accent to be the most difficult.

In order to get further insights about this issue, informants were asked to supply explanations. The latter are summarised and presented in the table below:

Table 34(b)

Teachers' Explanations for the most difficult Accent

British	Number	American	Number
-Familiarity with American films and channels	3	-Familiarity with RP	2
-The non-rhotic Accent	5	-American idioms and slangs	7

According to the above table, most of teachers who thought that the American accent is more difficult than the British one attributed this difficulty to the American idioms and slangs. However, concerning those who viewed the opposite, most of them related the difficulty of the British accent to the fact that it is non-rhotic.

Teachers' responses to Q 13 (In a listening comprehension session, do you usually expose your students to the listening material...?)

Table 35

Number of Times Listening to a Text

Option	Percentage %
Once	14%
Twice	29%
Three times	57%
More than three times	0%
Total	100%

As it is clearly shown in the above table, more than half of participants (57%) reported that they expose their students to the listening text three times followed by a proportion of (29%) who opted for “twice” to be the number of times their students are allowed to listen again. **It seems suitable to say that inability to get the listening material repeated can slightly affect students' comprehension of listening passages.**

Teacher's responses to Q 14 (When do you allow your students to listen again to the listening material...?)

Table 36 (a)

Cases where Repeating the Listening Material

Option	Percentage
With long passages	43%
When it contains too much culturally specific idioms and slangs	57%
Total	100%

According to the above results, culturally-specific idioms represent the situations where teachers thought that it is necessary to permit their students to listen again to recordings or videos with a percentage of 57%. This result might imply that teachers perceive texts containing idioms and slangs to be more difficult to listen to than lengthy texts.

In order not to restrict teachers' to a limited number of choices, they were asked to mention any other situations in which they would repeat the listening material for their students in a listening session. It is important to note that 71% of the respondents provided other answers which are thematised and presented in the table below:

Table 36 (b)

Other Cases where Repeating the Listening Material

Teachers' responses	Number
Complete failure of understanding	3
Always	1
Depending on the purpose of listening	1

As it is exhibited in the above table, in addition to the situations mentioned in table "36(a)", three teachers reported that they resort to allowing their students to listen again when none of them manages to comprehend the provided listening text.

Teachers' responses to Q 15 (When assigning listening activities, do you usually ask your students to...?)

Table 37

Nature of the Assigned Listening Tasks

Options	Percentage%
Look for the main idea	71%
Look for significant details	43%
Take notes in order to ask them questions orally afterwards	43%

As it is displayed in the above table, the majority of teachers (71%) stated that, when assigning a listening activity, they usually ask their students to look for the main idea which might help them acquire this technique when doing individual listening.

Teachers' responses to Q 16 (The listening texts you usually provide your students with are in the form of...?)

Table 38

Nature of the Provided Listening Texts

Option	Percentage %
Videos	43%
Audios	0 %
Both	57%
Total	100%

Results from the above table indicate that while 57% of teachers make students listen to both audios and videos, 43% of them reported that they exclusively expose their students to videos in the classroom. Yet, no teacher relies on solely audios in teaching listening comprehension. Hence, it can be said that the difficulty students encounter in listening comprehension may not be attributed to the lack of visual support since most of teachers provide their students with videos which, according to students' answers, are easier to comprehend.

Teachers' responses to Q 17 (Have you taught your students listening strategies before?)

Table 39 (a)

Teachers' Teaching of the Listening Strategies

Option	Percentage %
Yes	57%
No	43%
Total	100%

As the above table illustrates, more than half of the participants (57%) claimed that they have taught their students the listening comprehension strategies. Strangely, the results at hand seem in disagreement with what students have revealed in that the vast majority of them claimed that they have never been taught listening comprehension strategies.

Informants were asked to provide explanations for their answers. The latter are thematised and presented in the following table:

Table 39 (b)

Teachers' Explanations for their Teaching of Listening Strategies

Teaching of strategies	Number	Non-teaching of strategies	Number
-Listening for the gist Vs listening for details	4	-Teachers lack of knowledge About the strategies	1
-Inferring from context	1		
-Taking notes			

As the above table illustrates, all the participants who reported that they teach strategies of listening to their students stated that they mainly teach their students how to listen for the gist rather than details in addition to making inferences from the context as well as taking notes. Strangely, among those who admitted that they taught listening comprehension strategies, only one teacher provided explanation who confessed that he is not knowledgeable enough about such strategies. **It can be said that most of the teachers provide their students with some key strategies which are supposed to facilitate their listening comprehension.**

Teachers' responses to Q18 (What criteria do you follow when selecting a listening material?)

Table 40 (a)

Criteria for Selecting Listening Materials

Options	Percentage %
Nature of the topic	57%
Authentic texts	71%
Simple texts(c)	0 %
Variety of English	14%

Based on the assumption that inappropriate selection of auditory texts may render it difficult for students to get the meaning of the talk, this question is meant to find out the

criteria oral expression teachers consider when selecting a particular listening material. As it is shown in the above table, authenticity is the criterion for selection which received the highest number of the informants' responses (71%) followed by the nature of the listening topic (57%). It seems appropriate to note that unlike the three other provided options, "Simple texts" was not the criterion any of the teachers relies on when selecting a particular listening text for his students. **It seems possible to conclude that the listening texts provided in the classroom are relatively difficult since authenticity is the most tried and used criterion for selecting them.**

It is worth mentioning that informants were asked to mention other criteria for selection. The results are thematised and displayed in the table below:

Table 40 (b)

Other Criteria for Selecting Listening Materials

Teachers' responses	Number
Interesting topics	1
Funny texts	1

The above table shows that two other criteria, according to which teachers choose the listening materials, were supplied which are "humorous topics" and "interesting topics". **Such topics are likely to make them enjoy the listening tasks and hopefully comprehend them.**

Teachers' responses to Q 19 (What do you think should characterize a listening text so that a high portion of students can comprehend it?)

The respondents' answers to this question are thematised and presented in the following table:

Table 41

Teachers' Views on the Characteristics of Comprehensible Listening Texts

Teachers' responses	Number
Authenticity	3
Compatibility with students' level	3
Interesting texts	3
Matching students' cultural background	2
Normal speed of delivery	2

Results from the above table show that, for teachers, in order for a listening text to be understood by most of the students in the English classroom, it should be authentic, interesting, and suitable for students' level. Besides, it has to be delivered at a normal speed.

Teachers' responses to Q20 (What suggestions can you offer to help your students overcome their difficulty in listening comprehension?)

Teachers' answers to this open question will be summarized in the table below:

Table 42

Teachers' Suggestions for Overcoming Difficulty in Listening Comprehension

Teachers' responses	Number
-Practice with different varieties	7
-Learning aspects of connected speech	2
-Oral chat with natives	2
-Focusing on the gist rather than details	2
-Teaching listening strategies	1
-Providing interesting topics	2

As it is clearly displayed in the above table, all teachers agree that one way to overcome the obstacles students face in listening comprehension is to practice listening to different varieties of English outside the classroom.

In summary, teacher questionnaire shows that all teachers are aware of the importance of the listening skill and do encourage their students to practice listening outside the classroom; however, most of them occasionally teach listening. Furthermore, while they perceive aspects of connected speech and idiomatic expressions as partly affecting their students' comprehension, teachers regard fast speech rate and idiomatic expressions as the major obstacles. Interestingly, teachers consider the British accent to be more challenging for students than the American one. However, they believe that anxiety and lack of concentration do not interfere with students' comprehension. Besides, most teachers revealed that they select mainly authentic texts to be listened to in the classroom which might create troubles understanding listening texts. Most teachers stated that they introduce the listening topic as it helps students comprehend. Concerning their suggestions for overcoming their students' weaknesses in listening comprehension, teachers emphasized the importance of practicing listening outside the classroom.

2.2.2. Summary of the Results Obtained from the Focus Group Discussions

The focus group discussions were conducted with fourteen students, seven in each group. The responses yielded by the two focus groups revealed similar and different patterns about the factors causing difficulty to students in listening comprehension. However, all the participants agreed that they all experience difficulty when listening to videos and audios in the English classroom.

In fact, the results obtained from the first focus group showed that students undergo various difficulties with regard to the listening texts they are exposed to in the classroom. Interestingly, the lack of vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge about the topic, and practice in addition to fast speech rate, idiomatic expressions and the American accent were identified as the major factors which informants claimed to hinder their listening comprehension. Besides, lengthy texts seem to relatively affect students' comprehension of

the listening passages. Unexpectedly, all the participants acknowledged that their listening comprehension problems have nothing to do with English grammar. Students also stated that even though they sometimes experience some anxiety in listening sessions, they can easily understand the provided texts.

In order to successfully comprehend a listening material, participants stated that they tend to focus their attention, infer from the context, and occasionally take notes. It is worth mentioning that all the respondents emphasized the role of practicing listening outside the classroom in eradicating their difficulty in listening comprehension. Some of the informants argued for learning a massive amount of vocabulary and idioms as an effective way to improve their listening ability. Additionally, most of them recommended teachers' introduction of the listening topics as well as opportunities to listen to the text three times. Most importantly, they called for short and interesting listening texts.

In so far as the second focus group is concerned, the participants shared some of the problems with the first group in that they highlighted fast speech rate, lack of vocabulary and background knowledge about the topic, unfamiliarity with the speaker's accent in addition to idiomatic expressions as their major obstacles in listening. More than that, unlike what has been revealed in the first group, reduced forms seem to pose great difficulty to the second group members. Besides, most of the members of this group stated that though the bad quality of the recordings together with lengthy texts do not really render it impossible for them to understand the listening materials, it is a source of disturbance which they claimed to decrease their concentration.

Interestingly, participants of the second group acknowledged that complex grammatical structures do not hinder their listening comprehension.

Concerning the strategies they apply so as to comprehend, participants stated they mostly attempt to focus on the main idea rather than details, infer from the physical

context, and rarely take notes. In order to overcome their listening comprehension difficulties, participants suggested that students should be made aware of the importance of the listening skill, learn a lot of vocabulary and idioms, as well as culture of English speaking countries. Additionally, informants recommended their teachers to provide interesting topics that correspond to their levels. Finally, they called for more listening sessions.

In the next section, the researchers will turn to discussing the most significant data yielded from this research, and, thereby, answer the research questions.

Section Three: Data Discussion

2.3.1. The Extent to which Third Year Students Experience Difficulty in Listening Comprehension in the Classroom

2.3.2. Factors Triggering Listening Comprehension Difficulty in Oral Classes

2.3.2.1. Fast Speech Rate

2.3.2.2. Lack of Vocabulary Knowledge

2.3.2.3. Idiomatic Expressions and Slangs

2.3.2.4. Aspects of Connected Speech

2.3.2.5. Lack of Individual Practice

2.3.2.6. Lack of Interest

2.3.2.7. Weak Working Memory Capacity

2.3.2.8. Unfamiliarity with Accent

2.3.2.9. Lack of Background Knowledge

2.3.2.10. Lack of Concentration, Lengthy Texts, and Noise

2.3.3. Strategies Third Year Students Use to Overcome the Difficulty they Encounter in Listening Comprehension

2.3.4. Teachers' Awareness of the Factors Affecting their Students' Listening Comprehension in Oral Classes

2.3.5. Teachers' Suggestions for Helping Students of English Overcome their Listening Comprehension Problems

Section Three: Data Discussion

After having presented and analysed the results yielded by both student and teacher questionnaires along with those obtained from the focus group discussions, the researchers will now attempt to interpret and draw conclusions based on crosschecking the participants' answers in relation to the research questions put forward in the introduction . Hence, what will follow next is an attempt to present and interpret the major findings and draw conclusions from the aforementioned analysis.

The research tools used in this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. Do third year students of English at the University of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel, encounter any difficulty in listening comprehension in oral classes?
2. What are the factors that trigger difficulty in students' listening comprehension in oral classes?
3. Are there any strategies do third year students of English use to overcome the difficulty they encounter in listening comprehension?
4. Are teachers aware of the factors affecting their students' listening comprehension in oral classes?
5. What suggestions can teachers offer to help third year students of English overcome their listening comprehension problems?

2.3.1. The Extent to which Third Year Students of English Experience Difficulty in Listening Comprehension in Oral Classes

The results obtained from the research tools revealed that students experience a big deal of difficulty when listening to audios and videos in the English language classroom. In student questionnaire, while most of them stated that they have a good / average listening ability, they acknowledged that they encounter many difficulties in listening classes. Experiencing listening comprehension difficulty has also been proven to exist in that a

significant number of students admitted in Q 21 that complete failure used to happen in the classroom where nobody could understand the provided listening material. Similarly, experiencing difficulty in listening comprehension was confirmed by all the members of the two focus groups. In line with students' responses, the overwhelming majority of teachers emphasized the existence of such difficulties in their listening sessions. All in all, it can be said that EFL students seem indeed to experience difficulties in listening.

2.3.2. Factors Triggering Listening Comprehension Difficulty in Oral Classes

Revealing the factors causing difficulty to students in listening classes is the primary aim of the current study. It should be noted that the factors causing difficulty in listening comprehension for students will be ranked from the most to the least problematic.

2.3.2.1. Fast Speech Rate

Through this study, it has been shown that fast speech rate is the major hindrance to students' listening comprehension. The results from student questionnaire revealed that fast speed of delivery really renders it difficult for EFL students to comprehend the listening materials in the English classroom in that the highest proportion of participants (80%), when asked about the factors that hinder their comprehension, admitted that their failure to comprehend the listening texts is mainly attributed to the fact that they perceive native speakers to speak very fast. Similarly, all the participants of the two focus groups ranked fast speech rate amongst the major sources of difficulty when trying to understand a listening text in the classroom. Two students from the first and second groups stated respectively:

Because some speakers speak very fast, I hear some words and miss others which makes it impossible for me to get what they have said.

When the speaker goes very fast, he makes me out of mind. I find myself unable to concentrate.

In line with students' views, teachers also believe that speakers' fast speech rate is the main difficulty students experience in listening sessions which is apparent in their responses to the questionnaire where the vast majority of them (86%) acknowledged this view. This result seems to agree with what Osuka (2008) found out in that fast speech rate is the most significant factor that impairs EFL learners' listening comprehension.

2.3.2.2. Lack of Vocabulary Knowledge

Students' lack of vocabulary seems to highly cause difficulty to their comprehension of videos and audios their teachers bring to the classroom. The results from student questionnaire indicated that the majority of participants (67%) attributed their difficulty of understanding listening passages to facing too many unfamiliar vocabularies. The results of the two focus group discussions support this result in that the participants of both groups admitted that their lack of vocabulary significantly renders them unable to understand the listening texts in the classroom. One student from the first focus group stated:

I have a big problem with vocabulary. Most of the time, speakers use new vocabulary items which I am not familiar with. When I try to understand them, I miss the rest of the text.

Students from the second focus group talked about "scientific terms" to be really challenging for them, and related one of their experiences when their teacher gave them a listening video about "intelligence" and how they hardly caught some few words of the talk. The same result has been obtained from teacher questionnaire in that 86% of teachers believe that the lack of vocabulary knowledge vastly hinders their students' comprehension of the presented listening materials in the English language classroom. In the same vein, Findings from Juan and Zainiol Abidin's (2013) study indicated that the lack of English language vocabulary is the major factor that inhibited EFL Chinese students' understanding in the listening process.

2.3.2.3. Idiomatic Expressions and Slangs

One of the major factors which appears to have a strong effect on students' listening comprehension is idiomatic expressions and slangs a listening text might contain. The results obtained from student questionnaire clearly suggested that students' weakness in listening comprehension is highly ascribed to English idioms and slangs. Nearly all the participants in the focus group discussions also perceive English idioms and slangs to be difficult enough to bring about comprehension failure.

I cannot understand idioms and slangs as they are culture-specific.

I have a big problem understanding because of idioms, especially American ones.

Unlike students, teachers believe that, rather than being a major challenge, idiomatic expressions and slangs partially decrease students' listening comprehension. This suggests that while idiomatic expressions and slangs pose a great difficulty to students, teachers are not yet sufficiently aware of this problem.

2.3.2.4. Aspects of Connected Speech

The analysis of the research tools used suggested that some aspects of connected speech highly interfere with students' listening comprehension while some others have slight influence on it. Results from student questionnaire suggested that most of students experience great difficulty when listening to English in the classroom due to its speakers' unavoidable use of reduced forms, while only few reported that they cannot understand listening passages because of English stress, rhythm and intonation. Also, most of the two focus group members agreed on "reduced forms" to be one of their main challenges in listening comprehension. The following are two quotes of two students from the first and second group respectively:

Native speakers swallow many letters. It is very hard to understand them.

They use so many reduced forms which makes me unable to recognize some words, even the ones I know.

From their perspective, teachers revealed that aspects of connected speech are partly problematic for their students' listening. It can be established that amongst the various features of connected speech, reduced forms pose the greatest difficulty to EFL students in listening classes.

2.3.2.5. Lack of Individual Practice

Lack of practice has been found to be one of the factors that have the potential power to hinder students' listening comprehension. Results from student questionnaire showed that a considerable number of students seem not to do sufficient individual listening, as they admitted in Q5, which, among others, can justify the great difficulty students usually experience in listening sessions. In line with the results gained from the questionnaire, participants of both focus groups admitted that their occasional practice of listening outside the classroom has a strong impact on their understanding of listening materials provided in the classroom. A student from the second focus group stated:

The more I watch documentaries and English speaking channels the more I feel that my listening ability is improving.

2.3.2.6. Lack of Interest

Results from this study have shown that lack of interest has a slight effect on students' listening comprehension. This can be inferred from the fact that more than half of students revealed, in their questionnaire, that the listening materials tackled in the classroom are interesting. This result has further been confirmed by the second focus group members. Most of them stated that listening to uninteresting topics makes them feel bored, as they claimed. Nevertheless, they pointed out that though sometimes their teachers bring some topics which do not appeal to them, their comprehension is not really influenced. One student from the second focus group commented:

When I listen to something I do not like, I really feel bored but still I can understand it.

In their questionnaire, some teachers included “interest” within the characteristics of comprehensible listening texts which implies that they believe that lack of interest may, in a way or in another, make the listening task difficult.

2.3.2.7. Weak Working Memory Capacity

Based on what has been revealed in student questionnaire, it can be said that students’ working memory is partly problematic for students where 38% of them pointed out that they most of the time find it difficult to remember previous parts of the listening texts. Most importantly, participants of the first focus group stated that it is quite natural that they cannot remember each and every detail the target listening text contains as long as they can get the main idea. One student pointed out on this particular issue:

Even in Arabic we cannot remember everything when we listen to someone speaking, but still we can understand him.

2.3.2.8. Unfamiliarity with Accent

In this study, unfamiliarity with the speaker’s accent is signaled out as an obstacle students encounter when listening to English videos and audios in the classroom. Surprisingly, despite students long exposure to the British accent during their whole career of studying English, in their questionnaire, more than half of them acknowledged that they find the British accent to be more difficult to understand than the American one. This view was further supported by the teachers who attributed students’ difficulty with British English to their familiarity with “American channels and films” as one teacher stated. The results yielded by the first focus group revealed the same. One student commented:

I always watch American films, and I find them easy to understand. But when our teacher gives us something British to listen to... I feel I am not a student of English.

2.3.2.9. Lack of Background Knowledge

As previously pointed out in the literature of this study, lacking background knowledge about the topic of the talk is a real hindrance to listening comprehension because in such a

case, the listener would only be able to detect individual words and sentences but not the speaker's whole message. In this study, lack of background knowledge has been proven to be one of the factors causing difficulty to students in the English language classroom. The fact that students most of the time get engaged in listening without owning sufficient background knowledge is clearly shown through the results obtained from student questionnaire where a significant portion of students (38%) claimed that their teachers do not introduce the listening topics. Besides, even explanations provided by students who reported that their teachers introduce the topics implied that teachers' introductions are limited to superficial hints. Some participants of both focus groups admitted that they sometimes find themselves unable to understand the target listening materials simply because the topic is unfamiliar to them. A student of the first focus group commented:

I always encounter this problem. When I listen to something I have no information about, I struggle to get the meaning of the talk.

Similar to what their students stated, the overwhelming majority of teachers hinted that they provide their students with information about the topic before they start listening. They also agreed on the fact that introducing the listening topic helps comprehension. Implied in this is that teachers are of the view that the lack of background knowledge hinders comprehension.

2.3.2.10. Lack of Concentration, Lengthy Texts, and Noise

As signaled out in the literature, being unable to concentrate may possibly render it difficult for students to grasp the meanings of spoken texts provided in the English language classroom. Results from this study have shown that the lack of concentration, mainly caused by noise, which may result from the bad quality of recordings, and lengthy texts, partly provokes difficulty in listening comprehension. Analysis of student questionnaire revealed that a quarter of the students attributed their difficulty in listening comprehension to the lack of concentration. Also, some of the two focus group members

ascribed their lack of concentration, which they claimed to partly affect their comprehension, to lengthy texts as well as noise. One student from the first focus group pointed out:

When the text is long, I try hard to concentrate. But I eventually decide to give up.

It is worth noting that, based on the results obtained from this study, anxiety, lack of visual support, English grammar, and inability to get the listening material repeated are not among the factors that trigger difficulty to third year students in listening comprehension.

2.3.3. Strategies Third Year Students Use to Overcome the Difficulty they Encounter in Listening Comprehension

The results obtained from the research tools revealed that students apply some strategies in listening situations. As they acknowledged in the questionnaire when asked about the aim for which they listen, the majority of third year students reported that they listen for the gist rather than paying attention to each and every single word in the listening text. Also, in answering Q10, the overwhelming majority of students admitted that when comprehension failure takes place, they resort to redirecting their attention trying to maximize their concentration so that to cope with this difficulty. A few students reported that when there is no way to grasp the meaning of the whole text, they either benefit from learning new vocabulary items or look for specific information which helps at least answering assigned questions. Members of the focus groups further supported the results of the questionnaire in that most of them stated that they mostly attempt to focus on the main idea rather than details. Moreover, they pointed out that, when finding it hard to understand, they either infer from the physical context, in case of videos, or take notes when necessary.

It seems adequate to note that while the vast majority of students admitted that they have never been taught the listening strategies, more than half of teachers revealed that

they have taught them such strategies. This contradiction might be explained by students' misperception of what "listening strategies" means. Yet, more efforts should be made on the part of teachers so as to increase the likelihood of students' spontaneous and effective use of the aforementioned strategies.

2.3.4. Teachers' Awareness of the Factors Affecting their Students' Listening Comprehension in Oral Classes

Findings of the current study showed that oral instructors seem to be aware of the factors which interfere with their students' listening comprehension. That was shown in the responses yielded by both student and teacher questionnaires. An overwhelming majority of teachers (86%) acknowledged that their students undergo difficulty when listening to English inside the classroom. Also, 71% of them reported that they tend to discuss with their students their listening comprehension difficulties which suggests that they must have an idea about the troubles their students undergo in listening sessions. Besides, when asked about the factors contributing to their students' listening difficulty, most of teachers were able to identify some of the major difficulty provoking factors such as fast speech rate and lack of vocabulary knowledge. Teacher questionnaire also showed that some of the teachers opted for "interest" to be one of their criteria for topic selection, which implies that they are aware of the fact that uninteresting topics may inhibit students' comprehension.

2.3.5. Teachers' Suggestions for Helping Students of English Overcome their Listening Comprehension Problems

Teacher questionnaire revealed that all the teachers recommended students to practice listening a lot outside the classroom without sticking to only one variety so as to familiarise their ears with English which helps them cope with any potential obstacle which they might come across in the classroom. They also recommended learning aspects

of connected speech as most of students' listening obstacles are caused by those features as reduced forms. Teachers proposed oral chat with native speakers through the Internet as it is effective in familiarising them with authentic speech. When listening to English in the classroom, students were advised to focus on the gist rather than on every single word. Teachers also suggested providing students with interesting topics and more teaching of listening strategies as an effective way to reduce the difficulty they experience in listening and increase comprehension.

Conclusion

This chapter was concerned with the practical part of the current study. It comprises three main sections which are research methodology, data analysis, and data discussion. The first section has presented an elaborated description of the research paradigm, population, research design, and limitations of the study. The second section, however, has reported and analysed the results yielded by student and teacher questionnaires in addition to focus group discussions. The last section has been devoted to discussing the results where the researchers discussed and drawn conclusions based on the aforementioned analysis. Interestingly, the findings of this study has shown that the factors leading to difficulty in listening comprehension mainly lie in fast speech rate, lack of vocabulary knowledge, idiomatic expressions and slangs, and reduced forms.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the present study, the researchers recommend the following:

- Students should be provided with more oral expression sessions so that to have a maximum benefit from listening activities because one session per week seems to be insufficient to develop their aural proficiency.
- Students are required to do more individual listening without restricting themselves to standard language because they need to familiarise themselves with informal language which provides a rich resource for idioms and slangs.
- When doing listening on their own, students should not only listen to speech which is delivered at normal speed; rather, they should familiarise themselves with fast speech so as to be able to cope with the speakers' high speed of delivery when listening in the classroom.
- Students should seek ways (e. g extensive reading) to develop their vocabulary repertoire which they are in need for in their attempts to understand the target listening texts in the English language classroom.
- It is of great importance that teachers provide their students with more knowledge about the features of connected speech such as reduced forms, assimilation, and elision because having knowledge about them would make comprehension of the listening texts easier.

General Conclusion

It is widely believed that speaking is the most challenging skill for many EFL learners; however, listening also poses great difficulty to them in that students usually find it hard to comprehend listening passages, especially in unidirectional listening situations where no interaction between the speaker and the listener is possible. Basing on this concern, the current study primarily aimed at investigating the factors triggering difficulty in listening comprehension for third year EFL License students in the classroom from the perspectives of both students and teachers.

Apart from the general introduction and this general conclusion, this study encompassed two main chapters. The first one was divided into two sections. The first section took as its major concern reviewing some theoretical aspects of the listening skill including its definition, its importance, its various processes, its different processing models, its types, its strategies, its stages, as well as some principles in teaching listening. The second section, however, has elaborated on the major factors causing difficulty in comprehending listening passages. The second chapter, on the other hand, comprised three sections. The first section has been dedicated to expounding on the methodology used in this research work. The second section has dealt with the presentation and analysis of the results obtained from the employed research tools, namely students' questionnaire, teachers' questionnaire, and the two focus group discussions. The last section, however, has discussed and interpreted the results.

The findings from the current study have shown that the major factors that trigger difficulty in listening comprehension for EFL students in the classroom include fast speech rate, lack of vocabulary knowledge, idiomatic expressions and slangs, and reduced forms. However, lack of practice, lack of background knowledge, unfamiliarity with the accent, weak working memory capacity together with lengthy texts and noise have been identified

as less problematic for students. Additionally, English grammar, lack of visual support, and inability to get the listening material repeated did not seem to impede students' comprehension of listening passages in speaking classes. Hence, the aforesaid hypothesis has been supported in that a variety of factors have been found to hinder EFL students from comprehending listening texts. Concerning the strategies they use in coping with the difficulties they encounter in listening comprehension, students have been found to focus attention, make inferences from the context, and take notes. Moreover, the study has indicated that teachers are aware of the factors causing difficulty for their students in listening comprehension in that they highlighted fast speech rate and lack of vocabulary knowledge as the primary difficulty provoking factors.

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Appendices

Appendix One

Student Questionnaire

Dear students,

This questionnaire serves as a data collection tool for a research work that aims at investigating the factors triggering difficulty in listening comprehension for EFL learners. Your answers will be of great help for the completion of our research.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Guidelines: tick in the appropriate box (✓) and provide justifications and statements whenever necessary.

Section One: Background Information

1. Was it your choice to major in English?

Yes No

2. What do you think of your listening ability?

Very good Good Average Poor

Section Two: Listening Comprehension Difficulties

3. What do you think of the listening skill?

Very important little important Not important

4. How often do you have listening sessions in the classroom?

Always Sometimes Rarely Never

5. How do you find listening to videos and audios in the English classroom?

Very difficult Difficult Easy Very easy

6. Does your teacher usually introduce the topic of the listening material before you are invited to listen to it?

Yes No

Please, explain how

.....
.....
.....

7. How often do you listen to English outside the classroom?

Always Sometimes Rarely Never

8. While listening to audios and videos in the classroom, do you find it difficult to quickly remember information you have just heard?

Yes No

9. When you listen to audios and videos in the classroom, do you aim at...?

Getting the main idea Understanding every single word

Other (s), please specify

.....
.....

10. If you fail to comprehend the listening material in a listening comprehension session, do you...?

Stop listening Redirect your attention and try to focus more

Other(s), please specify

.....
.....

11. When your teacher tells you that you are going to do a listening activity, do you feel...?

Motivated Anxious Indifferent

Please, justify

.....
.....

12. Are the listening texts your teacher usually provides interesting?

Yes

No

Please, explain

.....
.....

13. Which accent do you find more difficult to understand?

The British variety

The American variety

Please, explain

.....
.....
.....

14. In a listening session, does your teacher usually allow you to listen to the audio or video...?

Once

Twice

Three times

More than three times

15. In order to comprehend a listening text in the classroom, do you need to listen...?

Once

Twice

Three times

More than three times

16. Do you understand better when you listen to...?

Videos

Audios

Please, justify

.....
.....
.....

17. Have you ever discussed with your teacher the factors that cause difficulty for you in listening comprehension?

Yes

No

18. Do you lose your concentration when...?

The text is too long

There is noise around

You focus your attention on understanding unfamiliar words

19. When you fail to comprehend the listening material, is it because of...?

a. Fast speech rate

b. Reduced forms

c. Too many unfamiliar vocabulary items

d. Complex grammatical structures

e. The lack of background knowledge about the topic

f. Idiomatic expressions and slangs

g. English language stress, rhythm and intonation

h. Lack of concentration

Other(s), please specify

.....
.....

20. Have you ever been taught listening comprehension strategies?

Yes

No

21. Has it ever happened that no student in your classroom understands the listening material?

Yes

No

22. If your answer to question “21” is “yes”, what was your teacher’s reaction?

.....

.....

.....

Thank you

Appendix Two

Teacher Questionnaire

This questionnaire serves as a data collection tool for a research work that aims at investigating the factors triggering difficulty in listening comprehension for EFL learners. You are kindly invited to complete it for the sake of research.

Thank you in advance for collaboration

Guidelines: tick in the appropriate box (✓) and provide justifications when indicated.

Section One: Background Information

1. Was your teaching of oral expression...?

A personal desire Assigned to you by the administration

2. How long have you been teaching oral expression?Years.

Section Two: Factors Triggering Difficulty in Listening Comprehension

3. What do you think of the listening skill?

Very important Little important Not important

4. How often do you teach listening comprehension?

Always Sometimes Rarely Never

Please, justify

.....
.....
.....

5. Do your students encounter any difficulties in listening comprehension?

Yes No

6. When presenting a listening task, do you...?

a. Follow the successive pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening stages

b. Directly make your students listen to the text followed by its discussion

Other (s), please specify.

.....
.....
.....

7. Do you think that introducing the listening topic helps students comprehend the listening material?

Yes

No

If yes, please explain.

.....
.....
.....

8. Do you encourage your students to practice listening to English outside the classroom?

Yes

No

9. Have you ever discussed with your students their listening comprehension difficulties?

Yes

No

Please, explain

.....
.....
.....

10. If your students have troubles comprehending the materials you provide them with, do you think it is because of...? (You can tick more than one)

a. The lack of vocabulary

b. Fast speech rate

c. Aspects of connected speech

d. Idiomatic expressions and slangs

e. Anxiety

f. Lengthy texts

g. Short span of concentration

Other(s), please specify

.....
.....
.....

11. Which accent of English do you usually expose your students to?

British accent

American accent

Both of them

12. Which accent do you think is more difficult for your students to comprehend...?

British accent

American accent

Please, explain

.....
.....
.....

13. In a listening comprehension session, do you usually expose your students to the listening material...?

Once

Twice

Three times

More than three times

14. When do you allow your students to listen again to the listening material...?

With long passages

When it contains too much culturally specific vocabulary and idioms

Other(s), please specify

.....
.....
.....
15. When assigning listening activities, do you usually ask your students to...? (You can tick more than one)

a. Look for the main idea

b. Look for some significant details

c. Take notes in order to ask them questions orally afterwards

16. The listening texts you usually provide your students with are in the form of...?

Videos

Audios

Both

Please, justify

.....
.....
.....
17. Have you taught your students the listening strategies before?

Yes

No

Please, explain

.....
.....
.....
18. What criteria do you follow when selecting a listening material? (You can tick more than one)

a. Nature of the topic

b. Authentic texts

c. Simple texts

d. Variety of English

Other(s), please specify

.....

.....

.....

19. What do you think should characterize a listening text so that a high portion of students can comprehend it?

.....

.....

.....

20. What suggestions can you offer to help your students overcome their listening comprehension difficulties?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Thank you

Appendix Three

Focus Group Discussions

Good morning. Thank you for accepting to join this focus group discussion which is a part of our research work that aims at investigating the factors triggering difficulty in listening comprehension to EFL learners in the classroom. You are ensured that your identities will be kept anonymous and your responses will be recorded and treated confidentially.

1. Do you find it difficult to comprehend listening passages (audios and videos) in oral classes?
2. What are the factors that hinder your comprehension of listening passages in oral classes?
3. In your attempt to comprehend listening texts in the classroom, what strategies, if any, do you tend to apply so that to overcome the difficulty you face in listening comprehension?
4. What measures do you think should be taken from the part of you as students and from the part of your teachers so as to overcome the difficulty you encounter in listening comprehension?

❖ Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you for your collaboration

Resumé

Ecoute, est une activité très importante pour la communication des étudiants d'Anglais et notamment pendant l'apprentissage de la langue Anglaise. Mais, la compréhension oral est difficile pour les étudiants d'Anglais. D'après un constat qui a été fait à l'université de Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia de Jijel, les résultats ont montrée qu' on plusieurs facteurs qui empêchent les étudiants de troisième années universitaire à comprendre et à maîtriser les textes aurales. Pour faire réussir ce sondage, les chercheurs ont basé sur deux méthodes qualitative et quantitative sur tous les plans. Donc, elles ont distribué des questionnaires sur soixante étudiants de troisième année universitaire et sept professeurs qui assurent le module de technique d'expression oral. On plus, elles ont fait un groupe de discussion sur le thème avec deux groupes dont chaque groupe contient 7 étudiants de l'échantillon du questionnaire. Les résultats ont affirmé que les principaux facteurs responsables de la difficulté de la compréhension des textes aurales sont : premièrement la rapidité de celui qui annonce le texte. Deuxièmement, la plupart des étudiants ne possèdent pas un bagage linguistique (vocabulaires) suffisant qui les permet de comprendre les textes aurales. Troisièmement, la difficulté de décoder et de saisir les expressions idiomatiques et argotiques. En fin, l'emploi des sigles des troncations et des abréviations.

ملخص

تلعب مهارات الإصغاء دورا هاما في كل من التواصل اليومي وكذا التعليم لدى الطلبة، و مع ذلك يواجه غالبيتهم صعوبة في فهم النصوص السمعية باللغة الأجنبية. بناءا على الفرضية التي تنص على وجود عوامل مختلفة مسؤولة عن صعوبة فهم طلبة السنة الثالثة لغة انجليزية للنصوص السمعية المقدمة في القسم بجامعة محمد الصديق بن يحيى بجيجل فان الدراسة الحالية تهدف أساسا إلى بحث وتقصي هذه العوامل من وجهة نظر كل من طلبة السنة الثالثة لغة انجليزية و أساتذة التعبير الشفوي بكلية اللغة الانجليزية. من اجل تحقيق أهداف الدراسة فانه تم اعتماد منهج كمي و نوعي في جمع معطيات الدراسة حيث تم توزيع استمارات استبيان على كل من ستين طالبا وطالبة من طلبة السنة الثالثة ليسانس لغة انجليزية و سبع من أساتذة التعبير الشفوي. إضافة إلى ذلك فقد تم إجراء مناقشة خاصة حول موضوع الدراسة مع فوجين مكونين من أربعة عشر طالبة من نفس العينة. بينت نتائج الدراسة بأن العوامل الرئيسية المسؤولة عن صعوبة فهم طلبة السنة الثالثة للنصوص السمعية تكمن في السرعة المفرطة في إلقاء النصوص، نقص الرصيد اللغوي لدى الطلبة، صعوبة فهم التعبيرات المجازية و كذلك التعبيرات العامية المستعملة في اللغة الانجليزية بالإضافة إلى الكلمات المختزلة.