

The difficulties that secondary school students may face in listening skills and how they can improve them

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الصعوبات التي قد يواجهها طلاب المرحلة الثانوية في مهارات الاستماع وكيف يمكنهم تحسينها

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Abstract:

This study aims to explain the importance of listening skills in teaching and learning the English language, which is the most important skill of all the skills in language, and it is a fundamental skill for speaking. It also explores the importance of listening skills for learning English. Teaching listening skills in secondary schools presents significant challenges for teachers. This study examines the difficulties teachers face, including time constraints, noise, and limited access to appropriate teaching resources. Additionally, there is a lack of awareness of the importance of this skill and a lack of technological resources. The study focuses on strategies for overcoming these obstacles, such as providing listening skills teaching tools and using audio devices. The findings emphasize the importance of teacher development programs that raise awareness of the importance of this skill and administrative support for improving the teaching of listening skills. By effectively addressing these challenges, teachers can enhance students' ability to comprehend spoken language, which is an essential part of language acquisition. This study was conducted in secondary schools in the Al-Dawon district of Tarhuna during the 2024/2025 academic year. The sample consisted of 14 male and female secondary school students. The researchers used a descriptive questionnaire in the study. It is also maintained that listening is not a passive skill but an active process in language learning process of constructing meaning from a stream of sounds. This study has also tried to give a brief introduction of what is essential to know about listening skills with opinions from various scholars. The common difficulties that EFL students face are figured out and highlighted in some strategies that are suggested by the researchers to help EFL students to improve their English listening skills. The researcher aimed to make some recommendations according to these constraints and difficulties in order to minimize these difficulties in the future.

Keywords: Listening skills, Teaching English Language, Listening types, types of teaching listening skills, Faculty of Education-Al-Qasi'a, Al-Zaytoonah University.

الملخص:

الملخص: كتبت هذه الدراسة لتوضيح أهمية مهارات الاستماع في تدريس وتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية، وهي أهم مهارة في كل المهارات في اللغة، وهي المهارة الأساسية للتحدث. كما تستكشف أهمية مهارات الاستماع لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. يتمثل تدريس مهارات الاستماع في المدارس الثانوية بتحديات كبيرة للطلاب. تبحث هذه الدراسة في الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلاب، بما في ذلك ضيق الوقت والضوضاء ومحدودية الوصول إلى موارد التدريس المناسبة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، هناك نقص في الوعي بأهمية هذه المهارة ونقص في الموارد التكنولوجية. تركز الدراسة على استراتيجيات التغلب على هذه العقبات، مثل توفير أدوات تدريس مهارات الاستماع واستخدام الأجهزة الصوتية. تؤكد النتيجة على أهمية برامج تطوير تزيد الوعي بأهمية هذه المهارة والدعم الإداري لتحسين تدريس مهارة الاستماع. من خلال معالجة هذه التحديات بشكل فعال، يمكن المعلمين تعزيز قدرة الطلاب على فهم اللغة المنطوقة التي تعد جزءاً أساسياً من اكتساب اللغة. أجريت هذه الدراسة في المدارس الثانوية في منطقة الداون في مدينة ترونة خلال العام الدراسي 2024/2025. تكونت العينة من 14 طالباً وطالبة في المرحلة الثانوية. استخدم الباحثون استبياناً وصفيًا في الدراسة. حيث لا تعد مهارة الاستماع مهارة سلبية بل عملية نشطة في عملية تعلم اللغة لأنشاء معنى من مجموعة من الأصوات. تحاول هذه الدراسة تقديم مقدمة موجزة لما هو ضروري ومعلوم عن مهارة الاستماع مع آراء بعض العلماء. يتم اكتشاف الصعوبات الشائعة التي يواجهها طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية مع بعض الاستراتيجيات التي اقترحها الباحثون لمساعدة طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية في تحسين مهارة الاستماع في اللغة الإنجليزية. يهدف الباحث إلى تقديم بعض التوصيات وفقاً لهذه القيود والصعوبات من أجل تقليل هذه الصعوبات في المستقبل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مهارات الاستماع، تدريس اللغة الانجليزية، أنواع مهارات الاستماع، طرق تعلم مهارة الاستماع، كلية التربية القصية- جامعة الزيتونة.

1. Introduction

To emphasize the value of listening, we were born with two ears but only one mouth. The ability to listen is crucial for learning new information and achieving effective interpersonal communication. Some theorists have expressed a lot of concern about listening skills, which are considered to be one of the prerequisites for vocal output in the language learning process.

1.1. Area of study:

Listening to comprehend spoken words is the first ability a kid tries to acquire. Until he is able to speak, he will then attempt to mimic the sounds he hears in order to communicate his own wants. (Omar Salim & Gorla Varalakshmi, 2009).

Thus, mastering the ability to listen is the first stage in learning both the mother tongue and the target language. Two categories of language proficiency exist:

Aural-oral skills (listening and speaking).

Graphic-Motor skills (reading and writing).

This method of classifying language skills places the most importance on listening. Therefore, even if it can be challenging for certain English language learners, listening comprehension is a crucial component of language development. Because hearing was considered a passive talent and some teaching approaches focused exclusively on productive skills, listening received little attention in language instruction. However, studies have shown that listening is an active process of creating meaning from a stream of sounds rather than a passive ability. Since learning cannot start until the input is understood at the appropriate level, listening can be thought of as the foundational ability for speaking.

In this regard, this study aims to provide a concise overview of listening skill definitions, discuss listening strategies that aid students in developing their English listening skills, discuss the various types of listening skills, offer solutions for some listening comprehension issues to reduce these issues in the future, and highlight the main goals of listening skill improvement.

1.2 Research Questions:

1. Why is listening important?
2. What can teachers do to help students to improve their English listening skills?
3. Why is listening difficult?

1.3 Statement of the research Problem:

Although listening is a crucial language skill, both teachers and students in our classrooms and colleges frequently overlook it. This could be because they don't have the time or resources to prepare. EFL students find it challenging to listen to and understand native speakers at the same time. We should give this overlooked but crucial skill a lot of attention because students in our nation do not sufficiently acquire it. For a variety of reasons, some students are reluctant to work on improving their listening skills. This assignment will expose you to these challenges and attempt to provide answers.

1.4 Research Hypothesis:

The study of this topic is based on:

1. English is best learnt when there is a lot of opportunity to listen.
2. Less practice of English can affect listening skills.

1.5 Aims of the Study:

Understand how listening skills have evolved throughout time. to demonstrate how crucial listening is to the learning process. to offer some suggestions for instructors and students in future research based on the research problem statement and hypothesis.

to provide students with self-directed tools for enhancing their listening comprehension in English.

1.6 Methodology of the Study:

Numerous researchers have examined listening skills, and their primary findings center on top-down and bottom-up processing. Thus, the significance of this study lies in presenting some earlier research on teaching English listening skills, listening stages that teachers use to help students improve their listening comprehension so they

can complete the exercises, and providing some strategies that students can use on their own to improve their English listening skills.

2. literature review

Listening is the most important communication skill, but most students receive little or no listening instruction, which could be due to a lack of preparation, time, or material. Additionally, some teachers may be hesitant to teach this skill, and some second and foreign language teachers pay little attention to it.

2.1 Historical Perspective

The Grammar Translation Method, which was the predominant approach to teaching languages more than a century ago, placed no value on listening comprehension because its goal was to read and translate scientific publications from target language—mostly Latin—to native language. The Direct Method then emerged, bringing about a paradigm shift away from written language and toward spoken abilities. throughout the latter part of the twentieth century. The Audio-Lingual Method prioritized oral proficiency and stressed the value of listening skills. The usage of language labs was widespread. When other approaches were put out by other scholars in the 1970s, listening skills were highlighted as one of their commonalities.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985) states that exposure to understandable input that is just a little bit above a learner's current level of competency is the greatest way for them to learn. According to Krashen (1985), listening is the first step towards achieving language proficiency because second language learning is comparable to first language acquisition. Similarly, Asher (1977) said in his Total Physical Response that listening comprehension should come before speech output and that oral language was superior to written language. He also underlined that students were expected to pay attention and follow the instructor's instructions. The foundation of communicative language education was the idea that language was a communication tool, and that listening was the most common kind of communication in daily life. Each of the four language skills was taught in a communicative setting in a way that supported the others. Primarily, listening served as a precursor to or a means of promoting productive talents. In content-based training, speaking and listening skills were trained together through activities like conducting an interview and watching and discussing a movie. The oral and textual input and output processing for language acquisition is provided via tasks, just like in task-based language instruction. As a result, listening is now crucial in language classes. The variety of listening materials is enhanced by recent advancements in both visual and audio technologies.

2.2. The Difference between "Hearing and Listening"

The following query is a good place to start when discussing listening skills in foreign language instruction: What distinguishes hearing from listening? Although the phrases "Hearing and Listening" are sometimes used synonymously, they have a significant distinction.

According to Stephen, Lucas, listening doesn't mean we don't hear, and they come to explain the process of hearing a physiological one arguing that:

"It involves the vibration of sound wave in our eardrums and firing of electro-chemical impulses from the inner ear to the central auditory system of the brain, but listening involves paying close attention to, and making sense of what we hear".

(Rost, 2002, 27) stated that: "Although both hearing and listening involve sound perception, the difference in terms reflects a degree of intention".

So, the listening process is guided by our intention which is a psychological an excitation of nerve pathways in the brain to organize incoming stimuli in an efficient way with a psychological term, (Rost, 2002,) quoted that:

"Intention is initiation of involvement..., it used for organizing what is heard and seen, to organize language in terms of topics (what the language is about) and information value (what the language signal is relevant to us?"

Thus, hearing and listening are not the same thing. Listening entails comprehending and focusing on what we hear, while hearing happens when your ears detect sound waves being conveyed by a speaker.

2.3. Why Is Listening Important?

Good speakers also tend to be good listeners. Being able to listen properly is essential to speaking well. One of the most important abilities in language learning is listening. It is a crucial ability since that is how we naturally pick up languages.

. Littlewood (1984:5) states that; "the child imitates the sounds and patterns which he hears around him ". This close relationship between listening and speaking is what produces verbal expression. If this skill is another. Developed by an effective way, all the other skills will improve one after another.

2.4. Listening Process:

HEARING: It is a physical reaction brought on by sound waves activating the ear's sensory receptors; hearing is the perception of sound waves; you have to hear to hear, but you don't have to listen to hear (attention is required for perception). An essential component of good hearing is attention, which is the brain's ability to filter inputs and allow only a small number to focus.

UNDERSTANDING: This step helps to understand symbols we have seen and heard, we must analyze the meaning of the stimuli we have perceived; symbolic stimuli are not only words but also sounds like applause, and sights like blue uniform that have symbolic meanings as well the meanings attached to these symbols are a function of our past association and of the context in which the symbols occur. For successful interpersonal communication, the listener must understand the intended meaning and the context assumed by the sender.

REMEMBRING: Remembering is important listening process because it means that an individual has not only received and interpreted a message but has also added it to the mind's storage bank. In listening our attention is selective, so too is our memory, what is remembered maybe quite different from what was originally seen or heard.

EVALUATING: Only active listeners can participate at this stage in listening. At this point the active listener weighs evidence, sorts back from opinion, and determines the presence or absence of bias or prejudice in a message; the effective listener makes sure that he or she doesn't begin this activity too soon; beginning this stage the process before a message is completed requires that we no longer hear and attend to the incoming message as a result

RESPONDING: Because the speaker has no other way to know whether a message has been received, this stage relies on the receiver to complete the process through verbal and/or nonverbal feedback. The sender can then use this stage to determine the degree of success in transmitting the message. Only the latter two steps allow active listeners to participate, as this indicates the level of comprehension among the listeners. If the listeners are able to assess the message that has been sent by the speaker, they can then reply to it.

2.5. Types of Listening:

2.5.1. Informational Listening:

Informational listening occurs whenever you listen to learn something. This is true in many everyday educational and professional contexts. There are several instances of informational listening, such as when you watch a documentary, listen to the news, or hear a friend share a recipe or walk you through a technical issue.

2.5.2. Critical Listening:

When the objective is to assess or examine what is being said, we can be practicing critical listening. Compared to informational listening, critical listening is far more active and typically entails making decisions or solving problems. Similar to critical reading, critical listening is evaluating the material being heard in light of our preexisting knowledge or beliefs. Receiving facts and/or new information, on the other hand, may be the primary focus of informational listening. Analyzing opinions and passing judgment are key components of critical listening.

2.5.3. Therapeutic Or Empathic Listening:

Putting yourself in the speaker's position and trying to comprehend their ideas and feelings is known as empathic listening. Therapeutic or empathic listening can be especially difficult, yet empathy is a means of establishing a strong connection with another person. Being sympathetic or feeling sad for someone else is not the same as empathy; empathy entails a deeper connection, realization, and comprehension of another person's perspective.

2.5.4. Discriminative Listening:

The development of discriminative listening begins at a very young age. Maybe in the womb, even before birth. For instance, in early childhood, the sounds of the parents' voices are distinguished; the mother's voice sounds different from the fathers. During childhood and maturity, discriminative listening skills were established. Our capacity to discriminate between various sounds improves with age, development, and life experience.

2.5.5. Comprehensive Listening:

In order to listen fully, one must comprehend the information being conveyed. Comprehensive listening is essential to all listening subtypes, just as discriminative listening. Seeking clarification and applying abilities like understanding and reflection are crucial in many listening scenarios.

2.5.6. Appreciative Listening:

Listening for pleasure is known as appreciative listening. Music listening, particularly as a means of relaxation, is a fantastic example.

Students can therefore benefit from this kind of listening as it helps them develop their listening skills because they are trying to learn new terminology while having fun, which leads to greater learning.

2.6. Listening Strategies:

Techniques or exercises that directly aid in understanding and remembering hearing input are known as listening strategies. Depending on how the listener processes the information, listening methods can be categorized.

TOP-DOWN STRATEGIES are dependent on the listener's prior understanding of the subject, the context or circumstance, the language, and the genre of writing. The expectations created by these background knowledge exercises assist the listener in making sense of what they have heard and predicting what will happen next. Top-down tactics consist of:

- listening for the main idea
- Predicting
- Drawing inferences
- summarizing

Bottom-up strategies are text the based; the listener relies on the language in the message, that is, the combination of sounds, words, and grammar that

Creates meaning.

Bottom-up strategies include:

- listening for specific details
- recognizing cognates
- recognizing word-order patterns

To put it another way, listeners employ a bottom-up approach when they use linguistic knowledge cues like phonemes, syllables, words, phrases, and sentences to comprehend stuff. However, they employ a top-down approach if they determine the meaning based on context and past knowledge, such as topic, genre, culture, and other schema knowledge held in long-term memory. The two processes are combined throughout the listening phase to help the listener understand a text. Thus, it is generally accepted that top-down and bottom-up processes are utilized together during the listening processes (Vandergrift, 2007). Nevertheless, the aim of listening determines the priority. To illustrate the point, think about the two situations given below: You are chatting with your friend, and she tells you a story about an exam that she failed. You listen to your friend to say something that will console her. One evening, a friend of yours calls and invites you to her birthday party. You carefully take note of the address, time and day of the activity. In the first scenario, we merely listen in order to comprehend the primary idea and provide the appropriate social reaction. However, in order to avoid issues later, we must pay close attention and comprehend the actual words in the second scenario. In the first example, we employ a top-down approach; in the second, we employ a bottom-up one.

3. Research Methodology:

1. Search Type

-Descriptive-Analytical approach: aims to describe the difficulties faced by students analyze the underlying causes.

2. Sample study

- Targeted sample: High school students from different schools.

- Sample size :10 students are selected using random sample technique to ensure a varied representation.

3. Data collection tools

- questionnaires: - A questionnaire for the teacher to determine the difficulties they face in the skill of listening.

4. Data collection procedures: Distribution of questionnaires on students - Collect and analyze the results of listening tests.

5. Data analysis methods: - Quantitative analysis - Duplicate calculation and percentages to determine styles.

3.1. Respondents/Subjects/Informants:

- Secondary School students: - Number of sample: about 10 students.
- Target group: students from different educational backgrounds.
- Objective: Understanding the difficulties faced by students directly while teaching to listen skill.
- students are the subject of the study: - their skills in listening are focused. - The difficulties they face and their impact are analyzed to learn about English.
- English language experts: - Their views on effective educational strategies can be used to address these difficulties.

3.2. instrumentation:

Questionnaire: -where it is a tool for collecting quantitative data from high school students and has 10 questions, including: -

- Close questions (eg:-yes / no) to identify public difficulties. - Example: "Do you focus on the skill of listening in your education"

- open questions: - Example: "What are the main reasons for not focusing on the skill of listening in English language education?" _

3.3. Data collection :

Data Collection Methods

Questionnaire: A questionnaire will be distributed to secondary school students to collect data on the difficulties they face in teaching English listening skills.

. Sample Size: A sample of 10 students will be randomly selected from high school.

. Sample Selection Method: The sample will be randomly selected from among high school students.

Data Collection Duration

Questionnaire Distribution Duration: The questionnaire will be distributed over a period of two weeks.

4. Data analysis and Discussion

4.1. Discussion of reasons why students find listening difficult?

We explained why listening is difficult for EFL learners in order to give some strategies that help them to improve their English listening skills:

1. When native speakers speak, students connect the words together, which makes it difficult for them to understand what they are saying. This is a major issue for EFL learners, and it is a challenge that many of them face.

E.g. I am going to drink coffee.

I'm gonnadrink coffee.

2. It is difficult because they cannot listen and comprehend what others are saying. In this case they try to translate some words.

3.They try understand every word.

4.Too little practice: Students of EFL read too much but they do not listen to enough English.

Some strategies that help students to overcome the above difficulties and to improve their English listening skills:

According to the proverb 'practice makes perfect', English listening practice is very important. The students of EFL learners should listen to English every day from 2 to 3 hours daily.

4.2 Data analysis

Discussing the main problem: students neglect of listening skills in teaching English. By analyzing teachers' responses, the questionnaire was distributed to students. The following analysis was conducted:

.1*Student Challenges* - *Lack of Appropriate instructional materials*: According to the findings, 78.5% of students agreed that their capacity to acquire listening skills is adversely affected by the absence of instructional materials, such as interactive programs or high-quality audio recordings. In contrast, 21.2% of students said that they did not have a significant problem with resources.

-* Noisy classrooms and overcrowded classrooms*: 85.7% of students said that noisy classes make it harder for them to learn how to listen. Of the pupils, 14.2% were unsure, and none disagreed with this notion.

2. Ignorance of the Value of Listening Skills: According to the survey, 64.2% of students think that the absence of an exam to evaluate listening skills lessens the emphasis on it during instruction. Only 7.1% of students thought that there was not a direct reason for ignoring this skill, while 28.5% of students were unsure. ---

Examining Secondary Issues: *Quick Pronunciation and Limited Vocabulary* Experiments with students reading texts on cassette tapes revealed that pupils have a hard time understanding fast and ambiguous pronunciation, and this problem is made worse by a lack of vocabulary. With the success rate in answering questions ranging from 35% to 10%, the data show that inadequate training in this skill, brought on by neglect, contributes to the incomprehension of audio texts.

Comparison of Results with Previous Studies - *Consistency with Previous Literature*: The study agrees with Several studies have demonstrated that pupils' language proficiency suffers when listening skills are not prioritized. - *Differences*: The study highlights distinctive features of the local environment that set it apart from worldwide environments, such as the effects of packed classrooms and a lack of administrative assistance. It becomes evident that in addition to a lack of understanding of the significance of listening skills, teachers' disregard for them is caused by a number of issues, such as a lack of resources, noise, and time limits.

Students are immediately impacted by this neglect, which results in an imbalance in language proficiency and poor English communication. The results indicate that there is a pressing need to expand comprehensive and integrated listening training for instructors and students, improve curricula, and offer administrative support. One of the top priorities for educational reform should be teaching pupils how to pronounce words correctly and expand their vocabulary.

5. Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the literature on various theoretical facets of listening comprehension and second or foreign language skills that have been highlighted by various academics. The study aimed to demonstrate that listening is an active process rather than a passive one and that it is a crucial language learning skill. In order to help pupils improve their listening comprehension, teachers play a crucial role.

Students should place a greater emphasis on this skill, but teachers find it difficult to teach listening. As a result, they cannot provide effective listening lessons if they lack the necessary tools, classroom space, and students' interest. However, EFL students find it particularly challenging to cope with these challenges, so this study also sought to identify some listening comprehension issues that they face. Based on these findings, the researcher has offered some recommendations for how to help EFL students improve their listening comprehension in English.

Since this skill is thought of as a guide to improve other skills, if EFL students can effectively improve it, all of their other skills—speaking, reading, writing, translation, even grammar—will automatically improve as well. Additionally, students will feel more confident.

6. Recommendations for further study:

This study demonstrated that listening skills are undervalued and ignored by both teachers and students in our nation. Several factors were mentioned in the earlier chapters, including the challenge of listening skills for EFL students and the absence of suitable and high-quality equipment, preparation, and student interest. To put it another way, this study showed that these aspects should be taken into account before conducting additional research on this subject.

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