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Investigating EFL Students' Listening Comprehension Difficulties

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Abstract

Listening comprehension has a significant effect on developing student's language proficiency to sustain effective communication. Despite of its importance in language acquisition, EFL students all around the world face difficulties while listening to spoken English. Hence; this research paper aims to collect student's perceptions toward listening problems, as well the main factors that hinder their comprehension .Its main goal is to raise Salah Al Dinne Al-Ayoubi secondary school students awareness about its importance in language acquisition and strategy use to overcome their constraints. This study adopts a descriptive analytical research method to achieve the goals set for this research. Moreover, the data was gathered by student's questionnaire. The sample size was 52 third year students of different genders. The collected data were analyzed quantitatively. The research results indicate that the majority of students were facing problems while listening to English .Consequently .Accent, speech rate, lack of contextual knowledge, unfamiliar vocabulary, complex grammatical structures as well strategy use were the major difficulties encountered by EFL students. Hence; students as well teacher's awareness about the difficulties, may enable them to develop teaching, learning strategies to improve listening skill. In fact, cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective strategies are considered the best ways to overcome student's constraints.

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List of Abbreviation

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

FL: Foreign Language

L2: Second Language

LC: Listening Comprehension

FLL: Foreign Language Learning

General Introduction

Listening comprehension is one of the main fundamental language skills, which has a significant effect in daily communication as well academic contexts. Significantly, it has a vital important role on developing student's language proficiency to sustain effective communication. Acquiring language proficiency is based on individual's receptive skills especially listening. Hence, it is considered as a medium in which students gain a large portion of their education and information; since more than 40% of student's daily communication spend on listening (Guo & Wills, 2006). Additionally, it provides spoken language understanding. Consequently; without understanding inputs at right level ,any kind of learning cannot occur(Rost, 1994).Furthermore it is considered as a motivational teaching mean for students that draws learners attention to new vocabulary and grammatical rules. Thus, any EFL student is supposed to enhance his listening skill in order to make language acquisition process successful, faster and effective.

Studies conducted in the field of FLL revealed that listening comprehension is the most difficult skill for language learners (Goh, 2000; Guo & Wills, 2006). Boyle(1984) classified four main different factors that influence listening which are the listener's psychological state, speaker's accent, complex grammatical structures ,and even the medium of communication whether a record, TV or a radio. Underwood (1989) listed the common barriers that students experience while listening as lack of contextual knowledge, limited vocabulary, speed of delivery, bad habits like understanding each word alone and Transitions in aural input. While Goh and Sun (2000) indicate that most common problems in listening for EFL students was with short-term memory in which learners forget quickly what they heard. Buck(2001)identified a multiple challenges which may confronted by EFL students in the FL exposure like unknown vocabulary, unfamiliar topics which contain a foreign sociocultural norms ,idioms and jargons as well as speech rate and finally the variety of English

accent. Moreover, Chang Chang (1995) investigated the different constraints that Chinese encounter while listening. He has found that speech rate, miss association of sounds with their appropriate meaning and miss interpretation of spoken language especially when it contains jargons and idioms. Furthermore, Bennui(2007) has investigated students perception about listening comprehension , he found that teaching methods, classroom environment ,motivation, and learning strategies and prior knowledge about the second or foreign language being learnt were the most crucial origin of student's low listening proficiency as well performance. Hammada (2013)asserted that LC is a difficult language task to be accomplished for students by investigating listening problems faced by Saudi students when listening to spoken language .He found that accent ,pronunciation ,speech rate, insufficient vocabulary, lack of concentration ,anxiety, bad quality of recording were the major obstacles confronted by EL Learners .Notably, Ismail(2015)revealed that students were aware of the importance of listening skill .although they admitted that it was very hard for them to acquire and understand spoken input due to the insufficient training in high school and the content of listening tasks.

Hence, it is necessary to find out the main factors that contribute as hinders for enhancing student's listening skill. All previous studies showed that listening is a complex language skill. Almost, EFL students are facing a kind of constraints in classroom or even in daily life .In; most cases there are a series of factors that influence L2 or FL listening comprehension. These factors include spoken language, the listener, passage and finally the auditory features. Moreover, the listener's ability to understand the phonological system of the foreign language, vocabulary proficiency, the topic's background knowledge, working memory and even the psychological state of the listener. It can have an impact on his ability to understand the spoken outputs, like anxiety, lack of concentration, which make the process of listening comprehension more difficult.

In fact, when students are supposed to receive assistance from their teachers through identifying their challenges in understanding the spoken passages they would improve their listening comprehension skill by using cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective strategies.

1.Statement of the problem

EFL students all around the world face difficulties while listening to English. Despite of its importance in language learning and teaching , most EFL teachers as well course book designers pay more attention to the other skills(Hammoda, 2013),their main goal is to develop student's linguistic competence .Moreover, classroom lectures consist of teaching target structures and vocabulary, in another word less emphasis was given to listening (Richard & Rodger, 2001). Listening comprehension has not received priority until 1970 (Osada, 2004) when it gained as a skill and started to take place in language programs. Most studies in the fields of Foreign Language Teaching have focused on different aspects of listening, only few studies have investigated the different difficulties that students encounter .Hence; it is necessary to investigate the main factors that may hinder the comprehension of spoken English for EFL students. The present study aims at determining student's listening comprehension difficulties, trying to raise their awareness of the importance of listening in language acquisition .In this case the teachers' role is to provide students with effective learning strategies to overcome their constraints.

Based on the research aim, which address the descriptive analytical phase of the study, in improving student's listening comprehension skill, one main question can be posed. The main question seeks to explore the major factors that can be attributed to student's listening difficulties.

2.Research questions

1-What listening comprehension difficulties do EFL student encounter when listening to spoken English?

Sub-questions

The second two main questions which attempt to raise and enhance the importance of listening skill.

1-How third year students perceive the importance of listening comprehension in language acquisition?

2-How can teachers improve student's listening comprehension skill?

3.Research Hypothesis

The main hypothesis that can be set for this study is that, third year students are confronting difficulties as well factors that attribute listening comprehension difficulties.

4. Methodology

4.1. The choice of the method

When conducting a research, many types of methods can be followed. The research is free to select the appropriate one that fits the research aim data and population. Since the objective of this study is to identify the different constraints and factors that are confronted by EFL students, the descriptive analytical research method seems to be the most appropriate one.

4.2. Students 'sample

To achieve the aim set for the present study, a sample 52 Salah Eddine Al-Ayoubi secondary school students at M'sila serve as respondents in the academic year 2019/2020.

4.3. Description of the questionnaire

Questionnaires for students will be used, as a research tool in order to achieve the aim of the study. Students questionnaire will be divided into four sections. The first section contains questions about students' personal information such as gender, age and their personal English rate. The other sections comprise of different questions according to the students' constraints they face while listening and the factors that may contribute to hinder the listening comprehension process such as: the linguistic aspects such as the lack of vocabulary, psychological physiological setting such as: anxiety, lack of concentration and noise around

.While teacher' questionnaire will consist of different questions about teaching language skills specially listening and the different language strategies they use in order to help their students to overcome those listening comprehension constraints to achieve a certain level of proficiency in English language.

4.4. Data collection and analysis

The research's data will be collected in the second semester of the (2019/2020) academic year. Students and teachers will be asked to answer the questionnaires in English as a class activity. The obtained data will be organized and analyzed quantitatively in order to get information about the different difficulties that third year students encounter in EFL listening.

5. Significance of the Study:

This study aims to contribute to this growing area of research by exploring the major factors that contribute to listening difficulties. Teachers would have a better understanding of their the students' listening comprehension difficulties they face while listening to English to provide them with the appropriate strategies to overcome their constraints. Moreover, to reconsider listening and give it more opportunity like the other skills in classroom teaching.

6. The Structure of the Dissertation

The research dissertation comprises of two main chapters a theoretical as well a practical part. The first chapter is divided into two main sections. section one provides an overview of the nature of listening comprehensions ,its types, stages as well its strategies as a language skill .while the second section reviews the studies that investigated listening comprehension difficulties all around the world and its main findings and the factors that may be related to their problems. While the second chapter comprises of two section. it discusses the choice of the research method which is descriptive analytical in nature, population setting instruments used to collect data for this study. While the second section is devoted for the quantitative analysis of the research, results obtained from the student's questionnaire.

Chapter One : Theoretical Background

Introduction

Since, listening comprehension is the most important language skill ,that has a significant effect in developing student's language proficiency .This is the reason for writing the present chapter through which we will try to clarify the major aspects of listening. Hence, this chapter is devoted for the literature review that covers the major notions of the present research. It is divided into three sections. The first one discusses the various definitions given by researchers from different perspectives, perceptions toward listening skill, stages, kinds, process. While The second section deals with the characteristics of spoken language, and the last section covers the major difficulties that EFL students encounter while listening with a successful listening comprehension strategies that allow any EFL student to communicate successfully and overcome the listening constraints

1.The Nature of Listening Comprehension

1.1.Definition of Listening Comprehension

Listening Comprehension is one of the fundamental language skills that has a significant role in foreign language learning. It enables any student to acquire language appropriately, adequately and rapidly because language acquisition occurs through receiving input from different sources(Rost, 2001) .Moreover listening was adopted by Audio-lingual method as a primary stage of language acquisition for beginners.

Listening is a fundamental skill in language learning process since it is a medium in which EFL students perceive knowledge .it has been identified by many researchers. Chastain(1977) stated that the ultimate goal of listening is to understand language at normal speed in an automatic condition Thomlison (1984) considered it as the ability to recognize and understand what others are saying.Infact this process involves understanding the linguistic and

the non-linguistic aspects of language such as the speaker's accent, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary , with a full understanding of the spoken communication's meaning being conveyed by the speaker. Furthermore; a successful listener for him is the one who has the ability to do all those processes simultaneously .Celce-Murcia(1995)indicated that listeners need to integrate phonetic ,phonological, prosodic ,lexical ,syntactic and pragmatic information to comprehend incoming speech. Consequently, listening comprehension is regarded as complex, interactive process in which the listeners are involved in a dynamic construction of meaning (Rost, 2002). The listener understands the oral input from sound discrimination ,prior knowledge of vocabulary, grammatical structures ,stress and intonation as well as others use linguistic ,paralinguistic, or even non-linguistic clues in contextual utterances in order to decode the speech.

Rost (2002)claims," At further removes from the physics of sound at linguistic levels of texts we arrive at listening comprehension .Definition of L2 listening comprehension tell as much about the definer as they do about listening-may be explicit or implicit, and they have varied with their times. Listening has been seen as arising from habit formation, as a function of innate cognitive language abilities, as akin to computation, as a quality related to psychology of self-awareness, as cultural awareness, or information processing"

In the context of language learning and teaching, students are supposed to receive, analyze, interpret, construct meaning and respond to spoken communication (Gilakjani, 2011).Consequently it is considered very important in daily communication with others since people spent more time in listening.

According to Nadig(2013)listening comprehension is the various processes of recognizing and making an appropriate meaning to spoken language. Moreover, Jafari and Hashimi(2015)emphasized that listening is a key for a comprehensible input specially in foreign language learning process .Any EFL student listen extensively to target language input

, knowledge and information in order to construct and create a mental grammatical structures , vocabulary, social and even cultural background of the language being learned.

1.2. Listening Comprehension Perceptions

In the context of language learning and teaching ,(Martinez-flor & Uso-join, 2006) indicated that ,listening comprehension has been perceived into different ways .In fact ,it has been viewed by various teaching learning approaches such as, Behaviorism, Structuralism , Innatist and Interactionist approach .

1.2.1. Environmentalists' Perspective toward Listening

Environmental approach gave a significant and a fundamental importance to listening comprehension in language learning .In spite of its importance on developing students L2 knowledge, listening was considered as a neglected passive language skill before 1960s.

Behaviorism view toward language learning was viewed as a stimulus –response reinforcement chain which was adopted by Pavlov and Skinner (1960).Hence ,students are supposed to receive external stimulus in order to respond in the learning environment .In this case students receive language input from the teacher, and their role is to recognize what the teacher is talking about (Thomlison, 1984).Chomsky (1960) argued that language consists of different linguistic aspects of a language (phonemes ,morphemes ,words and sentences).Those linguistic aspects construct an appropriate ,accurate words ‘place in order to formulate coherent as well cohesion spoken or written language for Structuralism theory. Consequently, EFL students acquire language input trough practicing and imitating the same language’s structures repeatedly. Brown(1990) claimed that language learning was seen as a mechanical process in which students had just recognize the spoken language components instead of understanding the oral input.

1.2.2. Nativists' Perception Theory toward Listening

Chomsky(1957,1965) asserted that children are born with an innate mental ability to acquire any language .LAD (Language Acquisition Device) was proposed by Noam Chomsky in the 1960s which is an instinctive mental capacity that enables an infant to acquire and produce any language despite of the complexity of its linguistic rules .This theory has a specific linguistic proprieties such as the listener's ability to distinguish speech sounds from other sounds in the environment ,ability to organize linguistic events into various classes which can later be refined, and ability to engage constant evaluation of the developing linguistic system(Neil , 1966).Significantly, there have been many conducted research to test Chomsky's theory such as Brown(1973) who asserted that children were active through using their mental and cognitive abilities to understand and acquire language input from aural sources. Consequently, Nativists perceive listening comprehension as an active mental process. Hence, students rely on their cognitive strategies such as analyzing and decoding spoken information to understand what they were listening to.In this case children as well students were seen as an active rather than passive receivers of language input because they are already biologically programmed for language acquisition (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan,2006).

1.2.3. Interactionist Perception toward Listening

Listening comprehension took a significant important place in cognitive psychology by the late of 1970s.The cognitive psychologists' ultimate goal was to understand the listening process. Accordingly, the comprehension of the spoken language takes place only if the listener relies on his own prior knowledge or understanding of a certain passages if they were already internalized in their minds. Additionally, the listeners 'prior knowledge plays an important role in constructing an appropriate meaning to oral messages while listening.(Maritnez-Flor and Uso-Juan, 2006).Vandergrift(1999)stated that the appearance of the schemata theory in the 1980s,memory was seen as an external factor which conducts the listening comprehension process. In addition, in the 1970s, sociolinguists came up with a number of theories, such as

Hymes (1971, 1972), which meant that language was used in a social context and that its use depended on the norms of appropriateness. Therefore, listening is perceived to be a dynamic, social and collaborative mechanism in which the audience is actively involved in the creation of meaning.

1.3.Stages of Listening

Wilson (2009) sub-categorized three main stages of listening: pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening. In classroom activities the teacher is supposed to activate his students prior knowledge and vocabulary about the topic, to understand the content of a listening task (Thanajaro,2000). In this case EFL students activate and relate their background knowledge through schemata (Wilson, 2009) relying on their long-term memory. Richard and Renandya(2002)asserted that pre-listening stage is seen as a motivational way for students about what would they hear through providing the learning context. Pre-listening classroom activities involve brainstorming vocabulary, reviewing some grammatical structures and discussing the theme and the core content of listening task.

While-listening , EFL students are going to develop and construct appropriate meaning and interpretation about the oral message .moreover, the teachers role is to ask the students to take notes about the text's main ideas(Karakas,as cited in Gilakjani, 2011).Additionally, students have the opportunity to listen to the same task several times in order to check ,verify their comprehension or to answer some sub-questions. Furthermore, Wilson(2009) asserted that when students listen extensively to the same task ,it would affect their psychological state through reducing the anxiety at its lower levels.

Post-listening activities is the final stage in which students have opportunities to respond and perform according to what they have understood from aural texts. Consequently, students may enhance and develop their listening skill as well their socio-cultural and knowledge about

the theme. Although, the received information goes through several sub –processes such as hearing, categorization of sounds, word recognition, comprehension and responding.

1.3.1. Hearing:

Hearing is the primary step of listening process and relates to sensory perception of human sound .It requires a full attention and concentration of perceiving the auditory sound system.

1.3.2.Categorization of Incoming Sound

Categorization of linguistic output of hearing stage in term of speech sounds is mainly dependent on the listener. In the first place ,the listener categorizes the speech sounds according to specific phonological cues and its place of articulation such as plosives ,voiced ,voiceless and nasals (cuter, 2001).Cuter (2001) says «the supra-segmental properties guide the interpretation process whilst the segmental cues serve to access words in mental lexicon”.

1.3.3.Word Recognition

The listener relies on his own linguistic competence in order to decode the grammatical rules that guide the L2 structures (Ellis, 2000). Ultimately, the linguistic output is recognized according to the different aspects of the language such as grammatical structures, morphological patterns, syntactic and semantic relationships between words .Consequently, word recognition depends on linguistic, pragmatic as well socio-cultural knowledge.

1.3.4. Comprehension

It is the process of understanding the speaker’s intention to achieve communicative goals (Rost, 2011).in this stage the listener tries to understand and interpret what the speaker intended to convey. Furthermore, listening comprehension is actually based on the listener’s linguistic, pragmatic and socio-cultural knowledge to interpret the spoken language.

1.3.5. Responding

It is the final stage of listening process .the listener interacts and communicates with the speakers after he fully understood the speaker's intention.as a result, the listener has already stored L2 linguistic structures in his long- t e r m memory for future recall. Consequently, responding seems as a reaction to all previous processes.

Tyagi (2013) claimed that listening process takes place in five stages of hearing, understanding, remembering, evaluating and responding.

1.4. Kinds of Listening

EFL students have the opportunity to improve their listening skill through combining both extensive and intensive listening.

1.4.1. Extensive Listening

Extensive listening has a great importance in developing students listening comprehension skill as well help them to overcome their different constraints they encounter while listening .it is mainly concerned with out class listening for pleasure or for other goals. Harmer (2007) indicated that EFL students could be involved in extensive listening trough motivating them to watch BBC learning channels, news or even English movies with subtitles. Moreover, subtitles help students associate what they have listen with what they have understood from them. In this case, students will acquire a great amount of L2 structures and information such new vocabulary, grammatical structures and even socio-cultural norms that help to shape that language. Furthermore, teachers may provide their students with language learning CDs to listen to such as textbook aural conversations for a better understanding.

1.4.2.Intensive Listening

Usually, intensive listening takes place in classroom activities particularly in laboratories .specially in phonetic courses to indicate how English language is pronounced with a teacher's presence and guidance .Moreover, teachers role is to explain the different aspects of English phonetics (pronunciation of different vowel sounds, place of articulation and variety of accents , British, American Scottish English

1.5.The Processes of Listening

The process of understanding a spoken language is based on psycholinguistic models to reach communicative language goals through listening between interlocutors. Johnstar(1997) ,Apud Lancaster and Philogene(1999) have distinguished between two types of mental listening comprehension processing (Top-down or Bottom-up). "Bottom-up techniques typically focus on sounds ,words, intonation, grammatical structures ,and another components of spoken language .While Top-down techniques are more concerned with the activation of schemata with deriving meaning with global understanding and interpretation of a text".

1.5.1. Bottom-up Processing:

Bottom-up processing is based on the actual use of linguistic knowledge to recognize and understand the meaning of the message Hence, the listener is supposed to use his linguistic information to interpret the appropriate meaning of the spoken language. In this case Bottom- up process focuses on phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic clues in order to achieve a full comprehension of incoming speech (Brown , 2007).

Additionally, this process assumes that the listener decodes sounds in a linear fashion, from the smallest meaningful morphological items into a complex text and long speeches. Significantly, EFL students create an appropriate meaning from lower phonological levels of words. They start from consonant and vowel sounds moving into grammatical target structures

to lexical relationships between words. Such as subject verb agreement in order to reach a final stage of a full understanding of a spoken speech.

1.5.2. Top –Down Processing:

This process goes in an opposite direction of the previous model. Top-down processing is based on the idea of student's prior knowledge about the discourse, which contributes as a factor to facilitate the listening comprehension process. The listener's prior knowledge are known as prior information about the topic, context, foreign culture and whatever he knows about the theme. The student's prior knowledge are already stored in long term memory as schemata (Vandergrift, 2007) after experiencing a specific events, themes and new knowledge ,the listener internalize those specific information in his mental memory system to recall them later. Moreover, this process revealed that the linguistic knowledge of the listener is not sufficient to grasp the appropriate meaning of a discourse without the adequate presence of the context and prior knowledge.

1.5.3. Interactive Processing

Wilson(2009) and Vandergrift(2011) mentioned that a successful listener is the one who is able to get a full comprehension of a spoken language in which he uses his own linguistic as well prior knowledge to get the appropriate meaning. EFL students have the ability to achieve listening proficiency in case they appropriately utilize both linguistic discourse and strategic competence. Vandergrift, 2007) emphasized that both Bottom-up and Top-down are complementary processes that work together as chain to make sense of a spoken input.

1.6.Types of Listening

wolvin and Coakely(1996) ,Smonds and Cooper(2011) have identified different types of listening according to its function and situation .

1.6.1. Discriminative Listening

Is the most basic form of listening which occurs at early ages from childhood in which a baby child has an already innate ability to distinguish between his mother's and father's voices .this stage does not require a child to understand the utterance's meaning but rather differentiate the sounds only. Moreover discriminative listening develops over time ,the more a baby grows up his ability to distinguish between the different vocal sounds through several social experiences is improved. Furthermore; this ability goes far beyond only distinguishing between sounds but rather it reaches recognizing the different speaker's accent, dialects and even a behavioral change (Wolvin,Coakley, 1985).

1.6.2.Comprehensive Listening

In this stage, the listener understands the meaning of the communicative message .It requires an advanced level in FL .the listener is already equipped with FL linguistic knowledge. Hence, a comprehensible listener can understand the spoken communicative message not only by verbal messages but also from non-verbal communication .non-verbal communication is describes as body language, gestures, and even a voice's tone of the

1.6.3.Informative Listening

The process of acquiring and learning new information through listening is informative, whether; in classroom or in our daily life, in social communication, from documentaries or news. Whereby; all types of an active listening requires a conscious effort and a full concentration to understand what the interlocutors are communicating. Consequently, a listener plays a role of a passive receiver in an informative listening such as students in EFL classes. Their main goal is to receive language input from their teachers by taking notes or recording lectures while listening.

1.6.4.Critical Listening

The critical listener's main goal is to evaluate, judge and scrutinize the speech .it is based on problem solving as well making decisions trough being active while listening. Moreover; An active critical listener analyses the received information and makes an appropriate judgment about the spoken message, although, it does not mean that what he have heard is flamed . in fact in this stage ,a listener engages himself in a socio-pragmatic analysis of the spoken language trough understanding ,comparing and judging the social-cultural differences ,instead; of being only passive receivers. Additionally, A successful critical listener is an open-minded one who accepts the others differences not being biased by stereotyped regional ideas in order to broaden his socio-cultural knowledge.

1.6.5.The Therapeutic or Empathic Listening

It is mostly used by psychologists in treating their patients .In general, the therapeutic listener's role is to understand the speaker's feelings, emotions and point of views in order to provide their patients with the appropriate treatment. Correspondingly, The listener engages the speaker implicitly to explain and elaborate on their behavior .on the other hand, it is not concerned with therapists only but rather practiced in our daily life communication with friends ,family and even in class-room .furthermore, it enhances the interpersonal communication trough being comfortable and sharing feeling and ideas.(Wolvin,Coakley, 1985).

1.7.Listening Comprehension Strategies

In the process of language learning, listening comprehension is considered one of the hardest language skill for students to be developed quickly. Consequently; many EFL students face a variety of listening constraints that hinder them to accomplish listening task .Rahimirad and Zare-ee(2015) asserted that any foreign language student encounter difficulties while listening to English at the first stages of learning process. For this reason, students are supposed use a

variety of listening comprehension strategies in order to reach communicative goals .Listening comprehension strategies are a set of techniques used by listeners to improve their learning and to communicate effectively . Oxford,Chamot and Omlley,2009) have distinguished between three different types of listening strategies which are cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective ones.

1.7.1. Cognitive strategies

Comprehension is mostly started from receiving, decoding ,and analyzing language input .Cognitive strategies are unconscious mental techniques used by learners to acquire language. They have been identified by (Clark, 1977) as elaboration, contextualization ,reconstruction ,deduction and transformation of input. Derry and Murphy(1986) defined cognitive strategies as a problem-solving approach .additionally, students create sense of their learning trough cognitive strategies, which help them to construct, transform and apply L2 knowledge. Since language is an accumulative process ,those strategies allow students to memorize and associate their prior knowledge with the new ones for further recall(Goh,1998;Oxford, 2011).Moreover, they are concerned with understanding and comprehension of spoken messages by creating a mental representation of what they have heard (Hulstijin, 2003).

Hence,when students receive linguistic input in classroom they try to utilize different techniques and tricks such as guessing the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary from context. Furthermore; students ,decode and relate L2 knowledge with their prior ones taking into consideration the grammatical ,syntactic or semantic relation between words to construct an appropriate meaning. The listener uses the theme's prior knowledge to draw interpretation and predict what would come next, trough translating them to his mother language to facilitate learning likewise to produce coherent as well cohesion target language structures. Richards (2008:11)identified cognitive strategies as mental activities related to comprehending and storing input in working or long term memory for later retrieval “.

1.7.2. Metacognitive Strategies

Rubin(1988) has identified metacognitive strategies as a specific techniques used by students in order to regulate the learning process through planning ,monitoring and evaluating .In this case students have a full control of their learning.in fact ,it has been shown that the actual use of metacognitive strategies have a significant effect on developing student's language performance(Oxford, 1990).Hence, Holden(2004) and Tugrul Mart,Yildiz and Azmi Bingol(2014) stated that in this technique students are fully aware while listening .In this strategy students learn how to plan, monitor and assess the received data from listening task. Moreover, Salataci(2002) asserted that the use of metacognitive strategies while listening increase students' self-esteem. It serve as a motivational factor to accomplish listening task. In addition to that, metacognitive strategies improve students 'speaking skill due to the fact that they become more confident in public speaking and they can take part in class-room discussions (Rahimi and Katal, 2012). Problem Solving Strategies are mostly used by students to find out an appropriate solutions when they get stacked in listening .Moreover, listeners use those strategies to make inferences and monitor them (e.g., using known words to infer the meanings of unknown words, using experience and general knowledge when Interpreting the text or guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words from context(Rubin and Robert,1987).Problem solving gives students the opportunity to use the target language while interacting with each other's to find out solutions.

Self-Knowledge is a Technique that includes recognizing the difficulty of L2 listening task. Becoming a more aware of one's confidence and anxiety levels while listening to a second language (Chemers Hu, & Garua,2001).In this case when listeners are fully aware about their own difficulties in listening tasks, they have a great chance to work on, and overcome them.. These strategies include recovering concentration when one's mind wanders, focusing more when understanding falters and not

giving up (Rost, 2002). However, it is not enough to be just aware of these strategies, also the listener's motivation has an impact on improving listening performance. Focused listening is an intentional and systematic process. The listener gives his full attention and concentration on what the speaker is saying to get information, knowledge and ideas. So Concentration plays an important role in accomplishing listening tasks. Hence, students will have the opportunity to manage this language skill.

1.7.3. Socio-Affective Strategies

Socio-affective strategies are a set of specific techniques used by listeners to cooperate with others and verify their appropriate comprehension of the spoken output (Vandergrift, 2003) and Abdelhamid (2012). Macintyre (1993) said that the affective strategies are closely related to social-psychological factors specially in the context of language learning because students are easily affected by the learning environment. Communication may take place whether in or outside classroom so, in this case students are required to build up a good relationship with their classmates or even society members. In fact; socio-affective strategies create and promote a positive psychological attitude toward language learning for students. It means that students learn better in a suitable, motivational learning environment as they listen O'Malley and Chamot (1990). Moreover, it reduces 'students anxiety at its lower levels (Vandergrift 2003). In other words, when a student feels anxious his listening comprehension process interfered by his psychological state. Finally, students interact and communicate with each other's in order to share information, knowledge and skills to increase, facilitate and achieve a certain level of language proficiency. In this, case a student's 'self-confidence is built through interaction by giving peer feedbacks.

In a general sense, language strategies are fundamental and essential to enhance listening comprehension skill in the sake of a successful learning of English as a foreign language to create an effective learning environment for an effective communication.

2.Listening Difficulties and Related Factors

2.1.Features of the Listener

Individual differences may affect both L2 listening comprehension as well general test performance. Bowles(2009) claimed that the use of both cognitive as well metacognitive abilities such as working memory ,planning, predicting ,monitoring and evaluating successfully affect foreign language proficiency. The main factors, which are considered here, include working memory, foreign language proficiency, and metacognitive strategies as well auditory features.

2.1.1. Working Memory

Baddeley stated that“is assumed to be a limited capacity attentional system ,aided by a newly postulated fourth system, the episodic buffer. Current interest focuses most strongly on the link between working memory and long –term memory and on the processes allowing the integration of information from the component subsystems. The model has valuable in accounting for data from a wide range of participant groups under a rich array of task conditions. Working memory does still appear to be working”.(2002, p.85)

Baddely,Hitch (1974) have identified working memory as a limited ability system of temporary storage and manipulation of necessary information for difficult tasks such as reasoning and comprehension .ultimately, the listener receives language input, so he is supposed to use his bottom up processing then interprets what has been heard before exposure of new knowledge and input .Meanwhile, students are expected to use their topic’s prior knowledge (the actual use of top-down processing)to make an appropriate sense of the received input. In this stage any listener depends mainly in his short-term memory to store and process

numerous elements of spoken message in mind while listening. The concept of working memory is based on the concept of short-term memory.

2.2.Proficiency and Experience with Second or Foreign Language

While language proficiency is a predictor in many studies, evaluating L2 listening comprehension seems as a complex process for researchers .It is described in many ways that is difficult to compare findings trough studies. One explanation for this challenge is the absence of structured tests to determine the levels of proficiency across language The concept of high versus low competency may differ from one study to another even when the same variable is measured in one analysis .Second language proficiency literature focuses on many language aspects. It includes mastering foreign language knowledge, vocabulary size, phonological system, grammatical structures of the target language as well background knowledge.

2.2.1Vocabulary Size

An important variable that can affect the understanding of the spoken language is the overlap between the listener's vocabulary knowledge and the vocabulary of the passage. Nation(2001)claimed that the listener must have a sufficient vocabulary knowledge to grasp the meaning of the sentence of the target language. In fact, Hirich & Nation (1992) claimed that foreign listeners or readers need to know 90 percent of language terms in order to understand the main points in whether spoken or written language, Nation(2001)has claimed that vocabulary size is an approximate indicator of other factors often considered to affect the capacity of listening comprehension including word knowledge, related factors are addressed in more depth below.

2.2.2Phonological and Grammatical Information

Research on the effect of phonological and grammatical information on spoken language listening comprehension reflects on whether high capacity and low-capacity listeners utilize

top-down or bottom-up processing. Those processes include inferring, elaborating to help them make sense of spoken language.(Goh,1998a,1998b). Field(2004) discusses a series of experiments by Koster (1987;quoted in Field ,2004,p.366) .Goh(2002) asked 40 language students to explain the methods they use to grasp spoken L2 and difficulties they faced. She found that the more students were familiar with non-native phonology the more they rely on low level (bottom-up) information. In reality, she noticed that when L2 students do not know how to utter words, they switch to their native language. In the same sack, Voss(1984) observed that the more listeners are familiar with target language phonology the more they rely on phonological cues (bottom-up)information.

2.2.3Background Knowledge about the Topic

The context awareness of the culture on the passage may have a significant effect on their ability to interpret what has been said. Without a system, it may be incredibly challenging to comprehend a word. Many authors also mentioned the importance of mutual information between the speakers and listeners (Churchland ,1999).Shared knowledge is essential since listeners are analytical and pragmatic in nature and whenever possible ,place, theme ,the environment ,the event ,the speakers and the intent of listening(Rost, 2005;Lantoff, 1999).Vandergrift(2007) indicates that L2 listeners would use existing information including topic, genre, culture and other schemas in long term memory to construct a contextual context through which to perceive what they hear.

Background, non-verbal information, word knowledge, cultural awareness and common sense are all used to create this structure. Bodie , Worthington, Imhof, and Cooper(2008)stated that other factors specific to particular listeners (specific knowledge about the topic, word knowledge, memory span, motivation, listening capacity)interfere with speaker's aspects (interactivity,status,power,role) and the passage (objective, purpose) to interpret listening

scores .As mentioned above listeners with rich background knowledge are more successful in accomplishing listening tasks.

2.3. Anxiety

Listener's anxiety can have profound impact on comprehension abilities when listeners are worried that the idea is too complex or that they may not be able to comprehend it, their capacity to focus declines ;this is valid even in the native language. Listeners are more anxious when they hear new information ,try to sort out conflicting information, listening to seemingly illogical passages(Clark,1989 & Wheelless, 1989)or when they think their performance reflects their abilities or intelligence (Dorgherty & Norick,2010).Indeed Hussey et al (2010)asserted that anxiety has a direct impact on listener's ability to resolve ambiguity in their mother tongue language in real time..

2.4. Characteristics of the Passage

There are several passages based consideration that should be addressed in determining what makes L2 listening comprehension challenging for students. This analysis covers only a portion of them. The factors discussed include authenticity, passage length and related factors ,passage complexity ,passage types ,and finally auditory features.

2.4.1 Authenticity

Authenticity of the audio material can be defined in many ways including the speaker, the listener, the context, the passage(Breen, 1985). (Gilmore,2007;Thanajaro,2000) have identified Authentic passage as a piece of real language produced by real speakers for real audience in order to convey a message for some sort. In other terms, that the speaker directs the dialogue to make sure that the communication is delivered according to the listener's needs to achieve communicative goals. In fact, most students experience big difficulties in oral language

classroom listening tasks and real obstacles as they communicate and exchanging ideas. This is because most listening resources, like classroom dialogues are rather grammatical-oriented scripts with perfectly controlled speed, voice tone, accent and correct grammar. Authentic materials are too challenging and can discourage students, and there is skepticism about exposing the students to err in grammar usage especially in early stages. Penny Ur (1984) considered that some problems that occur trigger irritation and discomfort listeners while utilizing a written authentic language tapes. It is difficult, Especially, for beginner students to disentangle the thread of discourse, to recognize various voices, and to cope with regular overlaps in fragments of authentic language conveyed by audio tapes.

2.4.2 Length of the Passage

Length of the passage is the extent to which the listeners can cope with the amount of information submitted for processing and understanding the spoken language .In fact it is a little bit difficult for any listener to analyze and decode all the received information from oral output at ones, especially when the speech is long (Anderson et al,2006;Bejar,Dociglas,Jamieson,Nassin&Turney,2000,as cited in Dunkel,1991,p.440;Rost, 2006).

Goh,2000;O'Malley,Chamot,&Kupper,1989)claimed that the result of such failure will be an inability to access new information as the listener spends additional time trying to understand what (he/she)missed. In fact long passages may be more likely to disrupt understanding due to the over wheeling memory storage ability of working listeners(Henning, 1990)

.Moreover,Thompson & Rubin(1996)reported that students complained about the segments longer than three minutes ,as being too long for theme to maintain concentration.

2.4.3. Culturally Specific Vocabulary and Idioms

Another feature of a passage that can have an effect on its degree of complexity is that the passage includes some culturally specific terminology or idioms. It requires listeners to have some pragmatic knowledge in order to interpret the passage and to respond correctly to the associated items. Many studies have investigated this factor often by examining the amount of culturally unfamiliar words (Nissan et al, 1996; Sasaki, 2000) or the number of idioms in the passage. Kostin (2004) discussed the influence of idioms on listening comprehension in the passage. American Heritage Dictionary (2000) defines idioms as “an expression which consisting of two or more words having a meaning that cannot be deduced from the meanings of its consistent parts .Snake in the grass is an example of English idiom ,that cannot be understood even if L2 listeners are already familiar with the meaning of both grass and snake. In this case listeners are supposed to know how the snake is defined in the target society.

2.5. Auditory Features

Comprehension in spoken language requires adapting to the idiosyncratic of a particular speaker, such as speech rate or the pitch of voice. Typically speaking; listeners are very effective at this ability. But adaptation is considerably more difficult when the speaker has different

2.5.1 Speaker's accent

Accented speech ,has been found to affect both the extent to which listeners successfully retrieve speaker's passage and the effort involved as listeners identify particular words in the passage (Floccia et al., 2009). In the case of speaker with different accents a listener must cope with variations arising for both the speaker's own idiosyncratic and additional variation ,the speaker communicates with those with the same linguistic context (Weil, 2003) .Most previous research that examined the effect of accent on listening comprehension provides strong and largely consistence evidence on non-native listeners.

Fitzmaurice, Butna & Balasubramanian(2005)explored how accents with deferring degrees with familiarity had an effect on listening comprehension of native and non-native listeners. Results showed that the accents of the speakers significantly affected listening comprehension among non-native listeners. The more familiar the accent is, the easier is to be understood. Furthermore, variation in interpretation of various accents were significantly even for non-native listeners. In fact, Accent affects L2 more than L1. Familiarity with accented speech may clarify these above findings such non-native listeners are less likely to have experience of the accents than a native listener. Finally, listening comprehension was proved to be affected by accent.

2.5.2 Distortion and Noise.

Authentic recorded passages are not necessarily recorded in perfect circumstances. Recordings from telephone calls, interviews, or radio signals are frequently distorted or mixed with background noise. Background noise and modulated sound can all contribute to speech that is difficult to understand . Indeed such auditory disturbances may have a major impact on the capacity of the audience to grasp .(Payton,Uchanky&Braid,1994;Adanketal., 2009). This is particularly due to the reality that is challenging to understand terms while the sound become difficult to hear due to noise and distortion in the signals .It is often difficult to construct a clear cognitive structure through which the listener can interpret incoming words.(Aydelott,Dick&Mills,2006;Aydelott, 2001). Indeed ,spoken language is distorted to some degree by the phonological mechanisms as reduction ,assimilation, elision re-syllabification (Field, 2003).

2.5.3 Speech Rate

Speech rate may appear to be simple definition that distinguishes between higher speakers and lower speakers, but it actually correlates to several measurements throughout study

literature. One common measure, especially in L2 listening comprehension literature. It is words per minute (Brindley & Slatyer, 2002). Research literature provides evidence that speech rate can negatively affect L2 listening comprehension. In the real world, L2 listeners move from one passage to another and encounter different speakers and content. Because listeners are more likely to perceive speech as fast when other features challenge understanding. Despite the recent results that higher speech levels can contribute to poorer understanding, it is understandable that L2 learners often explicitly suggest that speech speeds are a source of difficulty (Flowerdew & Miller, 1992). They indicated that the higher speech levels are correlated with frustration, anxiety, slower rates with sadness and disgust. Pan, Mckeass & Hirschberg (2001) demonstrated that spoken phrases containing unexpected words such as words with a low frequency relative to the given corpora tend to exhibit faster articulatory rates than those containing expected words.

Conclusion

Many researchers have defined listening comprehension as the process of analyzing, decoding and understanding of spoken language. It is considered as receptive skill, in which students acquire new knowledge and information. In fact listening comprehension seems to be a challenging task for students, especially in foreign language learning due to many factors that hinder the listening process. Consequently, many EFL students encounter different difficulties all around the world such as linguistic, physiological and even psychological problems that lead to the misinterpretation of oral output. In this chapter, the related literature of the present study was reviewed. It represents a detailed information about the whole process. It includes different definitions which have been given by many researchers, various perspectives toward listening as a language skill. In addition to its types, process, kinds, and the strategies that should be

followed by EFL students to be successful listeners. Finally ,it covers the major problems as well the factors that may hinder the listening comprehension process.

Chapter Two: Research Methodology and Results' Discussion

Introduction

The present chapter represents the methodology as well the discussion of the main results. In fact, this study is conducted to investigate the different listening comprehension difficulties that EFL students encounter while listening to English at Salah Al-Dinne Al-Ayoubi at M'sila. This chapter provides an overview of the study population and sample, with a brief discussion of the participants' profile and the sampling procedure. It is divided into two main sections. The first section describes clearly the research method choice, which is the descriptive analytical method, which seems the appropriate one that fits the research aim. It is also concerned with the research settings as well the participants profile. Hence, third year students at M'sila were participants in this research. Then it describes the research tools used to collect students' perceptions about their listening comprehension difficulties. A student's questionnaire was used as a research tool in order to achieve the aim set for this research. It includes the description of the research questionnaire and its items. While the second section is concerned with the research findings and its interpretations..

1. Description of the Research Method

“Research is simply a systematic and refined technique of thinking, employing specialized tools, instruments, and procedures in order to obtain a more adequate solution of a problem”(Singh, 2006). In order to carry out the research, the present study adopts a descriptive analytical research design. Singh (2006) claimed that “the descriptive research is concerned with the present and attempts to determine the status of the phenomenon under investigation” (p.104). It allows to measure the data in terms of quality and quantity and then to present it in terms of tables and graphs. Cohen (2000) claimed that the descriptive method is the most adequate for the educational research.

It aims to collect students' perceptions about listening comprehension difficulties they face

while listening to English. For further aim of answering the research questions that guided the research, and to achieve the goals set for this research.

A quantitative method was used to analyze the collected data . This latter is an appropriate method according to the nature of the study to collect relevant data.

2.Participants and settings

The research population plays an important role in the study. Hence, Arilkunto (2002) defined research participants as”a population is defined as all members of research subjects”. In this case the results are drawn upon their own perceptions.,

The research sample consists of fifty two students registered in Salah Al-Dinne Al-Ayoubi secondary school for the academic year 2019/2020.They were mixed(38 female)and (14 male) served as respondents in the research. Cohen, Manion and Morrison b(2007)claim that random sampling involves “choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained or those who happen to be available and accessible by the time”(pp.113-114).The present research took place at Salah Al-Dinne Al- Ayoubi secondary school in M’sila ,where English is taught as a foreign language. Therefore, for the sake of facilitating the statistical analysis of the research results, SPSS software was used to collect students ‘perceptions toward their own listening difficulties. Finally,the research results were organized in tables and graphs.

3.Sampling :

The quality of any research depends on its sample population.In this case researchers cannot conduct a research on large population for this reason a sampling procedure seems to be very practical in data collection.

Morrison (1993) indicates that,

One central issue in considering the reliability and validity of questionnaire surveys is that of sampling. An unrepresentative, skewed sample, one that is too small or too large, can easily distort the data, and indeed, in the case of very small samples, prohibit statistical analysis.

In this research, the population consists of third year students at Salah Alddine Al Ayoubi secondary school in the academic year 2019/2020. For the aim of exploring students' difficulties in listening at an intermediate level. Third year students were seen as the best research sample for this study.

3.1. Students' profile

Students are the core component of the teaching process, hence; their contribution in this study is very important. So groups of third year students have been selected to answer the research questionnaire. The research participants are fifty two (52). They were mixed thirty eight girls (38) and fourteen boys (14). The majority of students are from the same age between (17-18 years old). In terms of language proficiency, they range from medium, intermediate to high level.

4. Description of the Research Tool

To achieve the goals set for this research, a questionnaire was used as a research gathering tool. Mcleod (2018) who says "A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. Questionnaire can be thought of as a kind of written interview. They can be carried out face to face, by telephone, computer or post". That is to say, a questionnaire represents any form of question or statement to be answered.

Its aim is to collect students' perceptions toward the importance of listening comprehension

in the process of language acquisition. Moreover, to have a deep understanding of students' constraints as well the factors that may hinder their comprehension of the spoken language.

5. Distribution of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administrated in the classroom .It took three sessions of one hour to three classes. The copies were collected immediately after the students had answered the questions, to make sure that all copies are returned back. All students had enough time to read and answer with our assistance. In order to design this questionnaire, the present study relied on the work of(Boyle,1984;Yagano,1994;Hasan,2010;Underwood,1989;Rubi,1994;Yagang,1994;Dunkel, 1991)about the factors that influence listening comprehension with slit modification.

6. Data Collection

This research investigates listening comprehension difficulties from the perspective of EFL students. The data of the present research was collected in the second semester of the academic year (2019/2020). Students were kindly asked to answer the questionnaire in English as a classroom activity. It took one hour with three third year classes with no previous preparation. The obtained data through the research instrument was organized and analyzed and interpreted quantitatively .The data have been organized and illustrated in tables and graphs. It was used to get perceptions about the different difficulties and obstacles which Algerian third year students at Salah Al-Dinne Al-Ayoubi encounter while listening to English.

Chapter Three: Field Work

1. Oral Expression in Algerian Secondary School (Listening)

Listening comprehension plays a vital role in language classroom; it enables students to develop their language proficiency. Field(2008:5) states “Listening is the more important since it enriches the learners ‘spoken competence with new syntactic, lexical, ,phonological and pragmatic information “.Conversely, it has been overlooked for many years. According, to research in second language, listening is a neglected aspect at middle school teaching .Notably, Algerian ones are no exception. It causes imbalance in teaching/learning process ,which normally calls for the presence of the four skills. Thereby, Hammoda(2013) claims that EFL students encounter problems in understanding spoken English due to the fact that course book as well material designers pay more attention to grammar, reading and vocabulary which is the case of Algerian teachers. They think that it develops naturally and automatically within the process of language acquisition. In fact, teachers tend to test and evaluate listening not to teach it ,as well students main goal is to learn language input rather than understanding it(Oscada, 2004).As a result, classroom activities consist of listening to teacher’s explanation, then, students ‘role is pick new vocabulary as well grammatical structures only with no prior intention for enhancing listening skill. Consequently, it remains the most neglected language skill in Algerian secondary school programs.

2. Description of Students’ Questionnaire

The research questionnaire consists of (25) questions divided into three main sections. The first section comprises of two questions about the participants personal information such as gender, and self-rating to English proficiency. Students were asked to rate their four language learning skills in order to know their current level and to emphasis which skill is performed better for them. Section two deals with student’s perceptions to the importance of listening comprehension skill. Where students were asked to answer five questions concerning their own opinions about

listening. Its importance, its value, whether it is difficult or easy. Its significance in the process of language acquisition as well its role in enhancing their speaking skill.

Section three covers the most common listening comprehension problems that may encounter any EFL student while listening to spoken English. Students were expected to indicate whether they confront some constraints while listening to English . They are categorized into linguistic ,psychological, physiological ,problems related to the speaker and even the listener him self and finally the lack of strategy use.In fact,the research further aim is to have an insight about the students 'attitudes toward listening in general to provide appropriate pedagogical solution to overcome their constraints.

3. Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

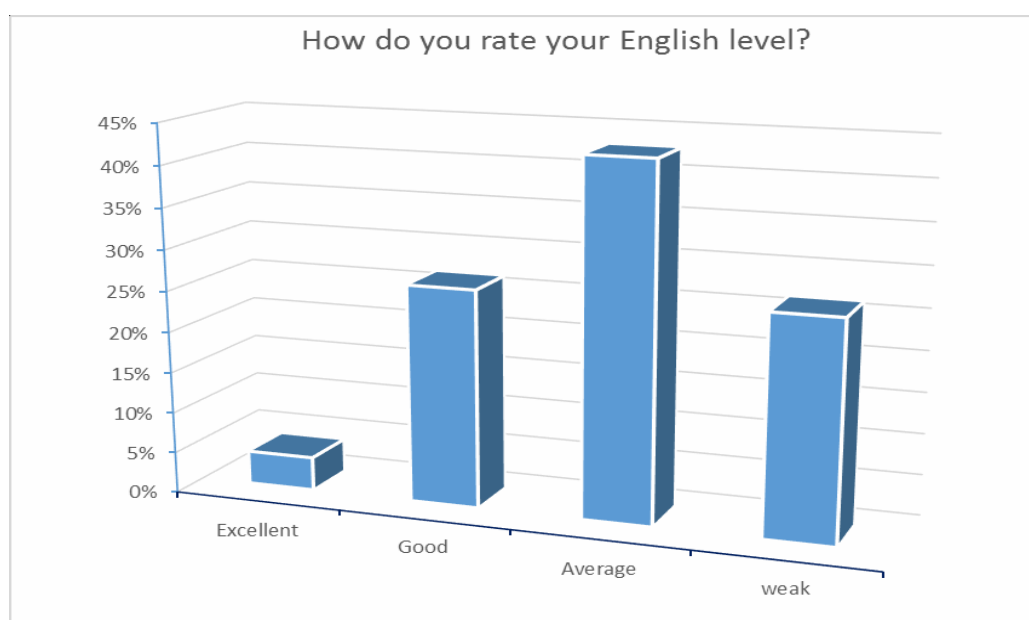
This section deals with the present research findings and its discussion. In fact this research paper aims at collecting student's perceptions toward listening comprehension difficulties. The present section is divided into four items. The first item deals with student's self-rating of English proficiency as well their classroom lectures. While, second section discusses student's self-rating of the four language skills. The third section includes student's perception toward the importance of listening as a language learning skill. Finally, the last section covers the major problems that can be confronted by students.

Table: 01

Participant's Self-Rating to English Proficiency

Response	Participants	Percentage
Excellent	2	4%
Good	13	25%
Average	21	40%
Weak	13	25%

Figure 01: Participant's Self-Rating to English Proficiency



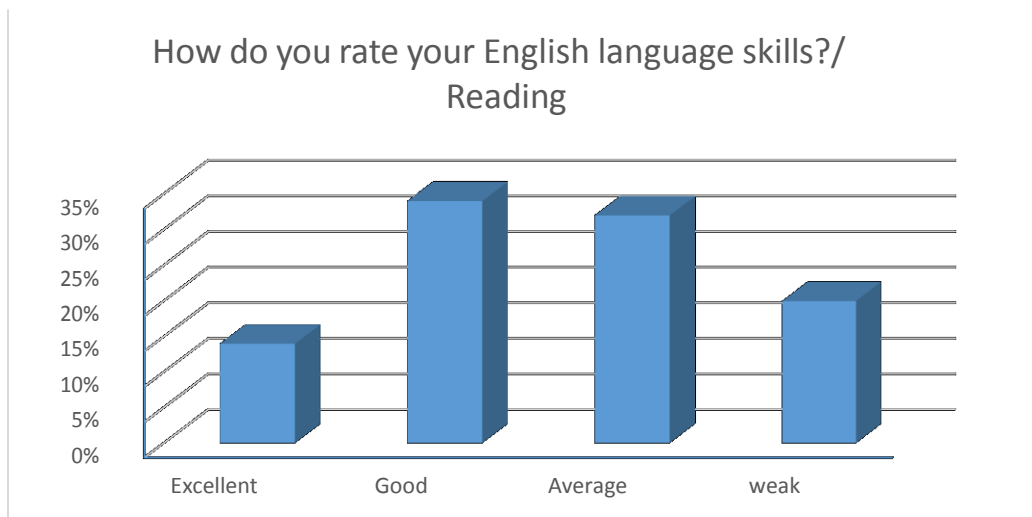
The provided graph shows the participant's self-rating to English proficiency. Notably, most students rated themselves between good and averaged(72%) , only few of them related themselves as excellent, while; the rest of them were weak in English (25%).

Table 02:

Student's Self-Rating to Reading as a Language Skill

Response	Participants	Percentage
Excellent	07	%13
Good	17	%33
Average	16	%31
Weak	10	%19

Figure 02: Student's Self-Rating to Reading as a Language Skill



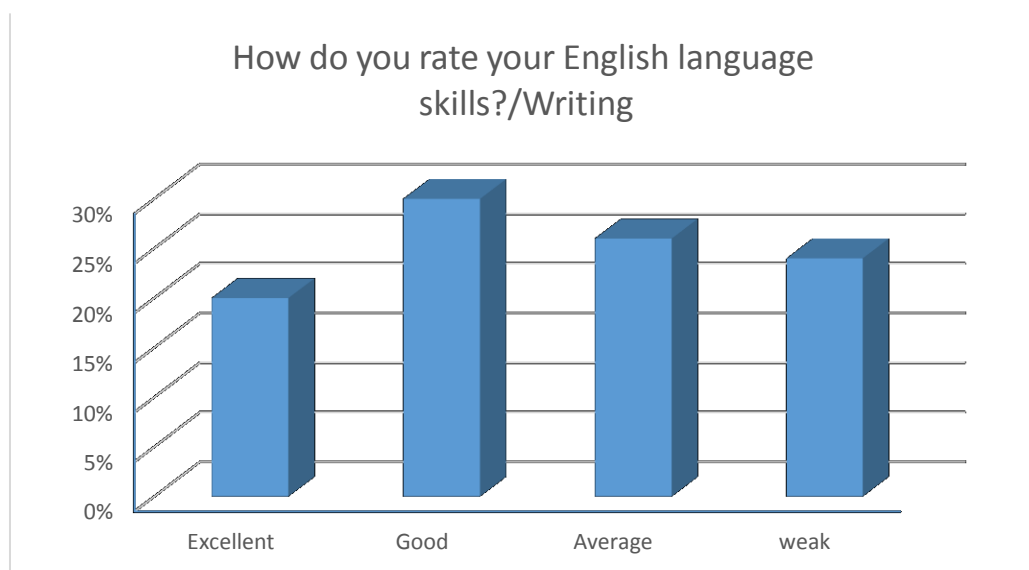
Reading is a receptive language skill in which students can acquire new knowledge, hence, more than 60% of students were between good and averaged in reading skill, while 13% of them were excellent therefore, 19% of them classified themselves as weak in reading skill.

Table 03:

Student's Self-rating to Writing as a Language Skill

Response	Participants	Percentage
Excellent	10	19%
Good	15	29%
Average	13	25%
Weak	12	23%

Figure 03: Student's Self-Rating to Writing as a Language Skill



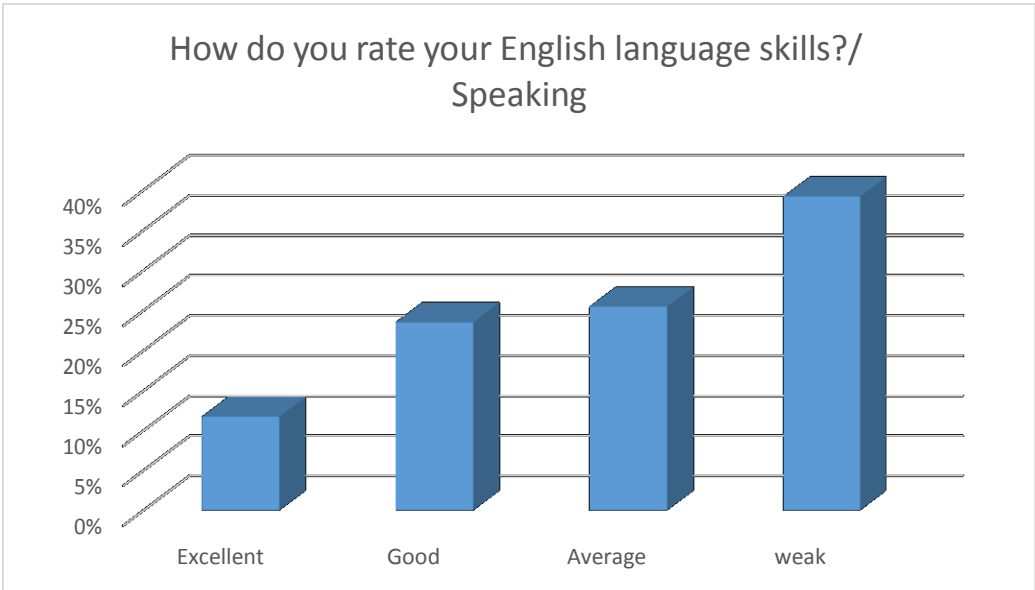
The above table as well the graph clearly show that most students(87%) were good at writing since it is the most important language skill that should be mastered for students. While only few of them were weak (23%). In fact, it is a productive language skill which requires academic strategies to be achieved therefore it seems a difficult task to be accomplished for them due to the lack of the practice.

Table 04:

Student’s Self-Rating to Speaking as a Language Skill

Response	Participants	Percentage
Excellent	06	12%
Good	12	23%
Average	13	25%
Weak	20	38%

Figure 04: Student’s Self-Rating to Speaking as a Language Skill



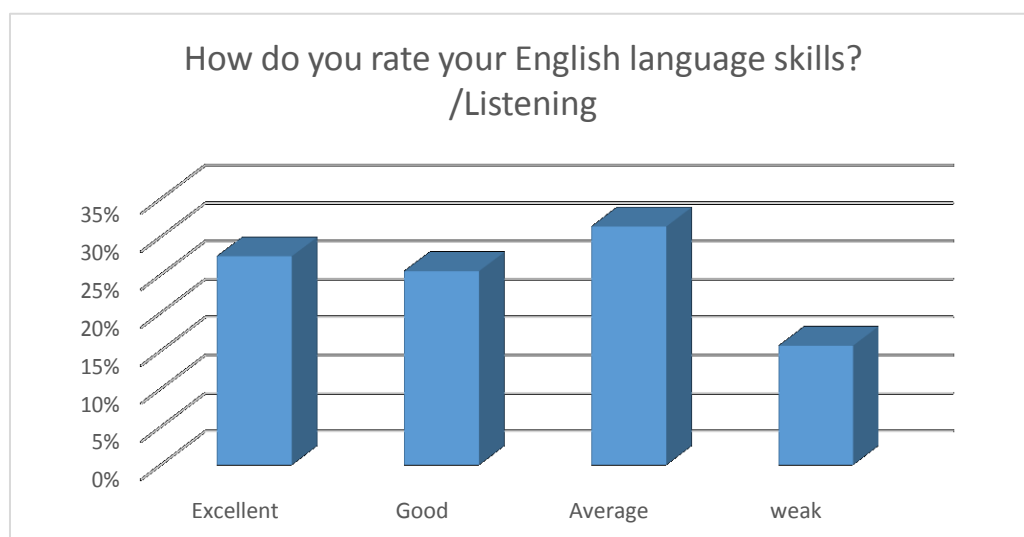
Speaking skill seems to be a challenging task for English students and it is considered as a productive skill .It requires a good level of proficiency in order speak fluent and accurate English .In fact about 40% of students were weak in speaking. Only few of them rated themselves as excellent in speaking (12%). The rest of them were between good and averaged level(48%).

Table 05:

Student's Self-Rating to Listening as a Language Skill

Response	Participants	Percentage
Excellent	14	27%
Good	13	25%
Average	16	31%
Weak	18	15%

Figure 05: Student's Self-Rating to Listening as a Language Skill



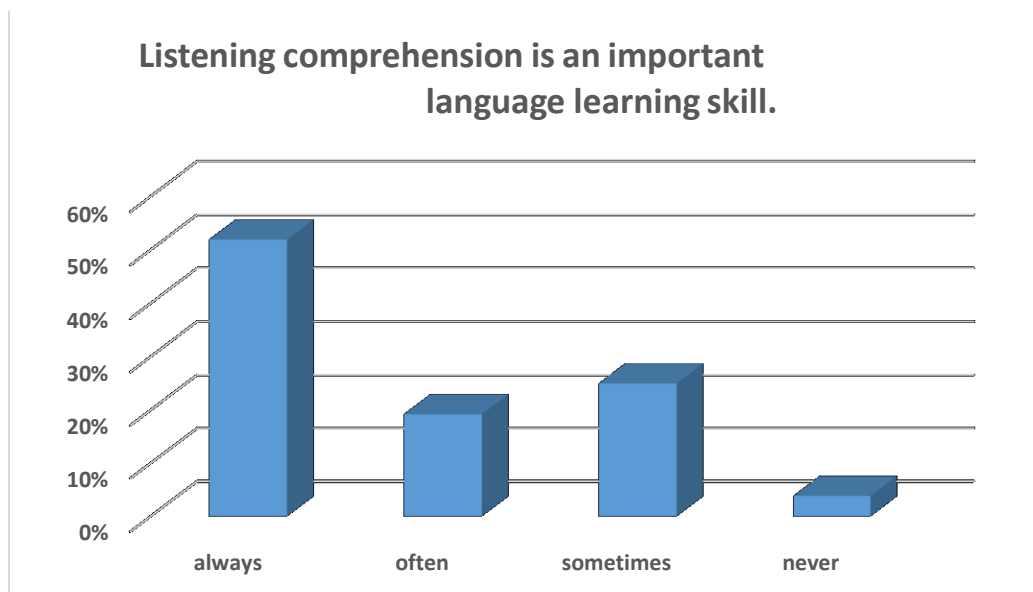
From the literature review of listening, it is regarded as a complex process that requires full attention with multiple processes simultaneously in order accomplish communicative goal. Whereas, the majority of students claimed that they have a good level of proficiency in listening(85%), however; a few of them admitted that they were weak at listening(15).

Table 06:

Students 'Perception toward the Importance of Listening Skill in Language Acquisition

Response	Participants	Percentage
always	27	52%
often	10	19%
sometimes	13	25%
never	02	04%

Figure 06: Students 'Perception toward the Importance of Listening skill in Language Acquisition



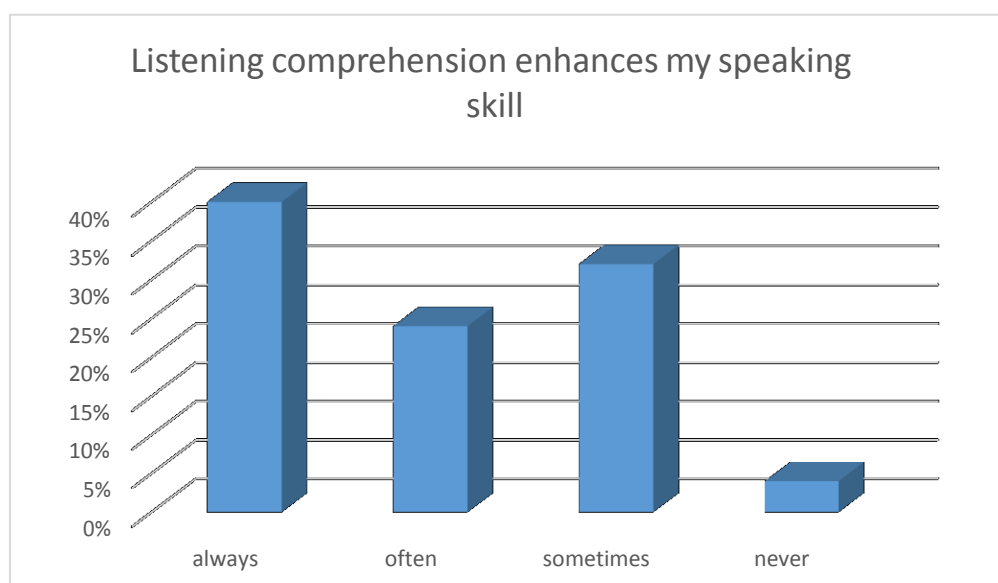
From the above table as well the graph we can deduce that the majority of students are aware of the importance of listening skill in the process of language acquisition. More than 90% students knew that they acquire the linguistic aspects of the language, grammatical rules as well new vocabulary from listening since it is considered as a receptive skill. Only few of them(4%) were neglecting it's the importance.

Table 07:

Frequency of Learners 'Opinions about the Role of Listening Comprehension in Enhancing Speaking Skill.

Response	Participants	Percentage
always	20	%38
often	12	%23
sometimes	16	%31
never	02	%04

Figure 07: Frequency of Learners 'Opinions about the Role of Listening Comprehension in Enhancing Speaking Skill.



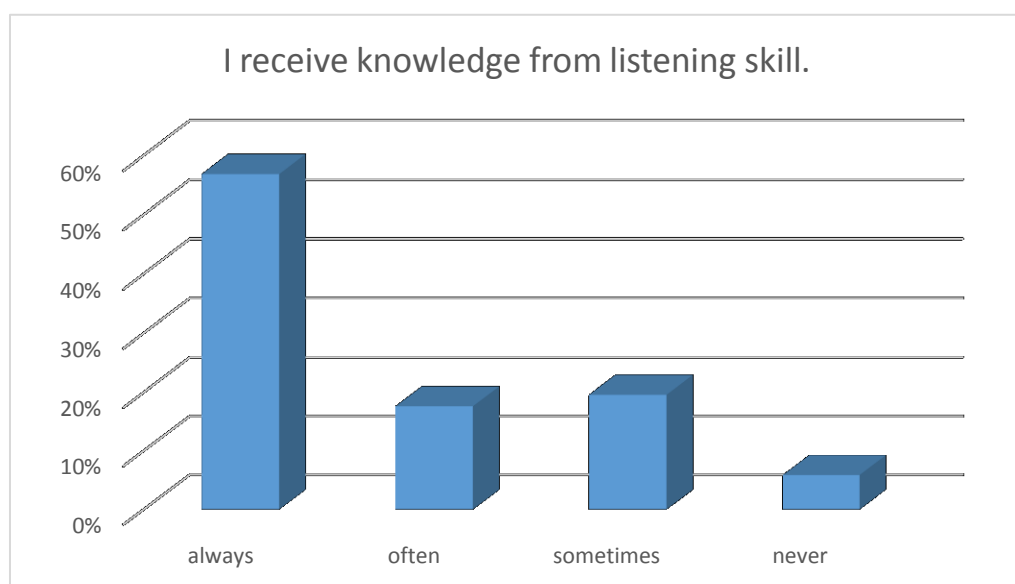
According to Rost (2001) listening comprehension plays a significant role in developing student's speaking skill. The more students are exposed to L2 listening as well native speakers the more they would have opportunities to acquire speaking aspects such as the phonological rules, accent, intonation and pronunciation. As illustrated in the above graph the majority of students (96%) believe that listening enhances their speaking. Only few students claimed that listening did not enhance their speaking skill.

Table 08:

Frequency of Learner's Opinions about the Role of Listening Comprehension in Language Acquisition

Response	Participants	Percentage
always	29	56%
often	09	17%
sometimes	10	19%
never	03	06%

Figure08: *Frequency of Learner's Opinions about the Role of Listening Comprehension in Language Acquisition*

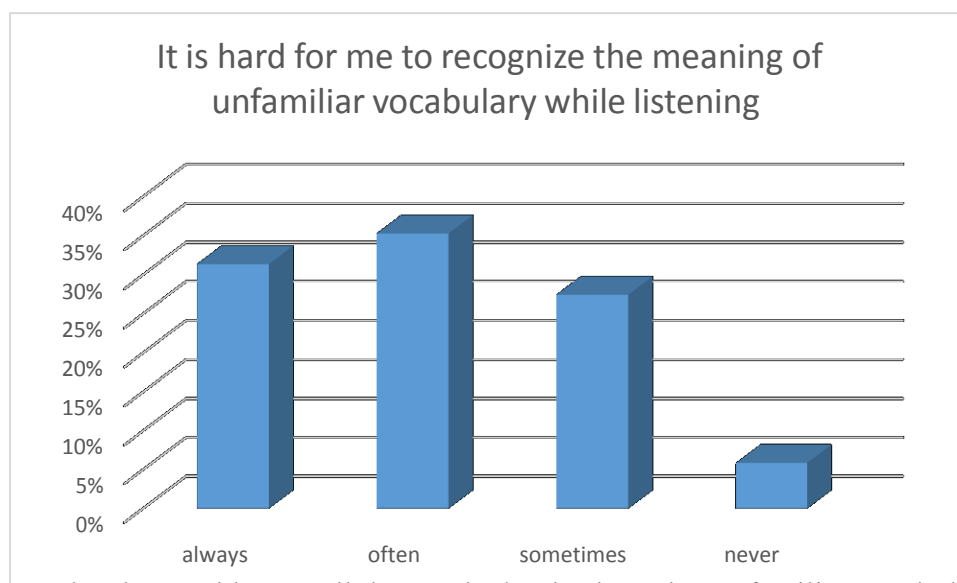


Listening comprehension is considered as a receptive language skill, which enables any EFL student to acquire new knowledge when listening to the target language. The majority of students(96%) claimed that listening comprehension has significant role in developing their language proficiency. Infact,there are many listening sources that have positive effect on learners such as learning environment like BBC learning channels.

Table 09:
Frequency of Learner's Opinions about Unfamiliar Vocabulary as a Factor that Hinders their Listening

Response	Participants	Percentage
always	16	31%
often	18	35%
sometimes	14	26%
never	03	06%

Figure 09: *Frequency of Learner's Opinions about Unfamiliar Vocabulary as a Factor that Hinders their Listening*



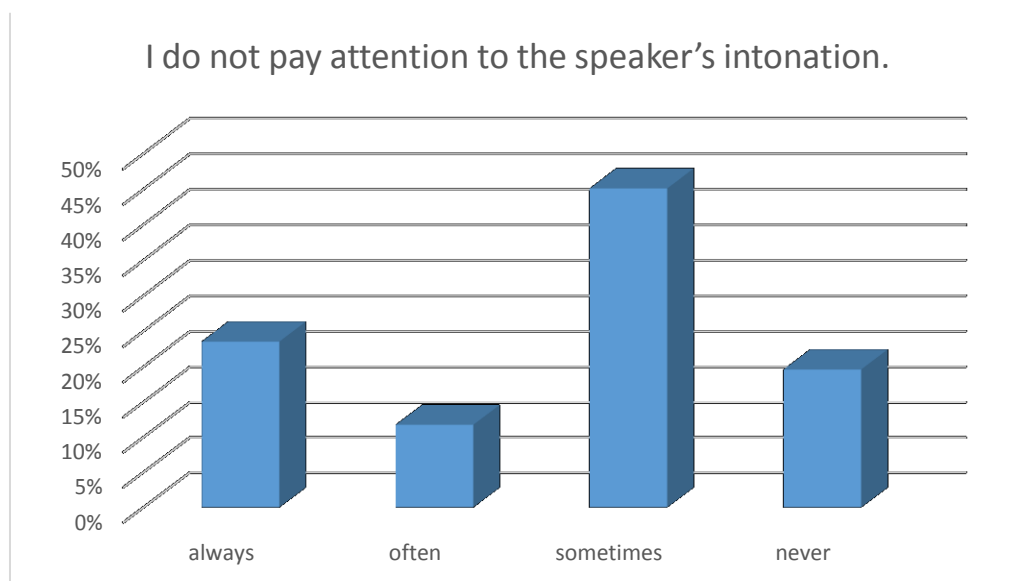
The above table as well the graph clearly show that unfamiliar vocabulary is a constraint that hinders student's listening comprehension process. Most students (95%) stated that the comprehension of new terms while listening was a very difficult process for them and it takes time to recognize its appropriate meaning. While about 5% of students had the ability to understand the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary while listening easily.

Table 10:

Frequency of Student's Opinions about the Importance of the Speaker's Intonation in the Process of Listening Comprehension

Response	Participants	Percentage
always	12	23%
often	06	12%
sometimes	23	44%
never	10	19%

Figure10: Frequency of Student's Opinions about the Importance of the Speaker's Intonation in the Process of Listening Comprehension



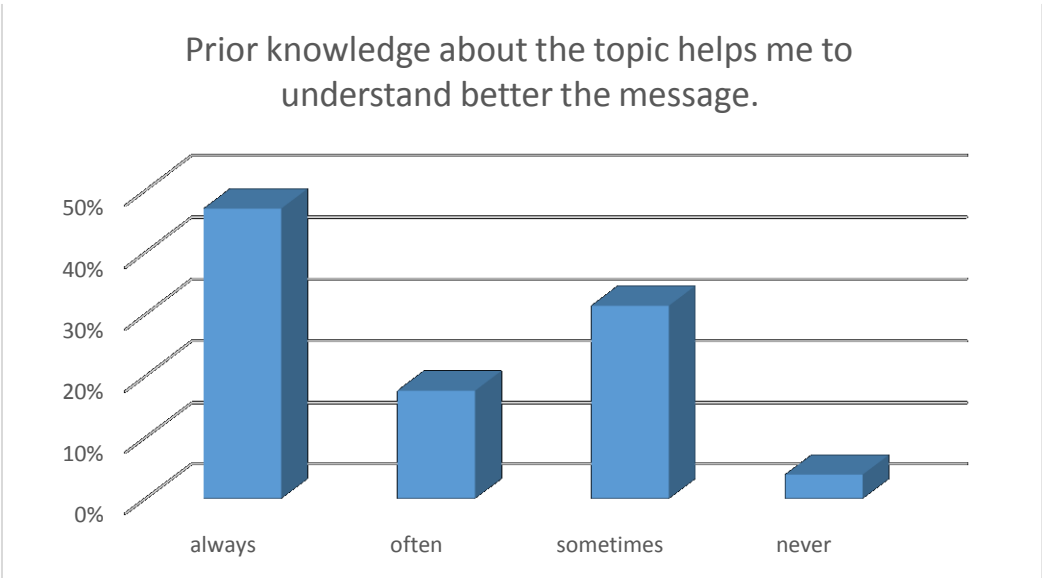
Intonation is a variation of pitch in speaking. Hence, the speaker's intonation plays a significant role in daily communication. It helps the listener to understand and accomplish communicative goals. It clearly shows the interlocutors psychological state and the intended meaning being conveyed by them. Consequently, the majority of students (80%) were not aware of its importance. More than 80% of students claimed that they do not pay attention to the speaker's intonation in daily communication. While about 20% of students stated that had the

ability to distinguish the psychological state as well the intended meaning the speaker while communicating through his intonation

Table 11:
Student's Perceptions toward the Importance of Prior Knowledge in Understanding the Spoken Language

Response	Participants	Percentage
always	24	46%
often	09	17%
sometimes	16	31%
never	02	04%

Figure 11: Student's Perceptions toward the Importance of Prior Knowledge in Understanding the Spoken Language



Achieving communicative goals requires efforts from both sides the speaker as well the listener. Applying various language strategies such as prior knowledge helps the listener to understand better the message. Hence, the majority of students responses (more than 95%) demonstrated the significant effect of the listener's prior knowledge about the topic in

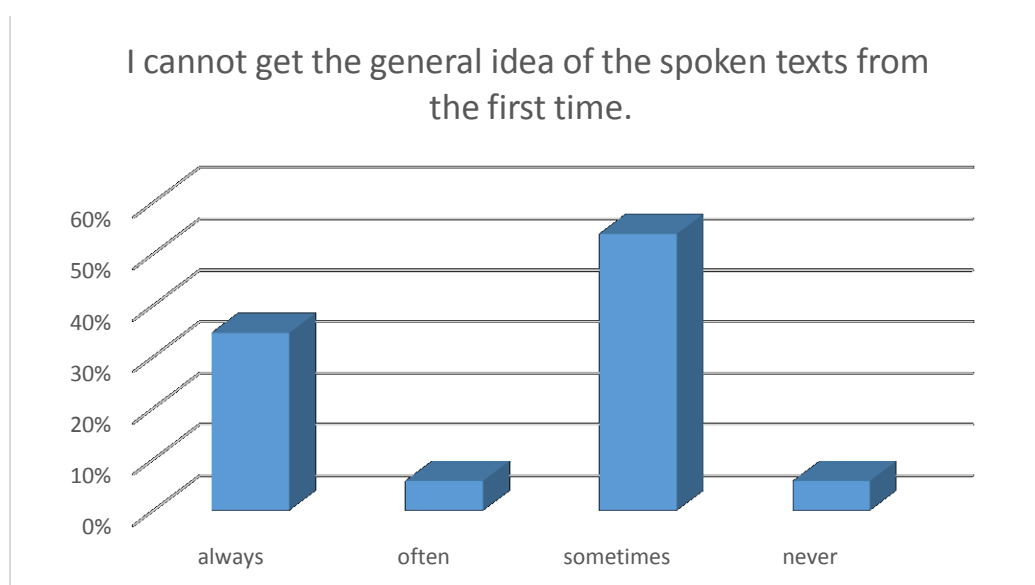
constructing the appropriate meaning being conveyed by the speaker through the sociocultural norms that govern the language.

Table 12:

Student's Perceptions toward Time's Frequency in Understanding the Spoken Language

Response	Participants	Percentage
always	18	34%
often	03	06%
sometimes	28	54%
never	03	06%

Figure 12: Student's Perceptions toward Time's Frequency in Understanding the Spoken Language



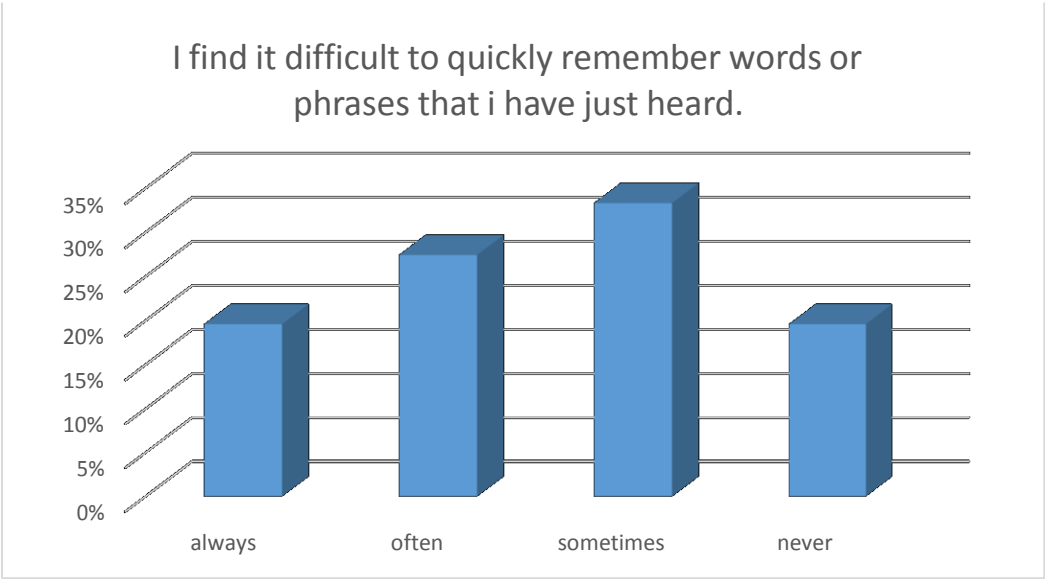
In foreign language exposure, FL students encounter different linguistic aspects such as new terms, grammatical rules as well new phonological system. Hence, the majority of students(84%) could not understand spoken English from the first exposure easily.Unless, they repeat it several times. Only few of them(56%) could easily understand spoken language from the first time.

Table 13:

Student’s Perceptions toward the Role of Short-Term Memory in Listening Comprehension

Response	Participants	Percentage
always	10	19%
often	14	27%
sometimes	17	33%
never	10	19%

Figure 13: Student’s Perceptions toward the Role of Short-Term Memory in Listening Comprehension



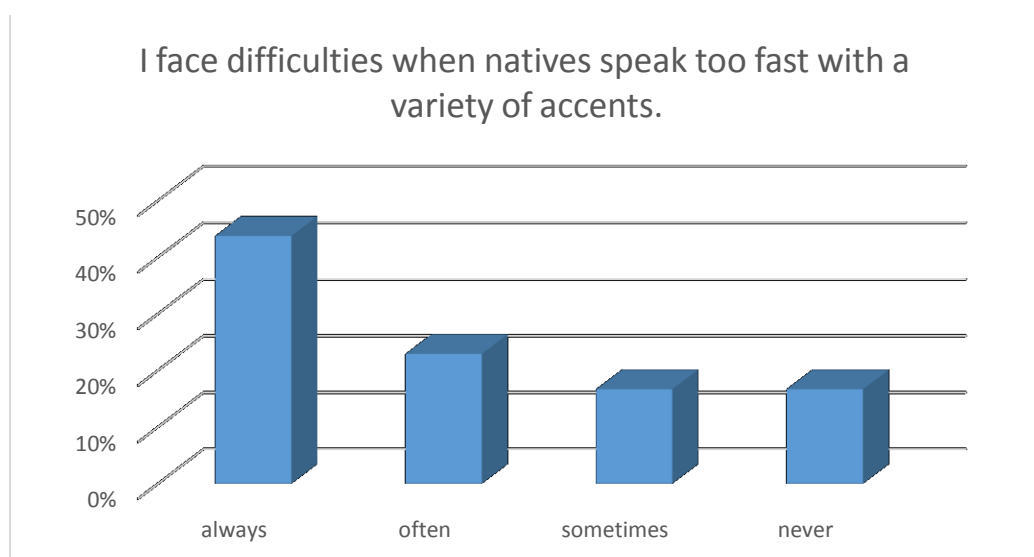
Despite of the importance of short-term memory in the process of listening comprehension ,the majority of students were facing problems with working memory.80% of students could not remember phrases that they heard from the surrounding environment. While about 20% of them had a strong working memory that enables them to remember and understand spoken language easily.

Table 14:

Student's Perceptions toward the Importance of Accent and Speech Rate in the Process of Listening Comprehension

Figure 14: Student's Perceptions toward the Importance of Accent and Speech Rate in the Process of Listening Comprehension

Response	Participants	Percentage
always	21	40%
often	11	21%
sometimes	08	15%
never	08	15%



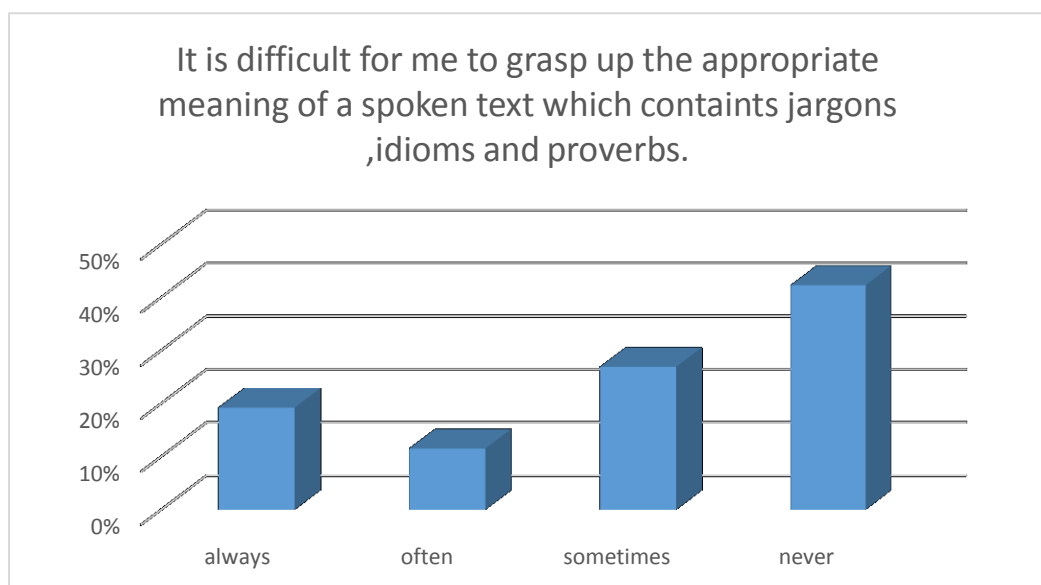
Speech rate is considered one of the main factors that may hinder listening proficiency. Hence the majority (85%) of students encounter a kind of difficulty when native speaker's speak too fast with a variety of accents such as British ,American or even Scottish. It seems a little bit difficult for them to understand all the linguistic aspects of a language simultaneously.

Table 15:

Student's Perceptions toward the Effect of Jargons, Idioms and Proverbs in Listening Comprehension

Response	Participants	Percentage
always	10	19%
often	06	12%
Always	14	27%
never	22	42%

Figure 15: Student's Perceptions toward the Effect of Jargons, Idioms and Proverbs in Listening Comprehension



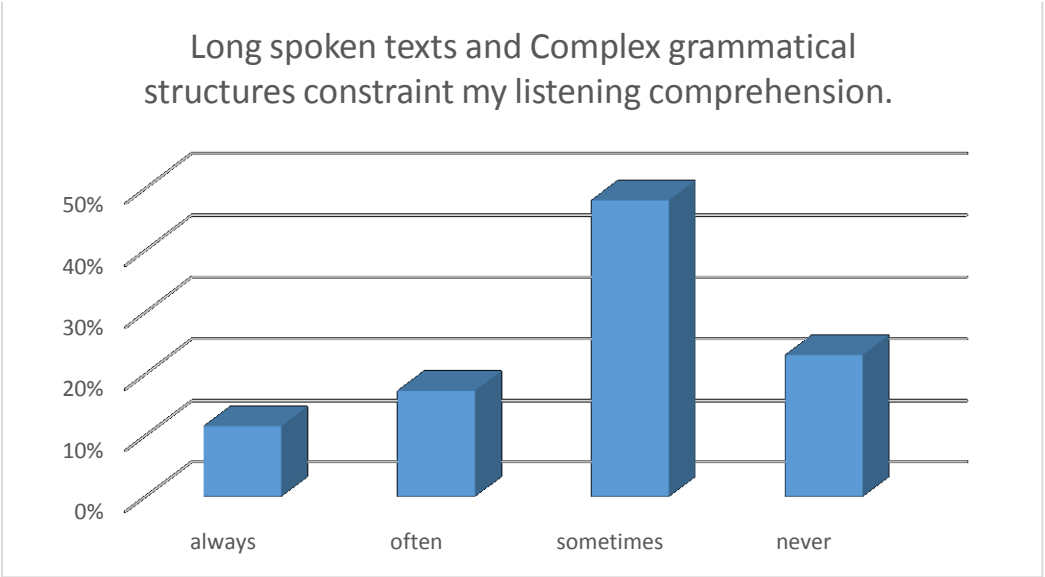
Having a reach language background is a key to acquire any foreign language including jargons and idioms .Foreign language background has a significant role in understanding the sociocultural norms that govern the spoken language. Despite of its importance ,most students(60%) claimed that they encounter problems when the spoken language contains jargons and idioms. While about (40%) of them, it was a successful learning strategy for a better language understanding.

Table 16:

Student's Perceptions toward the Effect of Long and Complex Grammatical on Listening Comprehension

Response	Participants	Percentage
always	06	12%
often	09	17%
sometimes	25	48%
never	12	23%

Figure 16: Student's Perceptions toward the Effect of Long and Complex Grammatical on Listening Comprehension



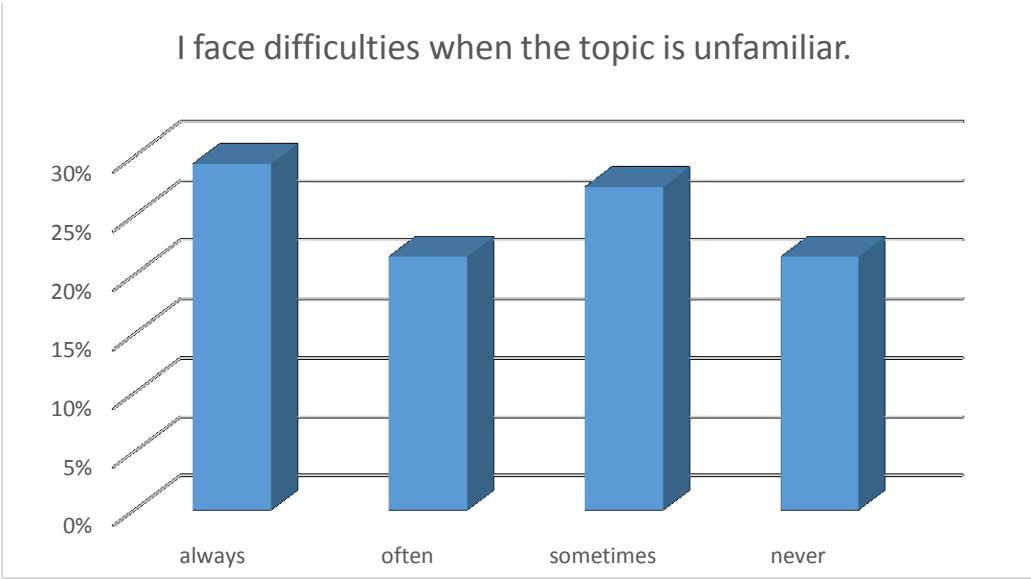
Long and complex grammatical structures were seen as factors that hinder listening comprehension for (80%) of students. While about (20%) of students, complex structures was not a constraint for them.

Table : 17

Student’s Perceptions toward the Effect of the Topic’s Familiarity on Student’s Comprehension

Response	Participants	Percentage
always	15	29%
often	11	21%
sometimes	14	27%
never	11	21%

Figure 17: Student’s Perceptions toward the Effect of the Topic’s Familiarity on Student’s Comprehension



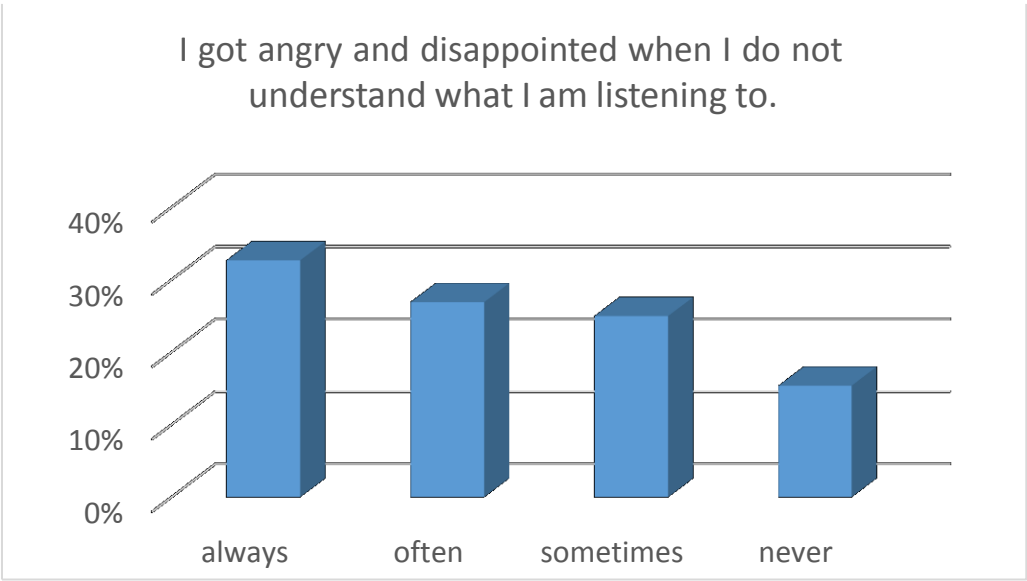
The topic’s familiarity plays a significant role in understanding any spoken language .As a result; the majority of students (80%) encounter a kind of difficulty when the topic is unfamiliar .Unlike the rest of them(20%) could easily use other strategies to understand the topics.

Table 18:

Student’s Perceptions toward the Effect of their Psychological State on their Listening Comprehension

Response	Participants	Percentage
Always	17	33%
Often	14	27%
Sometimes	13	25%
Never	08	15%

Graph 18: Student’s Perceptions toward the Effect of their Psychological State on their Listening Comprehension

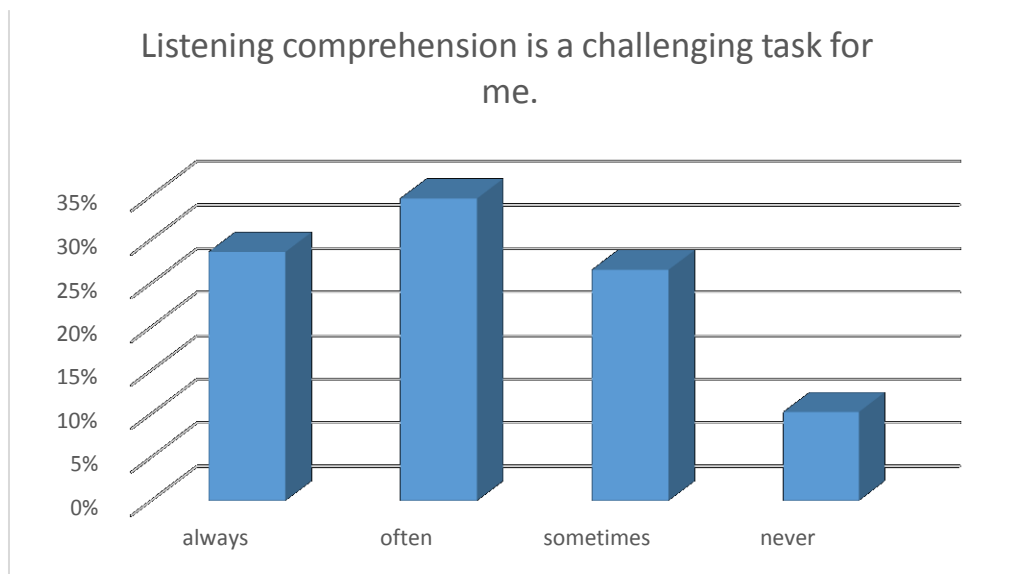


The psychological state of the listener affects his comprehension to spoken language .Consequently; more than (80%) of students were affected. As a result, they got disappointed when they were not able to understand what other were saying. Whether about (15%) of students, tried to control their psychological state while listening.

Table 19:
Student's Perceptions toward Listening as a Challenging Skill

Response	Participants	Percentage
Always	14	27%
Often	17	32%
Sometimes	13	25%
Never	05	10%

Graph 19: Student's Perceptions toward Listening as a Challenging Skill



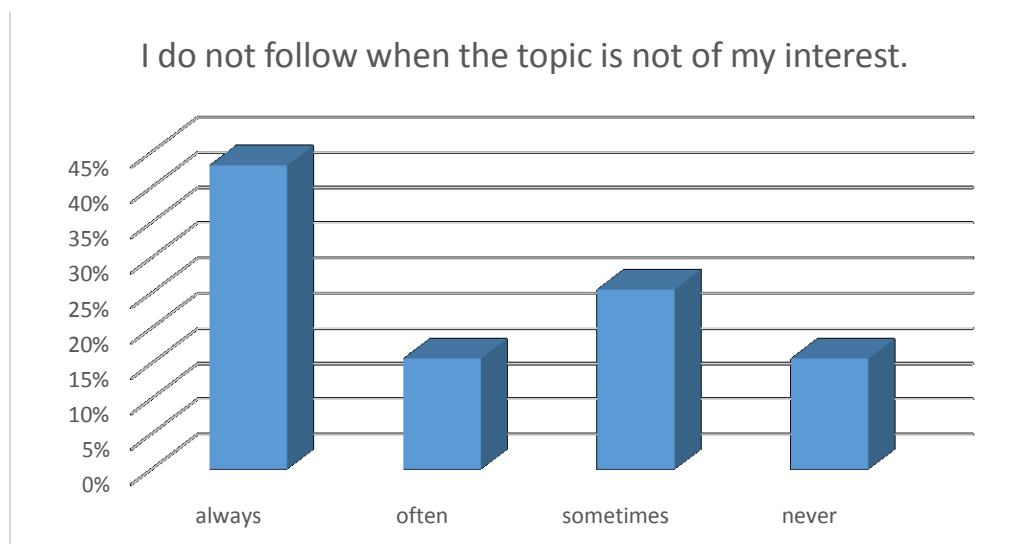
According to the complex nature of listening comprehension which is the process of interpreting the speaker's intentional meaning for (Rost,2002).Most students(90%) consider listening skill as a challenging language task to be accomplished easily .while only about 10% of them were easily capable of achieving listening proficiency. It has been proved that listening comprehension is a difficult language skill to be accomplished easily for EFL students.

Table 20:

Student's Perceptions toward the Importance of Interesting Topics in the Process of Listening Comprehension

Response	Participants	Percentage
Always	22	42%
Often	08	15%
Sometimes	13	25%
Never	08	15%

Graph 20: *Student's Perceptions toward the Importance of Interesting Topics in the Process of Listening Comprehension*

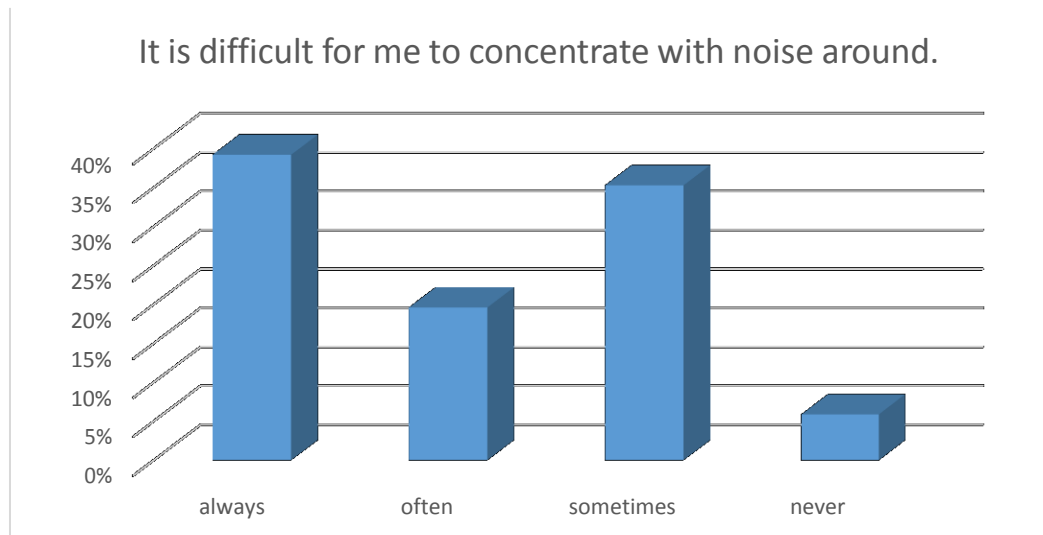


Interesting topics have a significant effect on listening comprehension .Thus ,the majority of students(85%) claimed that they do not follow the speaker when the topic is not interesting. While the rest of them (15%) they were interesting about any learning topics in which they can acquire new knowledge.

Table 21:
Student's Perceptions toward the Effect of Noise on Listening Comprehension Process

Response	Participants	Percentage
Always	20	38%
Often	10	19%
Sometimes	18	35%
Never	03	06%

Graph 21: *Student's Perceptions toward the Effect of Noise on Listening Comprehension Process*

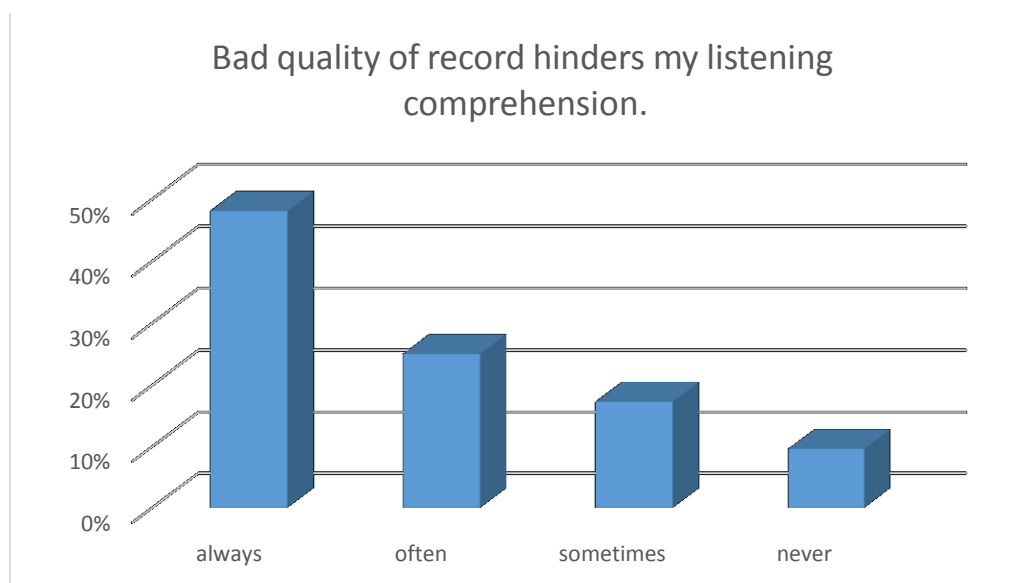


Noise is one of the main factors that hinders EFL listening comprehension skill. As a result, the majority of students (95%) claimed that they could not understand and communicate effectively when there is noise around. Unlike the rest of them; they claimed that noise does not affect them.

Table 22:
Student's Perceptions toward Quality Record's Effect on Listening Comprehension

Response	Participants	Percentage
Always	25	48%
Often	13	25%
Sometimes	09	17%
Never	05	10%

Graph 22: Student's Perceptions toward Quality record's Effect on Listening Comprehension



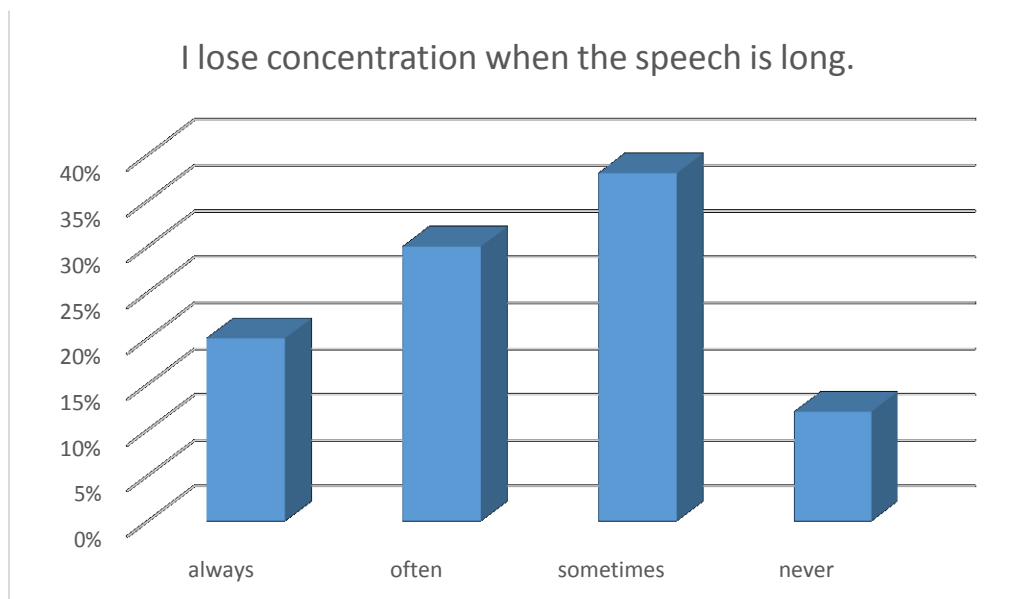
Bad quality of record was seen as a factor that hinders listening comprehension process. Consequently, the majority of students (90%) were facing comprehension problems when the records were poor. While few of them could easily understand recorded speeches easily even when they had bad quality.

Table 23:

Student's Perceptions toward the Effect of Speech Length on Listening Comprehension

Response	Participants	Percentage
Always	10	19%
Often	15	29%
Sometimes	19	37%
Never	06	12%

Graph 23: Student's Perceptions toward the Effect of Speech Length on Listening Comprehension



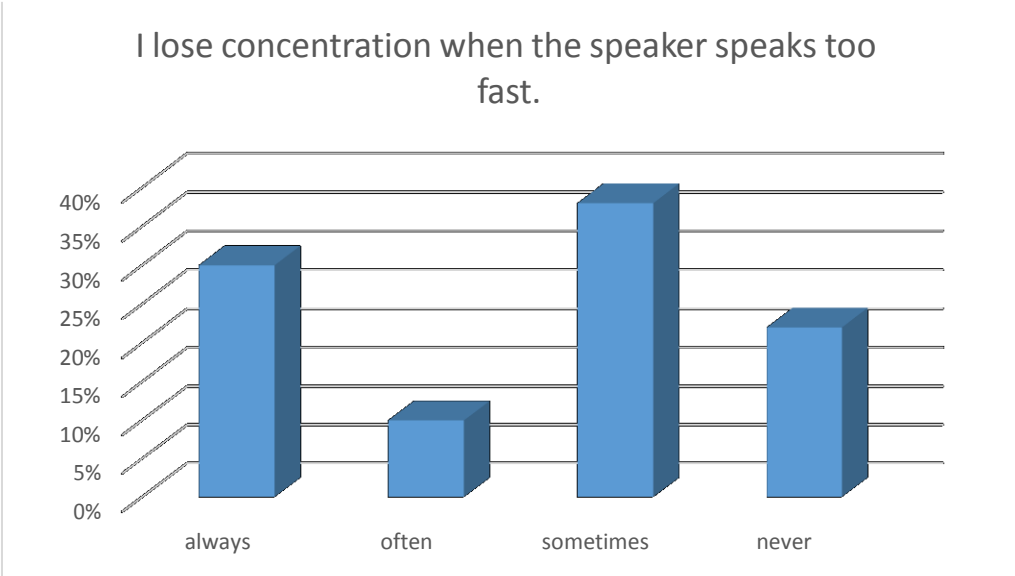
Speech length affects listening comprehension skill. Consequently; more than (90%) of students claimed that they lost concentration when the speech is long. Unlike the others (10%), it did not affect their comprehension.

Table 24:

Student’s Perception toward the Effect of Speech Rate in Listening Comprehension

Response	Participants	Percentage
Always	15	29%
Often	05	10%
Sometimes	19	37%
Never	11	21%

Graph 24: Student’s Perceptions toward the Effect of Speech Rate on Listening Comprehension



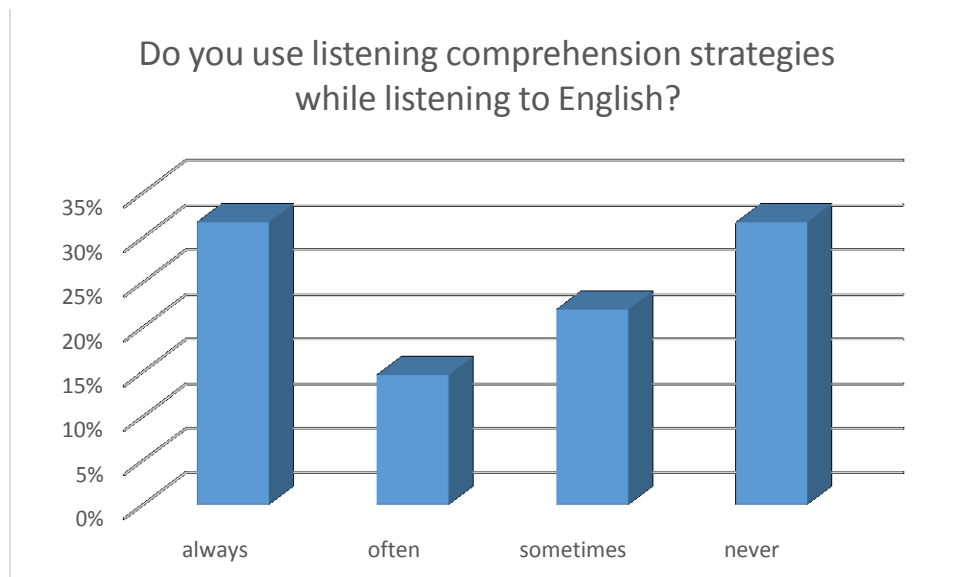
From student’s responses, we can deduce that speech rate affects students listening comprehension. Consequently; about (80%) of them could not concentrate and understand the language, when the speaker speaks too fast .Unlike the rest of them (20%) were not affected by it.

Table 25:

Student's Perceptions toward the Importance of Strategy Use while Listening

Response	Participants	Percentage
Always	13	25%
Often	06	12%
Sometimes	09	17%
Never	13	25%

Graph 25: Student's Perceptions toward the Importance of Strategy Use while Listening.



The majority of students were aware of the importance of using strategies while listening to achieve a better understanding of spoken language. 70% of students claimed that they use listening strategies. While about (30%) of students never use strategies.

5. Discussion of the main results

Drawing upon the results obtained from the employed gathering instrument. The majority of students were fully aware about the importance of listening skill. Consequently, listening comprehension is considered as a significant language skill for them. It helps them to achieve a good level of proficiency that enables them to sustain an effective communication. They claimed that extensive exposure to L2 listening would promote their linguistic competence. It develops their vocabulary bank, new grammatical structures and even the phonological features of a language. Furthermore; it would enhance their speaking skill.

Correspondingly; based upon the student's questionnaire analysis, this study comes to prove the research hypothesis. It concluded that third year students in Salah Al Dinne Al Ayoubi at M'sila are facing difficulties when listening to English. Consequently; those constraints hinder their spoken language comprehension. These problems are categorized into several types. Linguistic difficulties such as unknown vocabulary, complex grammatical structures. The speaker's accent as well the psychological state of the listener like lack of interest and anxiety. Moreover, the physiological setting can also have an effect on the listener's ability such as quality of records. Furthermore; the lack of contextual knowledge, jargons, idioms, noise, working memory and last but not least lack of strategy use are considered as factors that affect EFL students listening comprehension.

Finally; FFL teachers can help their student to overcome their constraints by providing appropriate learning strategies and environment. Listening materials are considered as a motivational teaching tools. Hence; adapting and adopting them can have a positive effect in enhancing listening skill. Moreover; varying teaching inputs like storytelling, English songs, radio and even BBC learning channels. Furthermore, teachers are supposed to equip their students by specific techniques like using schemata theory, guessing unknown vocabulary from context and asking for assistance when they are stuck. They are considered as best ways that

promote listening.

General Conclusion

Listening comprehension in English as a foreign language is challenging to many students, particularly to those who experience major listening difficulties. The latter tend to be related to the insufficient classroom training as cited in Hammuda(2013) in his investigation, as well as to the inadequate use of the appropriate listening strategies. Consequently; the majority of them stand as obstacles against the development of this language skill (Rost,2001).These factors can be drawn upon the complex nature and process of the listening skill itself..

Therefore, the main goal behind this dissertation is to do a deep investigation to collect student's perceptions toward the factors that cause listening difficulties. This research paper is divided into two main chapters, a theoretical as well a practical part.

The theoretical framework consists of two parts. They are devoted for collecting previous literature review about listening as a language skill. In fact, the first part is concerned with the major listening comprehension aspects including its kinds, types, process itself as well its main strategies. While the second one covers the major factors that attribute listening comprehension. The second chapter is divided into two parts,the methodological as well the practical one.The methodological section explains the choice of the method,participnats and settings,description of the research tool as well data collection procedure.

Furthermore, the practical part main goal is to confirm or refute the research hypothesis. Hence, the study was descriptive analytical in nature. Form the obtained data in the student's questionnaire, a general idea has been got about the different problems of listening skill in English toward language proficiency. The research sample includes fifty-two students .The majority of them contributed by providing their appropriate responses to reach the ultimate goal

of this study.

Notably; the research results clearly show that EFL students at Salah Eddine Al-Ayoubi secondary school students encounter different problems and factors when it comes to listening comprehension as a language skill. Those problems are related to some factors such as the psychological state of the speaker and the listener ,the physiological settings like bad quality of records, distortion and noise, linguistic features and speech content like; speech rate, accent's variety, topic's prior knowledge especially when it contains:jargons,idioms ,unfamiliar vocabulary, the last and list one is the lack of strategy use. Infact ;those are the major factors which can hinder EFL listening skill. Thus; such problems need to be discussed and taken into account in order to find out appropriate strategies as well solutions for students to overcome their constraints

Based on the results reached in this investigation and its implications for EFL listening comprehension, a number of recommendations can be considered for further research. In fact, achieving language proficiency through listening requires efforts from both teachers as well students. Students are supposed to be aware of the importance of listening comprehension skill in the process of language acquisition. They have to develop and work on their skills.

Furthermore,the research can be carried out to investigate the possible difficulties that EFL students may encounter in second language acquisition. It would be more empirical if others can replicate the study using other research collecting tools. The experimental method would be a more reliable technique. Especially, students tests to diagnose the extent to which factors can influence and affect listening comprehension. Consequently ,making use of those research results can lead course book designers ,material developers as well teachers to reconsider listening and give it more importance as a language skill.

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**Case Study: Third Year Students.
Questionnaire**

Dear students:

The present study investigates” the listening comprehension problems encountered by third year Salah Eddine Al ayoubi secondary school students while listening to English”. This questionnaire is designed to support our investigation .Thus you are kindly invited to answer this questions by selecting the answer which best reflects your opinion.

1-Gender

Male Female

Students' self-rating to language skills.

Items	Statement	Excellent	Good	Average	weak
1	How do you rate your English level?				

item	How do you rate your English language skills?	excellent	good	average	weak
1	Reading				
2	Writing				
3	Speaking				

4	Listening				
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A- Students 'perception to the importance of listening as language skill.

Items	Statements	always	often	sometimes	never
1	Listening comprehension is an important language learning skill.				
2	Listening comprehension is a difficult language skill.				
3	Listening comprehension is a boring task for me and it makes me feel impatient.				
4	Listening comprehension enhances my speaking skill				
5	I receive knowledge from listening skill.				

B- Problems related to linguistics features:

Items	Statements	always	often	sometimes	never
1	It is hard for me to recognize the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary while listening				
2	When encountering an unknown word , i stop listening and i try to think about its meaning.				
3	I find pronunciation familiar but cannot recognize the word.				
4	I do not pay attention to the speaker's intonation.				
5	Prior knowledge about the topic helps me to understand better the message.				

C- Problems related to the listener:

Items	Statements	always	often	sometimes	never
1	I cannot get the general idea of the spoken texts from the first time.				
2	I find it difficult to quickly remember words or phrases that i have just heard.				
3	I face difficulties while listening to English without subtitles.				
4	I face difficulties when natives speak too fast with a variety of accents.				

D- Problems related to the content of the speech:

Items	Statements	always	often	sometimes	never
1	I use my topic's prior knowledge to understand the spoken texts.				
2	It is difficult for me to grasp up the appropriate meaning of a spoken text which constraints jargons ,idioms and proverbs.				
3	Long spoken texts and Complex grammatical structures constraint my listening comprehension.				
4	I face difficulties when the topic is unfamiliar.				

E – Problems related to the psychological and physiological settings:

Items	Statements	always	often	sometimes	never

1	I got angry and disappointed when I do not understand what I am listening to.				
2	Listening comprehension is a challenging task for me.				
3	I do not follow when the topic is not of my interest.				
4	It is difficult for me to concentrate with noise around.				
5	Bad quality of record hinders my listening comprehension.				

F-istingening problems caused by failure of concentration:

Items	Statements	always	often	sometimes	never
1	I lose my concentration when I try to think about the meaning of new words.				
2	I lose concentration when the speech is long.				
3	I lose concentration when the speaker speaks too fast.				

G- Problems related to listening strategies:

Items	Statements	always	often	sometimes	never
1	I guess the meaning of unfamiliar words from context.				
2	I translate key words as i listen				
3	Do you use learning strategies when listening?				
4	Do you seek help when you are not able to rich the full comprehension?				
5	Do you use listening comprehension strategies while listening to English?				

1-What are the different strategies that you use while listening?

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