

EFL Listening Comprehension: Learners' Challenges and Teachers' Strategies: A Descriptive Study of Al-Ruhaibat Preparatory Schools

Amal Omar Ramadan Dyab*
Faculty of Engineering, Nalut University, Libya

استيعاب استماع اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية: تحديات المتعلمين واستراتيجيات المعلمين: دراسة وصفية في المدارس الإعدادية بمنطقة الرحيبات

آمال عمر رمضان دياب*
كلية الهندسة، جامعة نالوت، ليبيا

*Corresponding author: 23071982amald@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This study aims to investigate the challenges encountered by Libyan preparatory school students toward listening comprehension. It also highlights the most effective strategies that help to overcome these challenges. The study used a mixed method research design. The data was collected using a questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire was given to a sample of fifty- three students at preparatory school stage, whereas the interview was held with nine English language teachers. The results revealed that the majority of learners experience challenges in listening comprehension, including speed of the speech, accent of speakers, limited vocabulary, lack of background knowledge of the topic, anxiety and lack of confidence. As a result, these challenges make it difficult to comprehend the spoken discourse in English. Some strategies employed by teachers in classrooms presented significant effectiveness in enhancing learners' listening skills and strengthening their ability to overcome challenges. Finally, a number of significant recommendations and suggestions are provided in this paper.

Keywords: Listening Comprehension, Learners' Challenges, Background Knowledge, Listening Strategies.

المخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء التحديات التي يواجهها طلاب المرحلة الإعدادية في ليبيا في فهم مادة الاستماع، وتسليط الضوء على أكثر الاستراتيجيات فعالية للتغلب على هذه التحديات، حيث استخدمت الدراسة المنهج المختلط، وجمعت البيانات من خلال استبيان ومقابلات؛ حيث وُزِع الاستبيان على عينة من ثلاثة وخمسين طالبًا في المرحلة الإعدادية، بينما أجريت المقابلات مع تسعة معلمين للغة الإنجليزية، وكشفت النتائج أن غالبية المتعلمين يواجهون صعوبات في فهم المحتوى المسموع؛ وتشمل سرعة الكلام، ولهجة المتحدثين، ومحدودية المفردات، ونقص المعرفة الأساسية بالموضوع، والقلق، وانعدام الثقة، ونتيجة لذلك، تُصعّب هذه التحديات فهم الخطاب المنطوق باللغة الإنجليزية، وقد أظهرت بعض الاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمها المعلمون في الفصول الدراسية فعالية ملحوظة في تحسين مهارات الاستماع لدى المتعلمين وتعزيز قدرتهم على التغلب على هذه التحديات، وأخيرًا، قدمت هذه الورقة عدد من التوصيات والاقتراحات المهمة.

Introduction:

Learning English as a foreign language is a path that enables learners to communicate with others in daily life. Language proficiency involves four central skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing; where listening skill serves as an important input for developing those skills (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). Although listening skill plays an effective role in learning English, it is thought to be the most difficult skill that second language learners encounter. EFL learners believe that listening comprehension is one of the skills in which they perform very weak (Graham, 2006). In acquiring a foreign language, learners mostly suffer from numerous difficulties in understanding the oral language, particularly when they are in "one-way listening situation", where they do not have the chance to communicate with the utterer (Kumar, 2021). Enhancing listening comprehension and overcoming listening difficulties are usually dependent on the teaching program. The programs should emphasize on efficient methods and strategies that assist learners comprehend the language input, improve vocabulary, deal with variety of accent, have knowledge about the topic and build their confidence in listening (Win & Maung, 2019). In order to identify the challenges in listening comprehension, it is vital to discuss the definition of listening comprehension, the importance of listening skills, potential issues and difficulties related to listening, and successful teaching strategies that facilitate listening comprehension process.

Problem of the Study:

Given the researcher's extensive experience in teaching English, it has been observed that Libyan students especially at preparatory schools often struggle with listening comprehension. These obstacles hamper learners' ability to understand English effectively, impact their academic performance and overall language acquisition. Despite the vital role of listening skills in language learning, few studies have examined how these interrelated difficulties influence preparatory students, leaving a gap in targeted strategies to address and overcome listening challenges.

Objectives of the Study:

The major objective of this study is to identify the challenges that Libya students at preparatory schools faced during listening comprehension

Significance of the Study:

Compared to the other three language skills, Vandergrift points out that listening skill is the most problematic part in the educational process (Vandergrift, 2007). In addition, the complex nature of the listening activities participates in making learning this skill difficult and challenging (Osada, 2004). Consequently, this paper is designed to investigate listening challenges that prevent learners acquiring language, identify gender differences in listening comprehension performance, address these difficulties and improve learners' language input by applying beneficial teaching strategies. Next, the research results could help English language educators pay attention to teaching strategies in the listening aspect in the classroom. Moreover, this paper might offer educative information and valuable insights that serve as a foundation for future research in related fields.

Literature Review:

Listening comprehension plays a crucial role in educational process. It was defined as a dynamic cognitive engagement in which listeners are required to integrate auditory input, linguistic knowledge, and contextual interpretation to construct meaning of the speech (Rost, 2002; Hamouda, 2013). According to Vandergrift, listening comprehension is a complex skill requires making distinctions between sounds, understanding vocabulary and linguistics patterns (Vandergrift, 1999). In other words, listening process needs focusing on the flow of the given information during a speech such as pronunciation of words, rate of speech, receptive vocabulary and grammatical structures in order to achieve the goal of the listening comprehension (Hansen & Jensen, 1994).

It is argued that listening comprehension is a receptive skill, in which the listener has to active his/her experience and background knowledge to reconstruct the message that the speaker aims [12], Bilokcuoğlu, 2014). Listening comprehension is not restricted to understanding words, but also focusing on the meaning of spoken language from various aspects. The listener must employ different types of prior knowledge by applying what he knows to what he perceives to understand the meaning of the utterance (Anderson & Lynch, 1988).

Listening comprehension consists of two main processes; bottom-up process and top-down process (Goh, (2017).]. In bottom-up process, the listeners need to recognize sounds, word meanings, grammar and vocabulary. Whereas top-down processing approach enables listeners activate their knowledge of the topic including contextual understanding, cultural familiarity, and subject matter expertise to construct the meaning of speech (Al-Nafisah, 2019). The development of proficient listening comprehension needs making a balance between both bottom-up and top-down strategies. This equilibrium may differ according to several variables including textual complexity, task design, speaker's characteristics, listener's ability and employed cognitive processing strategies (Vandergrift, 2007).

The most significant aim of listening in EFL is to understand what native speakers said and interact with them smoothly during conversations (Marc, Brown, & Nunan, 2007). Listening offers opportunities to individuals to exchange cultures with speakers from diverse societal backgrounds (Hedge, 2001). In the context of EFL education, listening skills serve as an essential component in aiding second language learners, improve key sides of language proficiency such as vocabulary and pronunciation [19], thereby encouraging them to deal with real- life conversations effectively.

Common Difficulties Faced by EFL Learners in Listening Comprehension:

Most learners of English have a belief that living in a non- English- speaking environment is the main reason for the difficulties they face in listening comprehension. However, there are other obstacles that prevent them from comprehending listening. The main difficulties are as follows:

Speed of the Speech:

Speed of speech of native speakers is the most challenge that hampers second language learners' listening comprehension; in which the learners fail to understand the message that the speaker wants to convey (Renandya, & Farrell, 2011). Misunderstanding the oral discourse can be occurred due to the learner's inability to control the speed of delivery (McDonough & Shaw, 1993). Osada (2004) suggested that "in most cases, listeners must process the text at a speed determined by speakers, which is generally quite fast" [p.58]. When effective mechanisms are not available in the context of language learning, the fast speech may lead to decrease both learners' motivation and their learning outcomes. Thus, it becomes a hindrance tool rather than a promoting one.

Comprehending Different Accents:

Another issue that should be taken into account is the accent. Some English learners cannot achieve success in listening because of the difficulty in understanding unfamiliar accents (Buck, 2001). Derwing and Munro argued that listening to varied accents may causes misunderstanding the spoken language (Derwing & Munro, 2005). In other words, learners' limited exposure to various English accents may hinder their comprehension process and prevent their effective communication, particularly if they are accustomed to hearing only one accent. For instance, when the Libyan students hear English with Chinese accent for the first time, they will face many challenges in listening.

Lack of Vocabulary:

Limited vocabulary knowledge is one of the obstacles that weaken learners' comprehension. While listening, learners may face unknown vocabulary that hampers their comprehending of the speech. Unfamiliar words often make the learners stop thinking around the sense of those words and thereby resulting in the missing of further elements of the utterance (Vu & Peters, 2021). Moreover, overlapping between the language of the oral input and the learners' vocabulary knowledge can affect their listening skill and contributes to a gap between them and educational process (Walker, (2014).

Lack of Prior Knowledge:

Prior knowledge is denoted by many terms such as topic knowledge, prerequisite knowledge or background knowledge. Lack of prior knowledge is one of the crucial factors influencing language learners' listening comprehension difficulties. Poor background knowledge in many cases can lead learners to misunderstand the speaker and comprehend what is meant. Walker (2014) pointed out that a major issue English learners have is that they have a small amount or no experience in "real listening" [p.196]. In other words, if the learners have no great deal of knowledge about the subject they are listening to, it will be difficult for them to follow the speech and interact with the speaker successfully.

Anxiety and Lack of Confidence:

Anxiety and lack of confidence in listening to English are considered among the challenges that language learners encounter. Several learners have a feeling of stress in listening environments, which can impact their concentration and capability to comprehend what they hear (Canaran, Bayram, Doğan, & Baturay, (2024). Moreover, teaching process in a classroom is sometimes the key reason for worsening the problem of the learners' lack of confidence. This is can be attributed to the unappropriated selection of auditory materials which may reduce the pedagogical efficacy of listening skills training (Ziane, (2011).

From the above mentioned, it is important to note that listening comprehension, particularly in classrooms, cannot be achieved in the attendance of multiple difficulties such as fast speech rate, a small range of vocabulary, difficult accent, unfamiliar lexis, anxiety and lack of confidence.

Strategies to Overcome Listening Challenges:

Listening strategies can be defined as the efficient methods that improve listening comprehension process (Vandergrift, 2007). Encouraging learners to overcome listening difficulties and develop their listening ability requires employing various strategies in classrooms. Teachers can enhance learners' performance in listening skills by choosing and applying diverse teaching strategies (Buck, 2001). These strategies can be divided in different activities namely pre-listening, while- listening and post-

listening activities. Each division includes a distinct set of activities designed to achieve the intended learning outcomes (Movva, Alapati, & Veliventi, (2022).

Pre-Listening Activities:

Pre-listening task generally takes place before listening. It comprises different activities that promote learners to gain primary information needed to comprehend the text (McDonough & Shaw, 1993). At this stage, teachers are required to prepare appropriate motivating activities, for instance, predicting content from the title, talking about pictures and answering some questions which relate to the text (Hedge, 2001). The main aim of the pre-listening phase is encouraging learners to utilize their background knowledge and anticipate important thoughts of the text before listening.

While- Listening Activities:

While-listening stage involves making related connections to the pre-listening stage (McDonough & Shaw, 1993). In this task, students are asked to attain at the same time both auditory processing and comprehension. In order for this to be achieved successfully, teachers can create different activities such as numbering graphical items, taking general notes and writing down specific information [4]. The key object for the while- listening phase is to understand speaker's message, confirm learners' expectation and get the core content of the auditory text.

Post-Listening Activities:

According to Jo McDonough, post- listening stage is an essential aspect of listening and a complementary task to the previous two stages, pre-listening and while-listening stages; it permits learners to represent what they are listening to in their mind (McDonough & Shaw, 1993). In this phase, teachers can create various activities such as verifying answers, summarizing important points and reviewing notes with a partner. Post-listening activities focus on offering opportunities for learners to confirm their comprehension, practice real-life language and become more proficient in the target language (Hedge, 2001).

Furthermore, classroom environment also requires choosing optimal listening texts, in which the teachers take into account the activation of topics with a clear accent, familiar vocabulary and an easy rate of speech in order to avoid learners' anxiety and build their confidence in listening to English.

Based on the foregoing, it becomes clear that educational process can assist students to develop listening comprehension and overcome many difficulties through activating beneficial strategies that offer a range of purposes for listening. These strategies can be taught as pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities.

Previous Studies:

Prior research in EFL contexts have similarly focused on listening comprehension. Juan and Abidin (2013) investigated the listening comprehension difficulties that Chinese learner encounters during learning English as a second language in Malaysia. The researchers used qualitative method (interview) to collect data. The interviews were conducted to determine learners' listening problems during pre-listening, while- listening and post- listening activities. The findings revealed that limited vocabulary and accent of native speakers are the most difficulties that learners face in listening to English (Juan, & Abidin, 2013). Darti and Asmawati (2017) determined many students' listening difficulties in State Islamic University of Alauddin Makassar. Descriptive method (interview and questionnaire) was used to gather data. The paper highlights different listening difficulties namely: accent of speakers, pronunciation, speed of speech, limited lexical repertoires, lack of concentration, and bad quality of recording. Consistent with the prior literature, the findings confirm that listening is the most difficult skill for learners who study foreign language. In addition, it further validates the importance of employing different strategies in classroom to reduce learners' listening difficulties (Asmawati, (2017). Moreover, Christine, Goh and Larry Vandergrift (2021) highlighted important subjects for both a research agenda and language teachers since it gave a useful picture of the progression of listening research in recent scholarly work. The findings are in agreement with the previous work, which also discussed the importance of using listening strategies in the learning- teaching process. These strategies assist both English language learners to improve their listening skills and teachers to facilitate teaching English as a foreign language.

Methodology of the Study:

A mixed method design was used in this study, namely a structured questionnaire and follow- up interviews. The questionnaire was intended and distributed to a number of Libyan students at the preparatory stage; while the interviews were conducted with a group of English language teachers. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods offers researchers a good strategy to support the reliability of their findings by gathering data from different sources (Narcy-Combes, 2008).

The participants in this study include 53 students studying English as a foreign language from four preparatory schools in Al- Ruhaibat city, Libya. All participants were randomly selected from both genders, male and female. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted with nine female instructors

who are teaching English in aforementioned schools in order to investigate strategies utilized in teaching listening in the classroom.

Data Collection Tools:

Data was collected through two tools; a questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire was used to examine the listening challenges that most Libyan preparatory students encounter and how these difficulties affect their confidence in learning English. The study used a 15-item questionnaire with a 4-point Likert scale (SD=1 to SA=4), to evaluate listening challenges (items 1–9) and strategy effectiveness (items 10–15). The tool was formatted on paper and pilot-tested for clarity. Responses are coded numerically for quantitative analysis and calculating mean scores to identify patterns in learners' listening challenges. A follow-up interview was conducted with English language teachers to gather supportive information about effective strategies that can be activated to improve the students' listening skills.

Data Collection Procedure:

The researcher introduced herself to the students who participate the questionnaire and the teachers who participate the interview and explain them the importance of their participation in this study. Before starting the questionnaire, participants were given a time to talk about various topics such as the importance of learning English language in opening many horizons in the future in order to reduce any pressure they might be feeling prior to answering questions and encourage them to have spontaneously.

The first step of data collection was managing the questionnaire, it was distributed to fifty- three students, from both genders, in Al- Ruhaibat city at four schools. The questionnaire was filled and sent back within four days; every school spent one day. While reading questionnaire questions, students needed translation of some unknown words to ensure that the correct answers are given. The questionnaire data was analyzed by SPSS software. The next step of data collection was the interview with English teachers. The interviews were conducted individually with nine female teachers because of the differing availabilities of each teacher. Each interview lasted twenty to thirty minutes and used a tape recorder to record participants' responses. Six questions were employed in the interview. These questions were open- questions to get deeper insights and specific information about the participants.

Results:

Results Related to the Questionnaire:

This section presents the results obtained from the questionnaire. The main goal of the questionnaire was to examine listening comprehension difficulties encounter Libyan preparatory students at Al- Ruhaibat city.

Prior performing the descriptive analysis of the data, the data was checked for the normality test. The data should be normally distributed in order to proceed for the statistical analysis. In this study, the normality assumption was checked through the skewness and kurtosis values. Skewness values indicate the asymmetry of the distribution; while the kurtosis values indicate the peakness of the distribution. Fay and Proschan (2010) asserted that the data is considered to have normal distribution if the skewness and kurtosis values range between -2 and +2. Table 1 presents the results of normality test.

Table (1): the results of normality test

Item	skewness	kurtosis
Compared to speaking, reading and writing, listening is the most difficult skill I encounter in learning English language.	-.21	-1.1
It is difficult to find out what the main goal of the listening task I am going to do is.	-.23	-.51
I find it difficult to comprehend the text when the speakers speak too fast without taking enough breaks	-.54	-.91
I find it difficult to understand the oral texts when the speakers speak with different accents.	-.27	-.04
I find it difficult to comprehend the spoken texts because there are many unknown words.	-.56	.07
I find it difficult to concentrate when I think about the meaning of new vocabulary.	-.32	-.65
I find it difficult to expect words that would come next when listening	-.81	-.42
I find it difficult to be quiet and decrease my anxiety before doing any listening task.	-.11	-1.51
Before doing listening comprehension task, I lose my self-confidence.	.34	-1.2
Pre-listening, while- listening and post- listening activities that teachers	-1.3	1.33
Predicting content from the title, talking about pictures and answering	-1.48	1.96
Taking general notes, writing down specific information and numbering pictures assist.	-1.355	1.504
Activities such as checking answers, making summary and comparing notes.	-1.315	1.843
My teacher encourages me to overcome my difficulties in listening	-.922	-.081
After many activities in the classroom, my listening skills and my English.	-1.039	.428

From Table 1, it can be confirmed that the data has normal distribution as the skewness and kurtosis values range between ± 2 (Fay & Proschan, 2010). Table 2 presents the descriptive analysis of the participants' challenges in listening. The analysis is presented using the mean (M) and the standard deviation (SD).

Table (2): descriptive analysis of the participants' challenges in listening

Challenges in listening			
No.	Item	M	SD
1.	Compared to speaking, reading and writing, listening is the most difficult skill I encounter in learning English language.	2.67	1.02
2.	It is difficult to find out what the main goal of the listening task I am going to do is.	2.81	.84
3.	I find it difficult to comprehend the text when the speakers speak too fast without taking enough breaks.	2.94	1.04
4.	I find it difficult to understand the oral texts when the speakers speak with different accents.	2.62	1.032
5.	I find it difficult to comprehend the spoken texts because there are many unknown words.	3.04	.791
6.	I find it difficult to concentrate when I think about the meaning of new vocabulary.	2.65	.926
7.	I find it difficult to expect words that would come next when listening.	3.13	.971
8.	I find it difficult to be quiet and decrease my anxiety before doing any listening task.	2.53	1.189

From Table 2, it can be observed that the students have difficulties in listening classes. The most difficult part was presented in item 7 "I find it difficult to expect words that would come next when listening" [M=3.13, SD=.971], followed by item 5 "I find it difficult to comprehend the spoken texts because there are many unknown words" [M=3.04, SD=.791]. The third difficulty was presented in Item 3 "I find it difficult to comprehend the text when the speakers speak too fast without taking enough breaks" [M=2.94, SD=1.04]. Item 2 "It is difficult to find out what the main goal of the listening task I am going to do is" received a low mean score [M=2.81, SD=.84]. It is interesting to note that item 1 "Compared to speaking, reading and writing, listening is the most difficult skill I encounter in learning English language", presents less difficulty [M=2.67, SD=1.02]. Moreover, item 6 "I find it difficult to concentrate when I think about the meaning of new vocabulary" received a low mean score [M=2.65, SD=.926], indicating less difficult aspect. The participants also consider Item 4 "I find it difficult to understand the oral texts when the speakers speak with different accents" as less difficult [M=2.62, SD=1.032]. Item 8 "I find it difficult to be quiet and decrease my anxiety before doing any listening task" is also perceived as less difficult item [M=2.53, SD=1.18]. Finally, the least mean was recorded in item 9 "Before doing listening comprehension task, I lose my self-confidence" [M=2.27, SD=1.105], indicating that the students do not seem to lose their confidence before listening activity.

Table (3): Strategies to overcome the listening difficulties

Strategies to overcome the listening difficulties			
1.	Before doing listening comprehension task, I lose my self-confidence.	2.27	1.105
2.	Pre-listening, while- listening and post- listening activities that teachers	3.21	.893
3.	Predicting content from the title, talking about pictures and answering	3.33	.86
4.	Taking general notes, writing down specific information and numbering pictures assist.	3.40	.799
5.	Activities such as checking answers, making summary and comparing notes.	3.23	.831
6.	My teacher encourages me to overcome my difficulties in listening.	3.08	.987
7.	After many activities in the classroom, my listening skills and my English.	3.13	.929

Table 3 revealed that the highest mean was recorded for item 12 "Taking general notes, writing down specific information and numbering pictures assist" [M=3.4, SD=.799], indicating that this item represents the most difficult part in listening by most of the students. The second difficult area was in item 11 "Predicting content from the title, talking about pictures and answering" with a high mean [M=3.33, SD= .86]. The third highest mean was recorder for item 13 "Activities such as checking answers, making summary and comparing notes" [M=3.23, SD=.831]. Pre-listening activity is also considered a difficult part, (item 10) "Pre-listening, while- listening and post- listening activities that teachers" [M=3.21, SD=.893]. Following that, item 7 and item 15 received a high mean [M=3.13, SD=.971] and [M=3.13, SD=.929] respectively, indicating that these items reveals some kind of difficulty of the students. Item 14 "My teacher encourages me to overcome my difficulties in listening" was in the sixth order of difficulty based on the students' responses [M=3.08, SD=.987]. The seventh difficulty was presented in item 5 "I find it difficult to comprehend the spoken texts because there are many unknown words" [M=3.04, SD=.971]. Item 3 "I find it difficult to comprehend the text when the speakers speak too fast without taking enough breaks" was in the eighth order [M=2.94, SD=1.04]. The ninth difficulty

was presented in item 2 "It is difficult to find out what the main goal of the listening task I am going to do is" [M=2.81, SD=.84]. It is interesting to note that item 1 "Compared to speaking, reading and writing, listening is the most difficult skill I encounter in learning English language", presents less difficulty [M=2.67, SD=1.02]. Moreover, item 6 "I find it difficult to concentrate when I think about the meaning of new vocabulary" received a low mean score [M=2.65, SD=.926], indicating less difficult aspect. The participants also consider Item 4 "I find it difficult to understand the oral texts when the speakers speak with different accents" as less difficult [M=2.62, SD=1.032]. Item 8 "I find it difficult to be quiet and decrease my anxiety before doing any listening task" is also perceived as less difficult item [M=2.53, SD=1.18]. Finally, the least mean was recorded in item 9 "Before doing listening comprehension task, I lose my self-confidence" [M=2.27, SD=1.105], indicating that the students do not seem to lose their confidence before listening activity.

The second tool the researcher utilized was the interview, it was conducted to answer the research questions (3,4) of the current study by gathering supportive information from EFL teachers about listening strategies employed in the classroom and their role in overcoming learners' listening difficulties and improving their language input. To display different views from the interviewed teachers, key comments and quotes were selected and presented.

Question One:

- To what extent does listening comprehension play a vital role in language teaching, and how does it improve learners' proficiency?

All interviewees agreed that listening comprehension is an important part in teaching program; it serves as a bridge that facilitates learners improving their vocabulary, pronunciation and over all language skills thereby dealing with real-life communication efficiently.

Question Two:

- How do you rate students' level in terms of listening comprehension?

Seven out of nine interviewees answered that learners' listening comprehension skills are weaker compared to other language skills. Most learners struggle to comprehend main concepts during listening tasks and have difficulty identifying desired ideas and details.

Interviewee (6) commented, "After thirteen years of teaching, I've noticed students' listening levels are so weak. Occasionally, it becomes necessary for me to interpret some words or sentences into Arabic language to help them understand the task, which makes teaching English challenging".

Interviewees (2) and (7) said "Evaluating students' level in terms of listening comprehending is difficult in environments lacking key tools like advanced laboratories and teaching materials missing real-life examples".

Question Three:

- Through your experience in teaching English as a foreign language, what are the common listening challenges you observe on students?

All interviewees ascertained that pronunciation, limited vocabulary, fast speech, different accents, reduced self-confidence and learners' worries are the main problems EFL learners face in listening.

Interviewees (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8) and (9) stated that there are many difficulties learners suffer in listening tasks, but the most challenging are limited vocabulary, fast speech and accents diversity.

Interviewee (1) added that the majority of learners have no background knowledge of the topics in most listening tasks. This absence of knowledge further increases the comprehension difficulties.

Question Four:

- In your opinion, can listening difficulties cause anxiety for learners and increase their lack of self-confidence? If yes, as a language teacher, how can you stop or reduce them as much as possible?

All interviewees agreed that learners' anxiety and lack of self-confidence in listening classes result from listening challenges.

Interviewees (4) and (9) commented "Yes, listening difficulties can affect learners' academic performance. Some learners experience lack of self-confidence in processing auditory tasks, leading them to stop participating in any activity and seek to withdraw completely".

Interviewee (2) said "As teachers, we dedicate our greatest efforts within the available resources to reduce learners' anxiety and increase their confidence by motivating them with interested and funny activities such as drawing on the board and playing games in two teams".

Question Five:

- What teaching strategies do you use in listening lessons in order to motivate learners' comprehension ability?

All interviewees employ different activities through listening tasks in order to improve learners' proficiency and achieve the desired objectives in listening comprehension.

Interviewees (1), (3), (5) and (8) said “We create many activities in the class to change bored routines and encourage students to understand what we teach; we ask them to take notes, work with a partner and activate their knowledge by predicting ideas related to the listening task”.

Interviewee (7) said “Listening strategies vary according to the kind of listening task and its time. Listening activities can be activated before start listening, during listening or after listening; they depend on the purpose of every task and its nature”.

Question Six:

- To what extent do listening strategies enhance learners to overcome their challenges and improve listening comprehension?

All interviewees' answers exhibited a high degree of similarity. Teachers stated that effective listening strategies contribute to enhancing learning process and improving academic performance of learners through training them how to employ listening skills in different contexts. In addition, the interviewees confirm that these listening strategies offer opportunities for learners to interact fluently with individuals as native speakers.

Discussion:

Teachers classified listening as one of the essential skills in the design of educational curricula. Interviews showed that academic proficiency of learners in listening comprehension at preparatory schools is significantly deficient. This deficiency was produced because of the main six difficulties namely: limited vocabulary, speed of the speech, using various accents, lack of background knowledge, reduced self-confidence and anxiety in listening classes. Considerable efforts and attempts have been made by teachers to address language-learning challenges by employing beneficial activities in the classroom; pre-listening, during listening and post-listening activities. These activities meaningfully contributed to improving learners' language input.

Furthermore, the results of the qualitative analysis of the interviews exposed an inappropriate pedagogical practice in teaching listening skills. The findings presented that one of the female teachers mainly depends on direct translation from English to Arabic as a primary plan for explaining vocabulary and linguistic structures when learners encounter challenges in listening comprehension. Some students depend on their mother tongue instead of improving their skills or enhancing their interaction with communicative contexts in English language.

The study recommends that teachers have to focus on using authentic listening texts to reduce learners' shock in meeting fast language and different accents. Teachers should speak English as much as possible inside the classroom, in which the learners have an opportunity to listen more to English. It is also recommended that the ministry of education provides language laboratories that assist to arouse the learners' interest and satisfy their learning needs. It is important that teaching program designers take into consideration the listening skills when they design the educational objects of English curriculum by activating more listening activities.

Conclusion:

Listening comprehension is among the most critical skills necessary for English language acquisition. Most learners struggle to comprehend listening texts due to certain difficulties they encounter while learning EFL. This study aims to identify the challenges that Libyan students face during listening classes. In order to achieve this goal, the study employed a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative analysis and qualitative responses from teachers and students at preparatory schools. The results revealed five challenges in listening classes; they are speed of the speech, accent of the speakers, limited vocabulary, lack of background knowledge, anxiety and lack of confidence. This paper has shed lights on listening activities as key strategies that teachers have to use them in the classroom. The findings exposed a significant weakness in learners' auditory comprehension skills resulting from the challenges they face. Nevertheless, teachers' attempts were ready to overcome these difficulties and foster academic development. Finally, this study can be a guideline to offer deeper insights for further research on listening comprehension.

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