

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY TERTIARY LEVEL EFL LEARNERS IN LISTENING

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ABSTRACT: *Listening comprehension is a prime channel of learning a new language. This study attempts to find out the difficulties faced by the EFL learners correspond to listening skill at the tertiary level education of Bangladesh. The study entitled Difficulties Faced by Tertiary Level EFL Learners in Listening discussed difficulties faced by tertiary level learners in listening comprehension. The aim of the study was to explore the difficulties encountered by the students, resulting from several factors such as listening text, listeners' factor, speakers' factor, linguistic feature, failure to concentration and physical setting. To analyze and to find the solution to the problems, the researcher made use of quantitative method. The research was conducted in public and private universities of Bangladesh. The population of this study was BA and MA level students' in the academic year 2019-2020. The number of population was 60 students from two classes and data were collected through questionnaire. The result of the study shows that listening is very difficult skill for learners who is keen on learning foreign language. Understanding students' difficulties can motivate and help the teachers to improve effective learning strategies for the students to develop their listening abilities. It also provided potential solutions to the problems. Firstly, the teacher should adapt and improve listening materials. Secondly, students' need to enrich their vocabulary with correct pronunciation, which will enable them to understand the variety of accents, while practising listening. Thirdly, the authority concerned should establish language laboratory for practising listening. Besides, students should gather background knowledge about the topic. The solutions were made as a suggestion for the teachers, learners, academicians and for the curriculum designer and material developer. The results of the study may also be useful for those who are interested in this study.*

KEY WORDS: CLT, EFL listening, difficulties, content, listeners, physical setting

INTRODUCTION

The approach to EFL teaching and learning in Bangladesh has experienced dramatic changes for the past two decades. The objectives of learning English have changed remarkably. The demand of learning English is rising very fast for global communication. Undeniably, English as a lingua-franca enhances trade and commerce, job market, higher studies or accessibility to information. The prime purpose of learning English is to use it as a means of effective communication both nationally and globally. English as a skill-based subject pivots on four primary skills-listening, speaking, reading and writing. Effective communication depends on how competently a person can use the skills.

CLT (communicative language teaching) is one of the effective approach to give equal emphasize on four skills. Considering the reality, the country adopted Communicative

Language Teaching (CLT). CLT approach includes four basic principles such as i) personal engagement ii) interactive co-operation iii) using four skills in real life situation and iv) learning by doing. Four fundamental skills will be taught in an integrated way in CLT approach and by practicing these four skills with equal emphasis, the learners are expected to be proficient in English. But only two skills are practised at our tertiary level education. So the CLT approach does not serve the purpose of achieving the goal.

Alternatively, the instructors and the learners have a limited scope to practise the four skills. They are exam oriented and the whole system is liable for this situation. Only reading and writing skills are subjected to test in the examination. So, they are totally undermining the two major skills, especially the listening one. This elusive propensity poses a major hindrance to developing our students' English listening. The listening skill is one of the dominant skills for oral communication. The listening skill plays a key role in terms of communication as another dominant skill i.e. speaking skill builds on the listening skill. Communication pertains to imparting or exchanging the view, thought, feelings, emotion, opinions, sorrow, happiness etc. with the others by means of language. In addition to focusing on the forms of the foreign language, the sound segments, the word forms, and the sentence structures, students have to keep interaction with the contextual meaning of words. It is frequently thought that English is topical and content based but English is not a content- based subject; rather it is a skill- based subject. To be more proficient in English language, tertiary level students have to lay equal emphasis on acquiring all the four skills.

Learning listening skill will help students to improve speaking skill considerably. If people want to communicate properly, meaningfully, and naturally they need to listen to various types of English repeatedly and continuously. It is clear that without listening people cannot acquire language because listening provides language input. As Rost in Hien (2015) stated listening as foreign language learning is paramount important since it provides the language input. Listening plays an important role in students' language development for its comprehensible input. Accordingly, teaching listening demands more attention in order to develop students' language. In some language classroom, listening is considered to be the most difficult language skill for students because it needs more attention to comprehend the materials that include understanding dialogue and monologue text. It would be said that listening is a complex process in which several things happen instantaneously inside the mind. On top of that, the language instructors play key in learning process. It is the instructors' responsibility to resolve the difficulties faced by the students. However, most of the instructors do not pay due attention to their job. The instructors might consider listening to be less important than other skills. According to some recent research from Hamouda (2013), Abidin (2013), Anadapong (2011) who completed the related study, they concluded that in order to help students to improve their listening ability, language instructor had to understand students' listening difficulties in comprehending listening text, and instruct effective listening strategies to help the students to resolve their listening barriers. As the instructor knows their students' difficulties, instructor can play important role in improving their listening. Learners success in listening depend on how they can assume and solve their difficulties. If the learners know how the difficulties influence their listening, it could be easy to find the solution.

The lack of vocabulary, understanding structure, inability to comprehend natural spoken, lack of confidence, retaining concentration and bad recording are some difficulties faced by the student. As Hamouda (2013) stated that factors causing students listening comprehension problem are categorized into different sources including problems related to the listening text, listening problems related to task and activities, listeners' problems related to the listener and teacher's methodology. Therefore, it was the tactic to find out the students' difficulties from three main areas: listener factors, listening material and physical setting. Also, it became guidance for the teacher to overcome listening comprehension. Thus, on the horizon a study entitled *Difficulties Faced by Tertiary Level EFL Learners in Listening*.

Statement of the Problem

The researcher has noticed that EFL students face difficulties in listening comprehension. They cannot recognize what is being spoken in front of them and do exercises based on it. Students face difficulty in their listening course, score the lowest marks in listening exams. Not only that, but also learners find difficulty in understanding what the teacher says in English language like the given instructions by the teacher in native accent. The researcher finds it important to explore the difficulties encountered by EFL learners in listening, so that he can find remedies to better students listening comprehension.

Through the background illustrated above, the problem statement which could be formulated is 'what are the difficulties in listening comprehension of Bangladeshi EFL learners?'

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

The aim of conducting this study lies in my strong desire to fulfil the researcher's interest in the field of mastering the four skills through the investigation into the listening difficulties in the context of EFL learners with a view to enhancing their competence in communication.

Specific Objectives

The specific research objectives were as follows:

- i. To find out problems encountered by tertiary level students in listening.
- ii. To identify the real scenario in the treatment of listening comprehension.
- iii. To find out the problems which affects understanding listening.
- iv. Identifying the listening barriers of Bangladeshi tertiary level learners.
- v. To set out the strategies and plans for overcoming difficulties.

Justification of the Study

The result of the research was really expected to give benefit to the reader. Hopefully, pointing out the difficulties encountered by the students will raise awareness among the teachers and the learners that finding student difficulties will contribute to teaching and learning listening comprehension. Furthermore, this research would be useful for other researchers who are interested in classroom research to use the findings. Also, it would be a guideline for those who want to conduct the further research about difficulties in listening comprehension.

Research Question

General Question

- 1) What are the difficulties encountered by Bangladeshi EFL learners in listening?

Sub Questions

- 1) What are the difficulties the students face in the listening classes?
- 2) What listening problems do EFL learners face when listening to spoken English?
- 3) What are the difficulties they encountered pertaining to background knowledge, listening materials and physical setting?

Research Hypothesis

The research hypothetically presents the listening skill as the most important and the most used among the four skills. However, tertiary level EFL Learners face various problems in listening comprehension for a number of reasons such as the quality of listening materials, linguistic features of language, lack of concentration, the speaker's accent, the listener's background knowledge, psychological factors and physical setting.

Limitation of the Study

Limitation of the research lies in the following areas- constraints of time, inaccessibility to the tertiary levels Universities, small sample size, lack of confidential information, unavailability of desired respondents during my needs. As the study is confined only to the difficulties confronting tertiary level learners, the study is concerned with some issues and areas of English as a foreign language (EFL) listening. The study encounters some limitations and shortcomings such as the scarcity of relevant data, information, literature and other necessary materials. The researcher finds that no formal study or investigation has been carried out in the field of the EFL listening difficulties at tertiary level. So, the researcher has experienced some difficulties in finding relevant data to support and correlate the present study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Yousif (2006) stated in his recent research entitled *Listening Comprehension Difficulties as Perceived*. The study explored listening comprehension problems of first year students in a FL subject matter classroom. Data was collected on the basis of the lecture comprehension difficulties of these students by means of a short open-ended questionnaire and interview. The subjects of the study were 50 first-year students majoring in English in their second semester at Almajmah College of Education. They were admitted to the English department on the merit of acquiring 80% or more on the school certificate examination. The analysis of the data provides an index that hinder effective comprehension which are linguistic, conceptual, discourse, acoustic, environmental and psychological variables. The results of the study have implications for both EFL teachers and subject matter lecturers in the particular setting in which it was conducted as well as in similar FL tertiary levels. They discussed several obstacles that impact comprehension. These are divided into three main areas which are the factors pertaining to listeners, speakers and texts. Based on the previous research, most the student foreign language faced the difficulties of listening comprehension. There were many problems influence them such as problem related to the listening materials, basic linguistic problems perceived by listeners, the failure to concentrate, the listener, the speaker, physical setting.

While this research will find out the three factors of them are listening material, listener, physical setting.

In a recent research Abidin (2013) stated about English listening comprehension (ELC) entitled *English Listening Comprehension Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia*. The researcher used a qualitative method to collect data. Three Chinese students were selected for an interview on English Listening Comprehension (ELC) in University Science Malaysian (USM). This study is a research report related to the problems encountered by Chinese students in ELC learning. The interview was conducted to investigate students' perspective through the main question pertaining the problems of the Chinese students in their ELC self-learning process, in three steps, which include the pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening. The research findings show that the prime difficulties faced by the Chinese students is the lack of prior knowledge in English vocabulary, and this impedes their understanding in the listening process. Moreover, the different accents of the native speakers create complexities in the proper understanding of the listening content. The short span of concentration, and the learning habits of Chinese students were discussed as the ELC learning problems.

Anadapong (2011) stated in his research entitled *A Study of English Listening Problems and Listening Proficiency of Business at Bangkok University* that the main problems encountered by learners is listening text in EFL listening. This study was conducted with thirty of Business student at Bangkok University with the aim investigating their English listening difficulties and listening proficiency. Questionnaire, IELTS test, and Interview were used in this study to collect data. As a result, the data was analyzed by using SPSS. The findings of the research exposed that students main reason caused listening problem is the listening text. However, the lack of practicing listening skill and the lack of exposure to different kinds of listening materials were factors that mostly caused listening problems.

In addition, Anderson and Lynch (2003) stated that lack of background knowledge triggered difficulty in listening comprehension. They claimed that language was the means used by a community to express their culture beliefs, facts, ideas, rules, opinions, and lifestyle. Accordingly, the L2 learners have some lacking in target cultures, if L1 learners are not aware of the different aspects of L2 culture, they would have problems in listening comprehension. How lack of background knowledge could be a difficulty in listening comprehension Koichi (2002) gave an example on this issue. He stated that non-native speakers might not understand the cashiers in American supermarkets when they ask them about what type of bags they would like to have their purchases in. In fact, non-natives could know the meaning of bag, but it might be difficult for them to realize its meaning in this context, maybe because they have no such things in their cultures.

Chen (2002) investigated 190 college students' difficulties in listening comprehension. He found out top five problems in listening. First, students focused on figuring out the meaning of part of the spoken text and missed what came next. Second students, were unable to chunk streams of speech. Third, they did not recognize words they knew. Fourth, they were not certain about the key ideas of the text. Fifth, they were unable to form a mental representation from the words heard. Actually, all these reasons are related to word recognition.

Hamouda (2013) found in his research entitled *An Investigation of Listening Comprehension Problems Encountered by Saudi Students in the EL Listening Classroom*. This research uses quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. This study was carried out with the participation of 60 first-year student majoring in English language and translation at Qassim University. Their ages range from 20 to 22 years old. Listening comprehension seems to be the weakest skill and students encounter various kinds of listening problems. Data was gathered by means of questionnaires and interview. The research found that accent, pronunciation, speech of speech, insufficient vocabulary, different accent of speaker, lack of concentration, anxiety, and bad quality of recording were the major listening comprehension difficulties encountered by EFL Saudi learners.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Setting

This study is a practical one that employs both qualitative and quantitative methods. A questionnaire administered for EFL learners. The collected data were analyzed statistically and qualitatively. This study has been conducted by putting together both primary and secondary sources of data.

Population and Sampling

Population

The population of this study was the second semester students of City University for the scholastic year 2019-2020 and MA students of Jahangirnagar University. The total number of the population were 60 which consist of two classes. Both male and female participated with slightly equal gender breakup.

Sample

The study has made use of random sampling at the time of selecting the respondents. In random sampling, all populations have the equal chance for being selected in a study. This sample comprises 60 students- 36 females and 24 males. Cohen, Manion and Morisson (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 attained or those who happen to be available and accessible at the time” (p.113-114). In consistent with the above statement, the researcher has randomly selected a total of 60 of the participants, all of whom have an equal chance to be chosen. This method is reliable in valid data collection because it is frequently applied in language research.

Instrumentation

As mentioned above, the study was carried out with both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The instruments were used in this study a questionnaire with the subjects. The questionnaire was set up based on the research question and objective of the study. Open-ended questions were set up for collecting data. It consists of two sections. The first section contained 5 questions asked to collect personal information about the participants. The second section contained 48 questions grouped into seven categories: listening importance

perceptions, listening text, the listener, the speaker and the physical setting. This questionnaire was taken from the study of Assaf 2015. The answers were recorded on 5 points likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree).

Data Collection

The data had been collected from various sources such as population, journals, periodicals etc. As mentioned above, the data was collected through questionnaires from January 09-11, 2020. This particular section prescribes the complete data collection procedure. The total population was 60 EFL students. Among them 30 students were chosen from City University, from the second semester and another 30 from Jahangirnagar University. To facilitate better comprehension, respondents were briefed on the contents of the questions. The subjects were asked to identify their listening problems by responding to statements arranged on the basis of the five-point likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). Oral instructions were given in both English and Bengali to respondents by the researcher himself to avoid any misunderstanding. The questionnaire was administered among the respondents in the classroom. It took about 45 minutes for the students to answer all the questions. Data collection was done without any interference of the teachers or the researchers. So, the researcher can guarantee the reliability of the results. Finally, the data obtained from the questionnaire was presented and frequencies and percentages were calculated. When the data was collected, the scripts were processed for analysis and interpretation.

Data Analysis

In the present study, the results are presented in the pie charts and tables. Research, a scholarly investigation or experimentation, aims at discovering new facts and their correct interpretation. The science of statistics enables the researcher to plan, analyze and interpret the results of the investigation. It also provides accurate and precise information that piques one's interest. The data of the research was collected from the second semester (Hon's) and Masters students of the 2019-2020 academic year. Later, the data was organized and analyzed quantitatively. It was used for obtaining information about the difficulties and problems confronting EFL Bangladeshi learners in listening. The investigator collected and analyzed the data through appropriate statistical procedures. First, the data was counted manually, and then it was fed into the computer for statistical analysis. Survey results have been presented in different ways: by text, in figures in charts, in tables, graphs, and diagrams.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Difficulties Encountered by Bangladeshi EFL Learners in Listening

Students' Perception to the Importance of Listening

	Statement	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %
1.	I am aware of the perceived importance of English listening skill.	58.33	41.67	0.00	0.00	0.00
2.	I find that listening comprehension is difficult	31.67	48.33	11.67	1.67	6.67
3.	I find that listening comprehension is boring	5	30	31.67	3.33	30
4.	I find that listening comprehension is exciting	10	56.67	30	0.00	3.33
5.	I received sufficient training in English listening at my university	11.67	31.67	33.33	6.67	16.67
6.	I never heard about listening skill.	0	0	0	50	50
	Mean Score	19.44	34.72	17.78	10.28	17.78

Table 1: Results on Students' perception to the importance of Listening skill

Table one shows that 100% of the students were aware of the importance of listening skill. When the learners were asked about the difficulty of the listening skill, 31.67% of the learners strongly agreed and 48.33% agreed that listening comprehension is difficult while 1.67% strongly disagreed and 6.67% disagreed. On the other hand, 11.67% learners are average regarding the listening skill. In addition to that, 5% of learners strongly agreed and 30% agreed that listening comprehension is boring while 66.67% claimed that listening comprehension is exciting. For item 5, it is found that 43.34% subjects received listening skill at their university while 23.34% learners did not receive sufficient training in English listening comprehension at their university and 33.33% are neutral in receiving listening training. For item six, 100% subjects are familiar with listening skill. So, the findings support that listening is the most important skill for the tertiary learners. The mean score for the students' perception on the importance listening skill has been shown in a chart below.

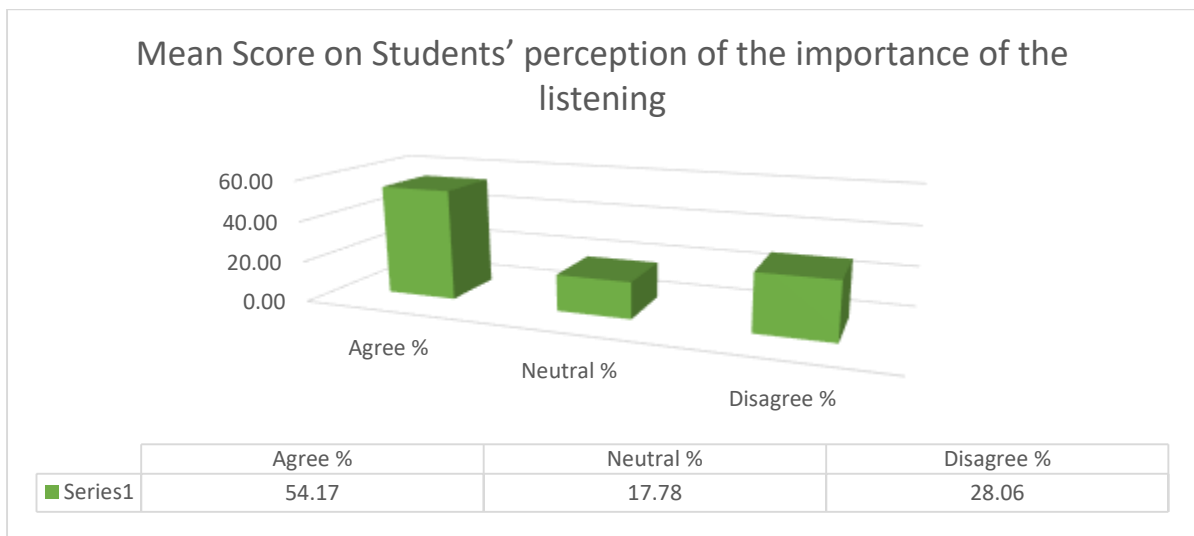


Figure 1: Results of the students' questionnaire

This chart indicates that the highest percentage of students are aware of how much important listening comprehension is. They find that listening is exciting and refuse that listening is boring. It is clear from the chart that the effect degree is high for the importance of listening, the percentage of which is 54.17 and the low effect degree for listening importance, the percentage of which is 28.06. There is a moderate degree, which is 17.78% for listening importance.

Listening Difficulties Attributed to the Content of the Listening Text

Item No.	Statement	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %
7.	I find it difficult to understand listening texts in which too many unfamiliar words	33.33	66.67	0.00	0.00	0.00
8.	I find listening comprehension difficult when the spoken text contains idioms.	28.33	55.00	8.33	0.00	8.33
9.	I find listening comprehension difficult when the spoken text contains jargon	28.33	55.00	8.33	0.00	8.33
10.	I find listening difficult when utterances contain different slang expressions.	11.67	68.33	3.33	6.67	10.00

11.	I find listening comprehension difficult when the text contains complex grammatical structures.	11.67	48.33	21.67	3.33	15.00
12.	I find it difficult when I listen to long spoken texts	18.33	55.00	13.33	0.00	13.33
13.	I feel tired when I listen to long spoken text.	15.00	45.00	13.33	3.33	23.33
14.	I feel distracted when I listen to a long spoken text.	23.33	55.00	5.00	0.00	16.67
15.	I find it difficult to understand listening texts when the topic is unfamiliar.	23.33	55.00	5.00	0.00	16.67
16.	I use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the spoken text.	41.67	56.67	1.67	0.00	0.00
17.	I find it difficult to comprehend every single word of incoming speech.	21.67	30.00	13.33	8.33	26.67
18.	I find it difficult to understand the whole listening passage.	13.33	41.67	6.67	15.00	23.33
	Mean Score	22.50	52.64	8.33	3.06	13.47

Table 2: Results on Listening problems attributed to the content of the listening text

Difficulties Pertaining to Unfamiliar Words Including Idioms, Jargon, and Slang Expression

When the students were asked whether the unfamiliar words, including jargon and idioms, affected the listening comprehension. All of the respondents agreed with this item. Among the respondents 33.33% strongly agreed and 66.67% agreed that unfamiliar words hindered their listening comprehension. In addition, idioms and jargon used by native speaker were also unfamiliar to the learners. Students responded that 83.33% did not understand the idioms and jargon used by native speaker in listening text while 8.33% did not face problems and remaining 8.33% are neutral. On the other hand, a small portion of respondents faced problems in slang expression which percentage was 80% while 16.67% did not face problems in slang expression and the remaining portion 3.33% are neutral. The research finding is consistent with what most of language researchers' opinion that the fundamental problem of listening

comprehension lies with limited vocabulary. The data also support the view of Underwood (1989) that lack of vocabulary is an obstacle for most students to listening comprehension.

Difficulties Pertaining to Complex Grammatical Structures

In the table 2, item no 11, respondents were asked whether the complicated syntactic rules and structures hampered the learners' listening comprehension. The majority of the respondents 60% have agreed that complex grammatical structures affected their listening comprehension while 15% responded that it was not problematic and 3.33% were in a moderate degree of response. These percentages show that complex grammatical structures also caused many hurdles to listening comprehension. These percentages show that complex grammatical structures also caused many hurdles to listening comprehension. This view matches Vogely's point of view (1998) which shows that the structural component of the text brings difficulty in listening comprehension apparently.

Difficulties Pertaining to Long Spoken Text

L2 learners' listening may be hampered when the learners get tired of long spoken text. Particularly, in academic listening, the listener may get tired while trying to understand unfamiliar sounds for long periods of time. The majority of respondents 78.33% stated in the item No 12,13 and 14 that they got tired and distracted when they listened to a long spoken text while 13.33% respondents disagreed with this and 13.33% gave moderate response. Thus, the long spoken text distracts listener from listening.

Difficulties Pertaining to Unfamiliar Topic and Background Knowledge

Table 2 shows that 97% of respondents often use their experiences and schemata to understand the spoken text and 79% of respondents face problems in listening text with unfamiliar topic. This finding goes in parallel with Hasan (2000) point of view, "Associating newly heard information with prior knowledge is a powerful and very frequently used way to guess the meaning of a listening passage." Samuels (1984) asserted that lack of basic schemata can cause problems in listening comprehension.

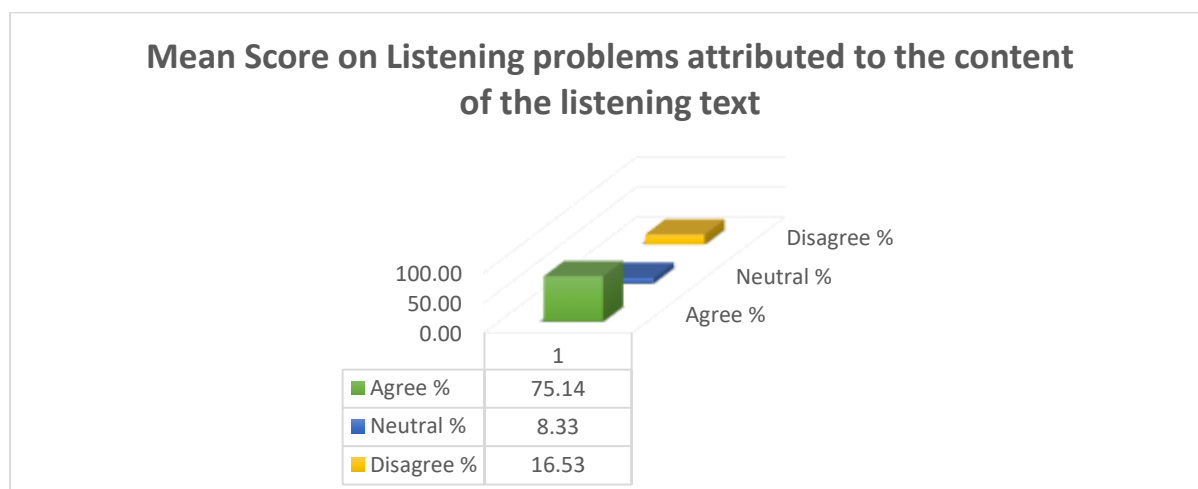


Figure 2: Results from the Students questionnaire

From the table 2, researcher got findings towards the students' problems pertaining to the content of the listening text. The above chart shows that the effect degree is high in

comprehending the content of listening text whose percentage is 75.14% while 8.33% is moderate degree and 16.53% is low effect degree. Thus, the majority percent 75.14 do not understand the listening text due to lack of vocabularies, complex grammatical structures, long spoken text, and lack of background knowledge.

Listening Difficulties Related to Linguistic Features

Item No.	Statement	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %
19.	I find pronunciation familiar but cannot recognize the words.	15.00	61.67	15.00	3.33	5.00
20.	I find it difficult to recognize the signals, which indicate that the speaker is moving from one point to another.	11.67	53.33	11.67	1.67	21.67
21.	I stop listening and start thinking about the meaning of the word when encountering an unknown word.	36.67	43.33	11.67	1.67	6.67
22.	I find it difficult to infer the meaning of unknown word while listening.	31.67	50.00	10.00	1.67	6.67
23.	I find it difficult to follow the sequence of the spoken when the sentence are too long and complex.	28.33	48.33	15.00	0.00	8.33
	Mean Score	24.67	51.33	12.67	1.67	9.67

Table 3: Results on listening problems attributed to linguistic feature

Difficulties Pertaining to the 'Prosodic Features' of the English Language

Table 3, shows that 76.67% of students fail to recognize the words even when they find familiar pronunciation. It also shows that this finding goes in similar with Brown's (1992) point of view that stress, rhythm and intonation are very important for comprehension.

Difficulties Pertaining to the Use of Signal Words

Table 3 portrays that 65% students of the whole number do not understand the signals when the speaker moves from one point to another. Thus, the students get confused in their listening comprehension. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) viewed that in informal situations or spontaneous conversations, signals are vaguer as in pauses, gestures, increased loudness, a clear change of pitch, or different intonation patterns. These signals can be missed especially by less proficient listeners.

Difficulties Pertaining to the Use of Unknown Words

While encountering an unknown vocabulary, the majority of students (80%) tend to stop listening and begins to ponder over the meaning of the word. As a result, they fail to follow the speech and miss important information. Finally, they get distracted from the rest of the text.

Underwood (1989) mentions that failure to recognize words also results from students' inability 'to segment the word out of connected speech.

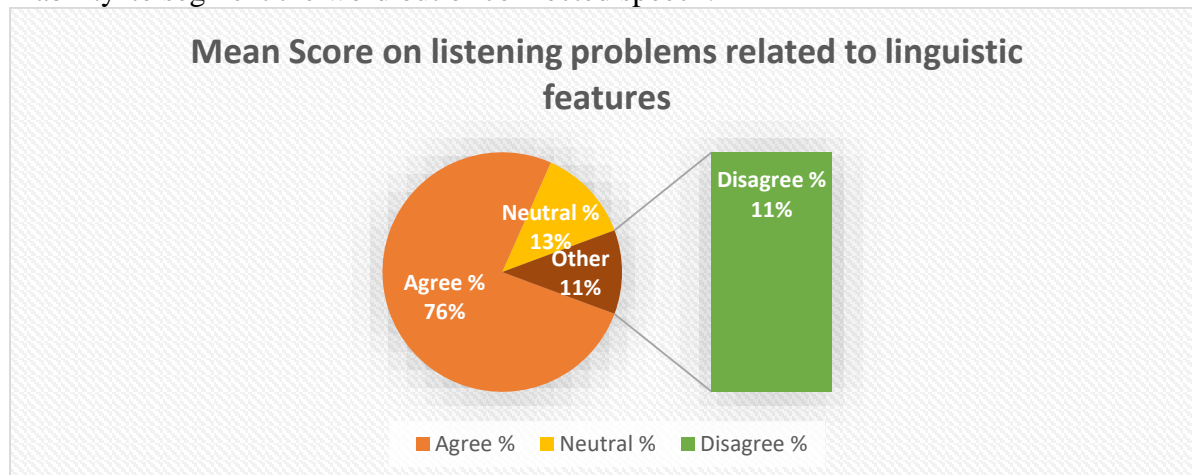


Figure 3: Results from the students' questionnaire

The above chart shows that the high effect degree for listening problems related to linguistic features is 76% while the low effect degree is 11% and the moderate degree is 13%. These findings represent that the majority of the EFL learners have faced problems in listening comprehension due to unknown words, pronunciation and signal words like moreover, in addition, thus, but and further. In fact, the above results indicate that unfamiliar pronunciation for familiar words is the major hindrance that confront learners while listening comprehension.

Listening Difficulties Caused by the Failure to Concentrate

Item No.	Statement	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %
24.	I lose focus of the talk when I have an expected answer in my mind.	26.67	48.33	11.67	0.00	13.33
25.	I am unable to concentrate because I look for the answers and listen to the dialogue at the same time.	18.33	43.33	18.33	5.00	15.00
26.	I lose my concentration when the text is too long.	30.00	35.00	16.67	0.00	23.33
27.	I lose my concentration If the recording is in a poor quality.	40.00	46.67	8.33	1.67	3.33
28.	I lose the flow of speech because I concentrate very hard on understanding every word or phrase I hear.	20.00	53.33	15.00	1.67	10.00
	Mean Score	27.00	45.33	14.00	1.67	13.00

Table 4: Results on listening problems caused by losing concentration

Difficulties Pertaining to the loss of Concentration Which Results from Looking for an Answer

Respondents have expressed that there are many reasons which affect their concentration during the listening task. 75% agree that they lose focus of the spoken discourse when they have got an expected answer in mind while 61% think that they face this problem because at the same time they look for the answer what they have listened and listening to the rest of the dialogue.

Difficulties Pertaining to the Poor- Quality Recordings

The majority of the students 86.67% think that the difficulties they encounter in listening comprehension results from the poor recording quality. This happens due to the recording's noises or the listening tool used for such a long time. As a result, poor-quality equipment interferes with the listener's comprehension.

Difficulties Pertaining to Focus Loss Which Results from Trying to Understand Every Words

When the students try to understand each and every single word, they lose concentration. 73% of participants agreed that they lose concentration when they try to find meaning of every single word. In listening comprehension, two things- one is listening and another is thinking- take place simultaneously. Thus if student try for comprehending every single word, they may lose their concentration.

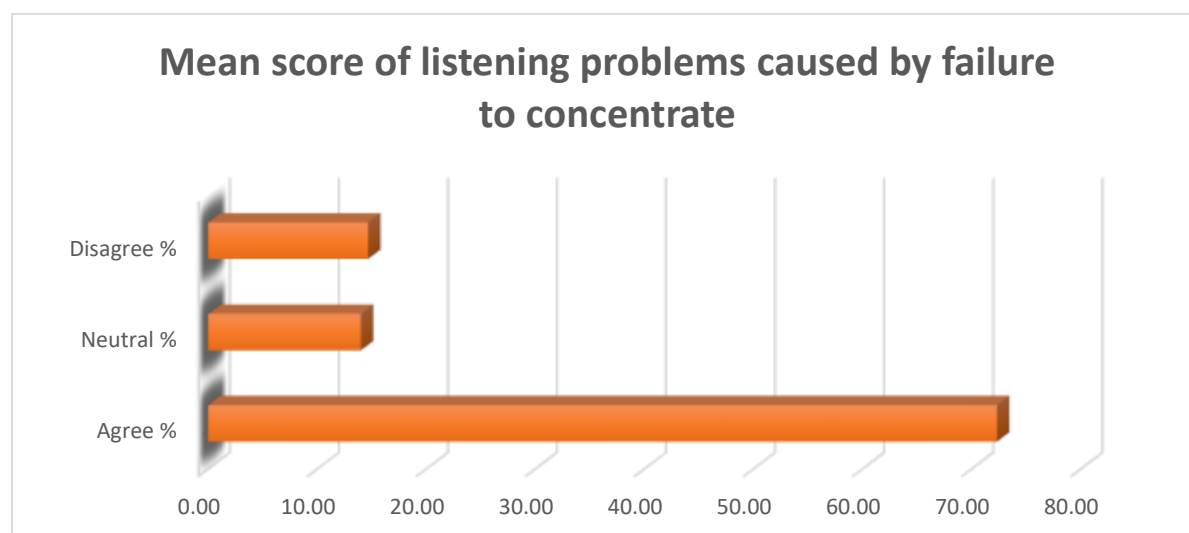


Figure 4: Results from the students' questionnaire

This chart indicates that learners are unable to comprehend listening due to losing their concentration. In this section, average 72.33% learners agreed that they lost their concentration in listening comprehension because of their trend to understand every single word, low quality recordings and looking for expected answer in their mind.

Listening Difficulties Related to listener

Item No.	Statement	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %
29.	I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the spoken text from the first listening	13.33	48.33	8.33	6.67	23.33
30.	I find it difficult to predict what would come next at the time of listening.	18.33	46.67	18.33	1.67	15.00
31.	I stop listening when I have problems in understanding a listening text.	18.33	45.00	6.67	10.00	20.00
32.	I find it difficult to recognize the words I know because of the way they are pronounced.	20.00	56.67	11.67	1.67	10.00
33.	I find it difficult to tell where one word finishes and another begins, there are words that I would normally understand in writing, but when I hear them in a stream of speech.	15.00	43.33	20.00	5.00	16.67
34.	I feel anxious when I listen to spoken texts.	13.33	40.00	10.00	15.00	21.67
35.	I find listening comprehension difficult when I am not interested.	21.67	65.00	1.67	3.33	8.33
36.	I fear that I cannot understand what I will hear before doing listening comprehension tasks.	16.67	50.00	23.33	3.33	11.67
	Mean Score	17.08	49.38	12.50	5.83	15.83

Table 5: Results on problems related to listener

Difficulties Pertaining to First Listening and Prediction

The table 5 showed that 63.33% of the students claimed that they stop listening when they have problems in understanding a listening text. Harmer (2000) reported that some of his students lose interest in listening and some of them stop it. It is then the teacher's job to make the

students get interested by boosting up their confidence and make sure that they can achieve success in listening. The portion of 61.66% learner get confused when they do not have general understanding on first listening and 65% learner do not predict what would come next at the time of listening.

Difficulties Pertaining to the Stream of Speech

Learners find it difficult to tell where one word finishes and another begins, there are words that the learners would normally understand in writing, but when they hear them in a stream of speech, the table 5 indicates that 58% learners cannot comprehend. Without having repetitions, they cannot understand the stream of speech.

Difficulties Pertaining to the Fear and Anxiety

Most of the learners feel anxious and fearful before starting a listening text. When they listen, they get tired. Table 5 indicates that 53% learners become anxious and afraid while listening but they can recognize the printed written text. Thus, it may affect the learners listening comprehension.

Difficulties Pertaining to the Lack of Interest

In the table 5, 86.67% learners agreed that it is difficult to understand the spoken text when it is not interesting enough and only 11.66% state that they can easily overcome this difficulty. This may happen due to the types of listening exercises which always remain the same. Listeners feel bored because of the repetition of the same exercises or the text is quite unknown to them. Hamouda (2013) asserted that motivation is an important factor in understanding the topic of the spoken text.

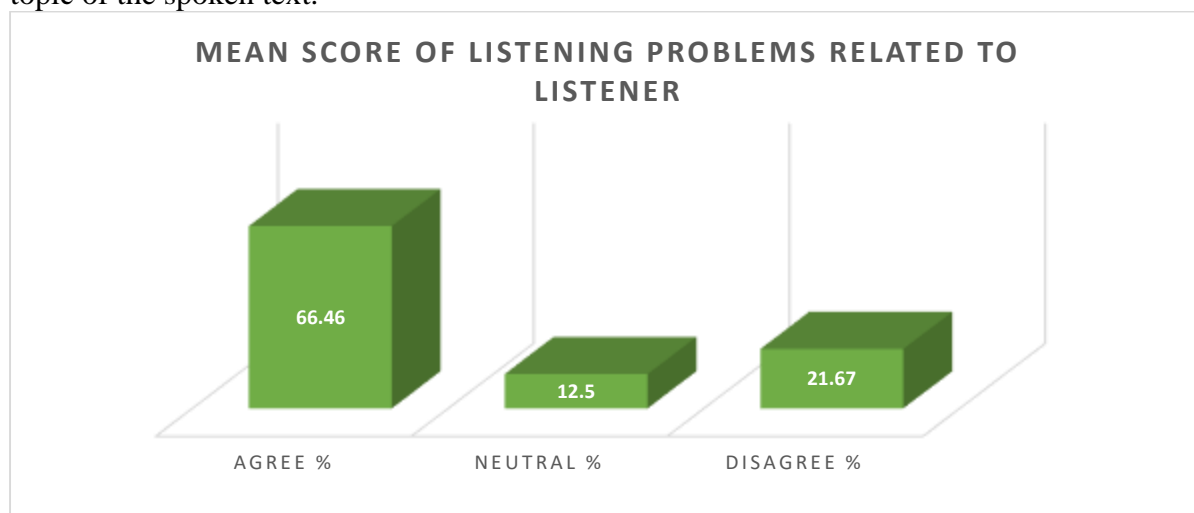


Figure 5: Results from the students' questionnaire

The above chart interprets that 66.46% listener thinks that they cannot understand listening properly due to the problems related to the listener. Lack of interest, fear and anxiety, the stream of speech, first listening and prediction problems are pregnant with the listener. Most of the learners face difficulties in these situations which are indicated by the above chart.

1.1.1 Listening Difficulties Related to the Speaker

Item No.	Statement	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %
37.	I find it difficult to understand the natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses.	21.67	46.67	18.33	5.00	8.33
38.	I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly.	26.67	61.67	10.00	0.00	1.67
39.	I find it difficult to understand the meaning of the spoken text without seeing gestures.	11.67	58.33	13.33	3.33	13.33
40.	I have difficulty understanding speakers with unfamiliar accents.	26.67	60.00	8.33	1.67	3.33
41.	I find it difficult to understand when speakers speak too fast.	26.67	51.67	11.67	3.33	6.67
42.	I find it difficult to understand the recorded material if it is not repeated.	25.00	45.00	16.67	5.00	8.33
43.	I find it difficult to understand the listening text when the speaker does not pause long enough.	23.33	50.00	16.67	1.67	8.33
44.	I find it difficult to understand spoken texts that have unfamiliar stress and intonation patterns.	23.33	60.00	13.33	0.00	3.33
	Mean Score	23.13	54.17	13.54	2.50	6.67

Table 6: Results related to speaker

Difficulties Pertaining to Hesitations and Pauses

Natural dialogues are full of hesitations, pauses, and intonation. Table 6 shows that most of the students 68.34% agree that they face difficulties in understanding natural speech which is full of hesitations and pauses. This is in line with the findings of previous researches. Hasan (2000) indicates that hesitations and pauses in spontaneous speech lead to perceptual problems and comprehension errors for the non-native speakers.

Difficulties Pertaining to Unclear Pronunciation

Many students think that unclear pronunciation causes much difficulty for them in understanding their English listening. 88.34% respondents agree that it is difficult to

understand the meanings of words which are not pronounced clearly. Unclear pronunciation of some speakers is also considered as a source of listening problem (as cited in Hamouda, 2013).

Difficulties Pertaining to Speed of Delivery

Most of the students 78.34% of the whole number agree that when a speaker speaks very fast, it is difficult for them to comprehend what is being said. On the other hand, only 10% of them disagree that it is not a learning obstacle. Underwood (1989) claimed that students absolutely encounter certain difficulties in listening comprehension since they cannot keep pace with the speed at which the speakers speak.

Difficulties Pertaining to Variety of Accents

Different accents cause difficulties to students in listening comprehension since they do not have much exposure to various accents. Table 5.6 shows that majority of students; 86.67% agree that they have faced problems for a variety of accent because they are exposed to the accent of their own teachers, not to the native speakers while only 5% of them disagree with this view.

Difficulties Pertaining to Stress and Intonation

As shown in Table 6, most of the respondents 83.33% of total participants agree that they do not understand spoken text due to intonation pattern. This finding goes in consonance with the view of Brown (1992) who said that: stress, rhythm and intonation are very important for comprehension.

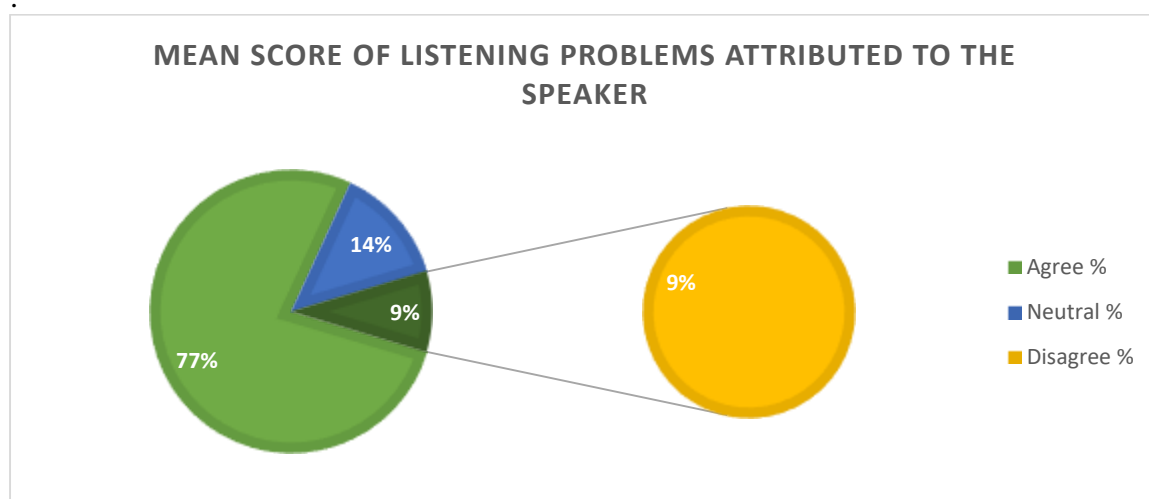


Figure 6: Results from the students' questionnaire

Aforementioned chart indicates that 77% learners faced problems related to the speaker. Students agreed that speaking unclearly and gliding over some words, speaking using unfamiliar accents, speaking fast are notable problems they face in listening comprehension. In addition, they think that natural speech is full of hesitation and pauses, not seeing the speaker's body language, not repeating what is being said more than one time and not pausing long enough are considered real problems of listening comprehension.

Listening Difficulties Related to the Physical Setting

Item No.	Statement	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %
45.	I find it difficult to concentrate with noises around.	40	50	6.67	0.00	3.33
46.	I find it difficult to understand English when there are unclear sounds resulting from a poor quality tape recording.	53.33	38.33	5	0.00	3.33
47.	I find it difficult to concentrate when the class room is not conditioned.	28.33	41.67	11.67	5	13.33
48.	I find it difficult to understand English when there are unclear sounds resulting from poor acoustic conditions of the classroom.	33.33	55	10	0.00	1.67
	Mean Score	39	46	8.33	1	5.42

Table 7: Results on listening problems related to physical setting

Difficulties Pertaining to Internal and External Noises

Hamouda (2013) asserted that noise is another environmental barrier to comprehension. Interior as well as exterior class noise pose an obstacle to listening comprehension. Both background noises on the recording and noise from surroundings may distract the listener's attention off the content of the listening passage. Because of the noise coming from corridors and other classes, some students experience difficulty in listening to the teachers' voices. As a result of the noise from recording material inside the classroom, a great number of students 90% claim that they cannot concentrate on listening. If the listening task is carried out with noises around, it does not bring a good result in listening. First, they feel distracted by the noise, no matter how hard they try to focus on the task. Moreover, the noise results in a complex of sounds instead of the clear recording being played. All these constraints prevent the students from hearing and focusing on the task.

Difficulties Pertaining to Poor Quality Tapes Recording

The majority of the students 91.66% agree that the difficulties they encounter in listening comprehension occur due to the bad recording quality / poor quality tapes recording. Thus, poor-quality equipment may interfere with the listener's comprehension (as cited in Hamouda, 2013).

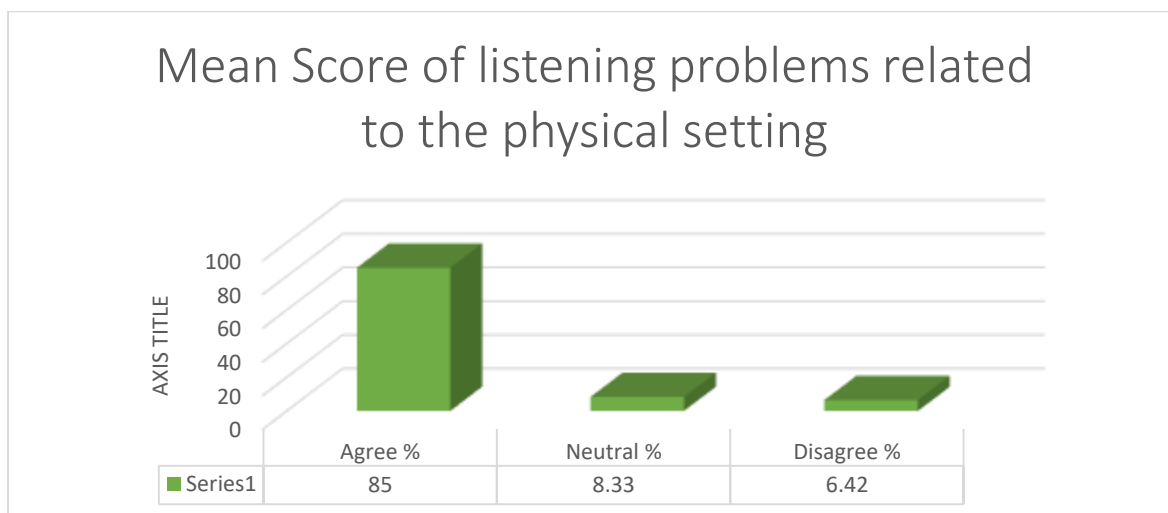


Figure 7: Results from Student Questionnaire

The above chart interprets, most of the students 85% fully agreed that where they listen the quality of listening equipment and the classroom condition play important role in listening comprehension. Almost all students agreed that it hinders listening comprehension.

The present study unveils some lapses and mismatches between the expectations and the existing conditions of English listening skill at the tertiary level education. During the study considerable correlations as well as contradictions are observed between the students on different issues on learning listening skill. The findings of the study are presented below:

There are many factors that contribute to the difficulties in listening comprehension. Lack of recognizing words, unfamiliarity of topics, poor grammatical structures, fast rate of speech, variety of accents, lack of vocabularies are the fundamental factors that hinder listening comprehension. Another important point is that students feel anxious and get afraid while listening sometimes. And they stop their listening when they do not understand the native speaker.

Recommendations

Considering the findings, the researcher suggests some recommendations for the students, teachers, ministry of education and curriculum designer, university administration and finally for the further researchers.

Recommendation for the Teachers and Students

Motivation is a great tonic of energizing to do every work. As EFL learners motivation is needed for learning English skills. Listening is the most crucial among the four skills. So, tertiary level EFL learners should be motivated to develop their listening skill. Learners can come forward with positive motivation to drive away the anxiety, fear and losing concentration in the listening skill. In teaching listening, teachers should give maximum importance to the listening process.

According to the above findings, in learning listening skill prior knowledge plays an important role and our students should develop their prior knowledge. In this regards, teachers should help students to grow prior knowledge regarding the listening materials, so that learners can be

able to connect their background knowledge with the listening activities. Teachers should make easy the context for the learners so that the learners feel interest with to learn listening skills. Prediction is another important factor in learning listening. Learners who can predict which speech or information are coming next more successful in listening. It helps students to foster their exposure to listening skill. Teachers should encourage learners in predicting the listening text. Using authentic materials is important to develop our students listening skill. In this regard our teachers should use interesting recordings in the classroom, otherwise student can lose their interest in listening. One material should be listened to repeatedly so that the learners may be able to recognize the sounds and words.

The limited stock of vocabularies hinders students listening. Our sincere suggestion for the teacher regarding vocabulary that they should encourage the learners to increase their stock of words. Understanding the difficult words meaning is important things. To build up fat-cat stock of vocabularies, teachers should encourage the students regularly. As English is a skill based subject, any skill can be developed through perfect practice. The more exposure the learners will get, the more they will be competent. Students should not practice listening only in the classroom. The teachers are not only responsible in motivating students practice for the development of listening but also self-motivation is needed for extensive listening. They can be encouraged to watch English movies, song, sports commentary and listen to BBC and CNN news etc.

Poor grammatical structures hinder learners' listening skill. Students cannot comprehend the long and complex sentence due to their limitation in grammatical structures. Regarding this problem encountered by EFL learners, our suggestion is to practice long sentence with subtitle audio recordings. It can help learners to improve listening long sentence. For the comprehension of complex structures, there is no alternative without practising grammar.

Last but not the least, student face problems with the variety of accents. Teachers should inspire their student to be introduced with different types of accent via radio, or internet based channel. Specially they should introduce with British, American and Australian accent. It is more effective path for comprehending accent.

Recommendation for the Education Ministry and Curriculum Designer

Among the four skills, listening comes first. This skill is considered to be the key skill which also enhances speaking skill. But in the context of Bangladesh both listening and speaking skill are neglected enormously. So, the education ministry and curriculum designer both should emphasize on listening skill. The listening skill should be made compulsory in the secondary and higher secondary education so that student can perform well at the tertiary level where they need to hear lots of teachers' instruction, announcements, lectures, and presentation etc. Curriculum and syllabus designer should include English listening as a subject where evaluation and tests would be taken on listening. Some interesting materials should be made to facilitate learning listening.

Recommendation for the Further Researcher

- It is hoped that more research would carry out with large sample size because the sample size was too small to generalize an overall conclusion applying to all EFL learners.

- It is recommended that more research have to be conducted on how to improve listening skills in the EFL context.

CONCLUSION

The present study is an overall attempt to sketch out a picture of EFL listening problems among the learners of Bangladesh. The present study has identified many problems regarding EFL listening. The researcher attempts to present the findings of the current study and puts some recommendations with a view to overcoming the existing problems or at least lessening the severity of the problems.

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