

Analysis of Barriers in listening comprehension among English majors at Education Faculty, Misrata University

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Abstract: Listening ability is one of the important skills in foreign language learning. Second language learners have significant problems in listening comprehension because that schools pay more attention to structure, writing, reading and vocabulary. It is noticeable that the graduates of university, English majors who intended to be teachers of English sometimes fail to understand the spoken language or cope with speakers in real life situations. The graduates who studied English for about 12 years, still find difficulties in understanding spoken language in real life situations or cope with speakers although they studied English for twelve years, two in primary school, three at preparatory, three at secondary stage and four at university. For this reason, the present study attempts to investigate some listening problems faced by English major students at education college, Misurata University.. Data gathered through questionnaire from the students' responses. Qualitative method was adopted to analyze the data obtained. This study revealed that listening comprehension is hindered by: limited knowledge of words, colloquial, accent, redundancy conversation, the speed, students are not encouraged listening to the programs on the radio or TV, Inadequate time to teach listening skills.

Keywords: English majors, foreign language, teach listening skills.

1. INTRODUCTION

No one can deny the importance of listening skills in foreign language learning because it is considered the key to acquire a language. Krashen, Enhrman, Herzog and Terrell (1984) confirm that acquisition takes place only when students absorb enough comprehensible input. Hasan (2000:138) points out that listening comprehension provides the right conditions for language acquisition and development of other language skills. Therefore this study identifies with barriers and difficulties that hinder the students from acquiring listening comprehension strategies during learning process. Qualitative method is adopted in order to investigate how English majors at Education Faculty, Misurata University acquire listening comprehension strategies. This paper is divided into abstract, introduction, Literature review, data analysis of the questionnaire, results of the study and recommendations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

It is widely agreed in the field of L2 listening plays a crucial role in language learning. Accordingly, listening has been viewed as a primary vehicle for language learning as it provides the linguistic environment and sets the stage for acquisition. It can provide meaningful input for the learner. Anderson and Lynch (1988:6) point out that understanding is not something that happens because of what a speaker says. The listener has a crucial part to play in the process of communication by activating various types of knowledge and applying what he knows to what he hears and trying to comprehend what the speaker means. Vandergrift (1997) confirms that learners need to acquire L2 listening skills to be able to understand target language speakers and to get benefits from various aural and visual L2 texts which are now available via network –based Multimedia as on-line audio and video. Listening is a complex and active mental process that involves perception, cognitive and memory. Thompson & Rubin (1996:331) point out that the listening process is often described from an information processing perspective as an active process in which listeners select and interpret

information that comes auditory and visual clues in order to define what is going and what speakers are trying to express. Boyle, Sheils, Flowerdrew and Miller in Yousif (2006) attributed problems of second language learners in understanding lectures to the speaker. These factors include speech rate, repetition and paraphrasing. Munro & Derwing in Bingol, Celik, Yildiz and Mart (2014) claimed that too many genres of accented speech would result in a significant reduction in comprehension. They also pointed out that second language listeners are used to their teachers' accent or to the standard varieties of British or American English. They confirmed that teachers in this case have to familiarize the students both British and American accent. Goh's study (2000) discussed the problems that faced by a group of a second language learners. Goh related the problems to the following: (1). A perception stage such as recognizing sounds as distinct words or group or words and difficulties with attention. (2). Problems related to parsing which include various difficulties with developing a coherent mental representation of words heard. (3). Problems related to utilization. The students had difficulty with understanding the intended message of the speaker. The difficulties comes when the listener was unable to process the text further due to either a lack of prior knowledge or inappropriate application of prior knowledge. (4). The learners quickly forget what is heard as soon as they begin to listen to another part of the message. (5). The students are unable to recognize the words they know. They feel that the words are sounded familiar but they are unable to recall their meanings immediately and in this case they fail to process the message using those words. (6). The learners understand the words but not the intended message. They can understand the literal meaning of the words. This is a utilization problem which is related to the listener's ability to make elaborating inferences on the intended meaning of the message. Takeno & Takatsuka (2007) carried out a study about the factors affecting listening ability of Japanese learners of English. They pointed out that Japanese learners of English as a foreign language often find it more difficult to listen to English than to read it. They concluded that a short-term memory is one of the factors that affects listening comprehension. i.e auditory short-term memory, capacity of phonological loop, is largely affected by the learner's rehearsal speed. They also found out that reading rate does not affect the listening comprehension ability of Japanese learners of English in cases where their English scores for written tests were within the same level. They pointed out that there is no significant correlation between reading rate and listening comprehension. Yousif (2006) conducted a study which was dealt with listening comprehension of the first year students majoring in English in their second semester at Almajmah College of Education, Saudi Arabia. She mentioned that the participants had difficulties when they listened to lecturers. Yousif mentioned the following barriers. (a) Limited vocabulary. (b) The students had a difficult task listening to lectures since they have limited exposure to lengthy connected speech. (c) Rate of delivery. (d) Environmental variable such as temperature. (e) Boredom and frustration. Hayati (2010) examined the effects of speech rate on listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners. His results of two experiments, pre-test and post-test, showed that the exposure to natural speech rate made a significant improvement in learners' listening comprehension. Hayati confirmed that learners' exposure to slow speech rate had an improvement but the exposure to the natural speech rate was greater than the exposure to slow speech rates. Therefore natural and slow speech rates both have some features that can be beneficial to learners of language.

Underwood (1993) mentions problems in learning to listen to English. She calls them features of spoken English. She says that the students whose culture and education include strong storytelling and oral communication are better at listening than the students who depend on reading and a book-based culture and educational background. She lists a number of potential problems as follows:

1. Lack of control over the speed at which speakers speak. Most complaints of students come from the difficulty with listening. They cannot control the speed of the speakers because they work on the meaning of some words and miss the other part. They feel that the speakers swallow the words or the words disappear before they catch them

2. Not being able to get things repeated: According to Underwood, listeners sometimes are not always in a position to get the speakers repeat an utterance. This takes place when the learners are out of the classroom such as listening to a radio or watching television. She mentions that listening takes place in real time, and once heard. After the speaker has finished, the listener does not have access to the text again. It is not like listening to a recorder or talking to a speaker face to face. The recorded material is under the control of the listener. He can replay it over and over. In a laboratory, the students can be given opportunities to control their own machines if they are provided with tapes. They can go back over parts they want to hear again and again. But if they do not have tapes, they may ask the teacher to repeat the parts which they want to listen to as they feel necessary. We always notice L2 listeners ask for repetition when they do not understand by saying "sorry" or "what" when they are in a position face to face. The speakers may repeat the same words or rephrase them in another way.

3. The Listener's Limited Vocabulary: According to Underwood (1993) the unknown words make the listeners stop listening and think about the meaning of the words. Consequently, they miss the next part of the speech. This happens because of giving more emphasis to accuracy than fluency during the teaching process which has been more concerned with mastery of forms of language rather than with how to use it. She goes on and explains that the learners have to stop dwelling on missed words and continue or follow up the speakers. Speakers often say things more than once or rephrase the information. Learners must be trained to develop the skills of keeping up with speakers even when they fail to understand the unfamiliar words.

4. Failure to Recognize the Sign. Underwood points out that when the speakers move from one point to another, they give indications or signals to show this movement .e.g speakers in lectures show clearly that they are about to begin a new point by saying' *then*, or *secondly* or they sometimes pause slightly or make different intonation or raise their voice to show this movement.

5. Problems of Interpretations: The L2 Listeners may face problems in interpreting non-verbal clues such as facial expression, nods, gestures and tone of voice. Also knowing the culture of other languages makes the listeners interpret the meaning between the lines and not just the surface meaning of the words.

6. Inability to Concentrate: Underwood (1993) provides some acceptable reasons that cause inability to concentrate on listening. She mentions that the shortest break in attention can cause difficulty in understanding conversation because of missing parts of utterances. If the topic is interesting, the concentration for the students is easier but if they find the topic boring, the focus decreases and the listening becomes tiring. She mentions some factors that cause difficulty in concentration. She relates them to the poor records or machines or the rooms are unsuitable for the use of recording machines. She suggests that the students must be provided with different topics and the records must be in a good condition (pp:16-19).

Ur (1984) provides potential problems in learning to listen to spoken language. Some aspects of listening comprehension are easier for learners of L2 than other aspects. Some aspects are learned intuitively but others are learned by practice. The problems which are mentioned by Ur that cause difficulties in understanding the spoken language are as follows:

1. Hearing the Sounds: According to Ur, some sounds of English do not occur in other languages such as /f/ and /v/ as in *four* and *valve* respectively. The sound /v/ does not exist in Arabic. The students may assimilate it into the nearest sound familiar to them and hear and pronounce it as /f/. Also /d/ and /ð/ as in *desk* and *that*. The learners pronounce *that* as /dæt/.

2. Understanding intonation and stress.

According to Ur (1984), Intonation and stress carry great deal of information. English speakers use pitch variation and tunes. These features are very important for intelligibility, because they are used to express intentions. The voice of the speaker can show that he is asking for a question, asking for information, seeking for agreement or making remarks. If the listeners misunderstand the importance of intonation, it leads to mis-understanding the meaning and causes unintelligibility. Gimson (1987:264) defines the term intonation as "The meaning of an English utterance, i.e the information it conveys to listeners, derives not only from its changing sound patterns and the contrastive accentual prominences already referred to, but also from associated variations of pitch".

3. Sentence stress: the stress falls on certain words in an utterance. E.g *OMAR broke the window*', the stress falls on the doer of the action. The speaker stresses Omar not anybody else. But when the speaker says 'Omar broke the *WINDOW*' he stresses the window not anything else. This means the broken thing is a window not a glass or a bottle (p.5). Teachers need to draw the students' attention to the existence of stress in the words or in sentences. They have to show the importance of intonation and stress in understanding spoken language because they are closely connected to each other.

4. Coping with redundancy: Language is considered to be a medium of communication, its efficiency does not depend upon the perfect production and reception of every single element of speech. Speakers provide the listeners with more clues than they need for easy comprehension, but great deal of the clues or information is unnecessary .It is redundant. Richards et al (1993:310) define the term redundancy as "the degree to which a message contains more information than is needed for it to be understood".

According to Ur (1984), the foreign listeners whose grasp of meaning is slower than native speakers, demand more effort to find the gaps. Ur gives three reasons for the listener's failure of grasping the meaning in the case of redundancy.

a. The number of gaps is much larger. Some items are difficult to understand simply because the listener does not know them. Other items cannot be understood because the listeners are not familiar with to grasp during the rapid speech but the listeners may understand them if they face them in a written form or slow pronunciation.

b. The listener is not familiar enough with the sound combination, lexis and collocations of the language to make predictions or guesses for what is missing.

c. The number of the gaps is not much larger than those the learners would encounter in first language. The foreign language learners need to perceive and comprehend everything they hear even they would not do so in their first language. If the learners try to recognize every single word that is said, they will be handicapped by the failure to do that. Effective listening is aided by the ability of the listener's ignorance of unimportant items, much of what the listeners hear is redundant and they have to recognize it as such. The learners need practice and to make them realize the unimportant words through moving from intensive and extensive listening in the foreign language and coping with the noise outside interference- and recognizing redundant words.

5. Fatigue: Most foreign language learners pay more attention to the unfamiliar sounds, words and interpretation. This process makes the listener tired because of the concentration on those features. Ur (1984:19) says:

The effects of fatigue vary a great deal, depending on how hard the learner needs to concentrate and on his ability to do so for long periods. But it is certainly a fact that in a long listening comprehension exercise, a learner's grasp of the content is much better at the beginning and gets progressively worse as he goes on.

Reading, writing and speaking are tiring, but the learner can make breaks where he wishes during carrying out the activities. According to Ur, in listening, the breaks are set by somebody else and the break may not occur where the listener needs. It depends on the speaker i.e the speaker controls the breaks. Most English major students face this problem which is mentioned by Ur. The students try to decode the sounds, understand the meaning of every word and at last they find themselves losing the concentration and become tired and run out of energy necessary to complete this hard process.

6. Understanding Different Accents:

Accent is a particular way of speaking which tells the listener something about the speaker's background. Kenworth (1993:11) points out that "every language in the world has different varieties and different accents". Richards et al (1993:1), explain that the accent may show the region or country that the people come from. E.g northern accent, American accent, Australian accent...etc. Also it shows the social class they belong to. E.g a lower class, middle class, upper class or working class. The accent shows whether the speaker is native or not. It is easy to differentiate between Indian speakers and English speakers according to their accent. Students have to be provided with materials in different accents to make them familiar to those accents when they face them in real communication.

7. Informal Speech: Ur (1984) points out that the biggest problem for L2 learners is the language which used by normal people. She makes a distinction between formal and informal language. Formal speech is used in situations, when the speaker is very careful about pronunciation, choice of words and sentence structure such as news-reading, lectures and written texts. Informal speech is usually spontaneous and colloquial such as television interviews, most classroom teaching and the very informal speech such as gossip, family quarrels and the most discourse people hear, (pp.11- 21). Ghazala (1994:4) emphasizes that the non-native students must have practical examples which show the distinction between Standard English and colloquial English. When the students encounter this language in real-life conversation, it will not be strange to them.

3. METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was employed for this study. It is considered a good way to collect information and more reliable instrument. The questionnaire was given to 70 students whose majors are English in Education faculty. The sample was chosen randomly to elicit the students' views about the problems related to listening comprehension because this skill is one of the most problematic aspects of language learning. It is assumed that many language learners have problems in listening skill. They are unfamiliar with listening environment and have limited proficiency and fear of comprehending the messages correctly.

Data Analysis:

The options of the questionnaire are (never, rarely, sometimes, usually, always):

Q.1. Did you have listening activities at secondary stage?

The aim of this question is to know if the students are familiar with listening comprehension at secondary stage or not. Many teachers at this stage neglect teaching listening activities that are available in textbooks. This ignorance may be because of lack of listening facilities such as laboratories or recorders which has a negative impact at university stage. The answers of the students in the questionnaire show that about 10% of the students always had listening activities and about 64% of them never had activities in listening skill and about 6% of the students usually had such these activities, whereas about 10% rarely had these activities and about 10% sometimes had listening skill. Listening at this stage is very important. It gives a ground, provides the aural input and enables English majors at university to interact in spoken communication. Language learning largely depends on listening. It forms the concrete basis for second language proficiency.

Q.2. Do lecturers explain the topic before starting the listening activity?

The answers show that about 20% of the lecturers usually clarified the topic of the task used in listening before tackling the lesson and about 42% of the lecturers sometimes gave information about the topic and 20% always did, whereas about 18 rarely but no one said never did this technique. Knowing the topic before listening gives extra information to students and they can predict what are they going to listen to. This technique helps the students to make decisions and where to focus their attention while listening. Without clarifying the topic, the learners lose the important features of knowledge of the subject which make them unable to comprehend.

Q.3. Do you listen to English programs on TV or radio?

The answers of the students clarify that about 10% of the students said always tried to listen to some activities used on the radio or TV, and about 10% usually did, 15% sometimes, 5% rarely and 60 never did this technique. Listening to English channels is a way to improve listening skills and learn to understand native speakers when they speak at a normal rate. Listening carefully can also help you improve your accent and fluency when you speak, sharpen comprehension skills, improve vocabulary and grammar, and enhance ability to focus, as well as keep you abreast with the culture and colors of the language you're learning.

Q.4. Do you spend a lot of time to improve listening skill?

According to the provided answers of the students, it is clear that about 30% of the them sometimes allocate time to develop their skill by themselves and about 24% do not usually do that and 14% said that they always do whereas about 9% rarely specify especial time for this task and 22% never try doing such these things. This means that many students ignore training this skill at home, but large number of them sometimes or usually do. Learning second language is a long term process. Learners have to spend much time listening to catch the sounds and to train their ear catching these sounds. Children hear a great deal of language around them before they speak to conform concepts, explore the environment and acquire the language at the same time. Learning to listen to the target language improves language ability. The sound, rhythm, intonation and stress can only be perfectly adapted through listening. This cannot be happen unless the learner spend a lot of time listening to different facilities such as, interviews, news on radio or TV.

Q.5. Do lecturers sequences materials used in listening into pre-listening, during-listening and post-listening sections?

The answer introduces that from 28% to 33% sometimes or usually laid stress on dividing the lesson into stages which can be considered as the normal division of teaching listening skill (pre- during- post) listening sections and 9% of the teachers always do this technique, whereas about 20% of them do not do it few times and 9% do not do this technique at all. Harmer (2002:213) Warns of using listening activities as traps to be fallen into them. Underwood (1993) points out that listening activities can be done through three phases and by using authentic materials.

Q.6. Is the speed the main problem of understanding spoken language?

The aim of the question is to know the complaints of the students while they learn the language through listening comprehension. According to students' answers, it can be said that the majority of the students from 32% to 29%

sometimes or usually encountered the problem of the speed during listening to the target language and about 24% of them had permanent problems with this issue. Whereas few of them 10% rarely faced this problem and about 5% never been encountered with this. There is a common complaint among the students at English department when they listen to English speakers. They complain that their listening skills cannot cope with fast spontaneous speech. This means the students have difficulty in catching the words from the stream of the speech. This is because they do not listen regularly to spoken language. Lack of control over the speed is because the students' thinking of the meaning of every word. The learners have to concentrate on the main idea of the conversation and they do not need to understand every word. Kenworthy (1993) comments on the speed of the speaker in that the speed is not a vital factor in intelligibility. When the listener feels that the speaker speaks too fast, it is not the speed which causing the difficulty, but in fact that the listener cannot pick up out the most important words from less important ones.

Q.7. Can you get the main idea when listening?

This table shows that from 36% to 43% of the students could get general idea about the topic used during listening task and about 20% of them could get the main idea completely, whereas none of students of the students lost understanding the topic which is presented in listening skill.

Q.8. Do you think of unknown words when you listen?

Question eight is aimed at identifying whether the real problem in understanding conversation is confined to limitations of knowledge of vocabularies or not when the students listen to spoken language. According to the students' answers, it is obvious that 64% of the students usually spend their time thinking of new words presented during listening skill and 14% of them always have this problem, whereas from 10% sometimes and 12% never of the students have this defect. If the learners take the time to process each message in detail, they will not be able to keep up with the speakers. Students need practice in rapid recognition of prefixes, infixes, suffixes and word stems. Students also need a deep knowledge of the theme of the speakers because a great deal of what listeners comprehend is not in the linguistic information. As result the students cannot understand because they do not have sufficient information to make the necessary inference.

Q.9. Do lecturers of listening comprehension expose the students to different accents of English?

The answers of the students show that about 30% of the students agreed that lecturers of listening comprehension sometimes introduce different accents in front of their students during listening and 18% of the teachers always did this, and 20% said usually, whereas about 24% of them did it few times and about 8% of the teachers did not do this technique absolutely. Accent is a particular way of speaking which tells the listener something about the speaker's background. Every language has different varieties and different accents. Richard et al (1993:1) explain that the accent may show the region or country that people come from and shows the social class they belong to. Students have to be provided with materials in different accents to make them familiar to those accents when they face them in real communication.

Q.10. Do Pre-listening information about the topic improves your listing comprehension.

From the provided answers, it is clear that 38% of the students agreed that introducing the topic before listening activity usually helped them to understand what is presented easily and about 33% of them said always and 21% said sometimes. Whereas few about 4% said never or rarely. This showed that doing this technique improves students understanding during listening. Pre-listening activates prepare the learners of the language what they will hear and what will they do. They have a central roll in understanding the language. These activities help the students to make decisions and where to focus the attention while listening. Knowing the topic before listening facilitates comprehending the language.

Q.11. I find it difficult to understand natural speech which full of hesitations and pauses.

Question thirteen shows that most of the students about 43% agreed that natural speech which full of interrupts with hesitations and pauses makes the language difficult to be understood and 20% said sometimes and 13% answered usually get in the way of understanding the topic easily and about 9% of them said always, whereas from 5% to 10% said never or rarely. This means that large number of the students have lack of understanding the language which full of hesitations and pauses. Spoken language usually has hesitations, pauses, fillers and repetitions that give the speakers and the listeners more thinking time as well as the speakers may make repairs such as false starters, corrections in grammar or selection of

Q.12. I find it difficult to summarize what I have listened to.

According to the students answers of this item, it could be said that about 38% of the students usually find difficulties to summarize what's said in front of them during listening and about 23% sometimes encountered with this problem,

whereas from 15% to 23% said rarely or never having such this issue. This indicates that there are many students who can not understand and summarize listening lessons properly. This technique is very useful and helpful to recall the information. It provides encouragement and confidence. Some lectures ignore this technique. This may be because of large number of the students in the classroom.

Q.13. I find it difficult to understand words which are not pronounced clearly.

Item number 15 clarifies that 29% of the students usually face difficulties to understand unclear pronunciation easily during listening comprehension and about 27% sometimes encounter this problem. It is also clear that 33% always found it difficult to understand such this kind of problems. Whereas 9% said rarely and about 3% said never. This shows that students who do not have an idea about this issue or were not be exposed to this kind of speech will face problems to understand easily. This complaint is common among the learners of second language when they listen to English speakers. They complain that their listening skills cannot cope with fast spontaneous speech. They have difficulty in catching the words from the stream of the speech. This because they do not listen regularly in and out the classroom. The more the students listen, the more they can understand the language.

Q.14. Do lecturers of listening comprehension expose the learners to informal speech?

The results of question fourteen show that 60% of the lecturers rarely give their students opportunity to be exposed directly to informal speech and 20% usually did this and about 6% of the lecturers always follow this technique, whereas 11% usually, 6% sometimes and only 3% never adopt this task during teaching listening. This means that there were many lecturers do not try to help their students familiar to the normal speech used by English speakers. Most listening activities used in teaching are based on formal language which are imaginative. The conversation in real life situations is colloquial. The designers of the activities for listening comprehension neglect features that are used in spontaneous spoken language such as television interviews, most classroom teaching and very informal speech such as gossip, family quarrels and most discourse people hear. As a result learners cannot follow up speakers or understand them in real life situations. Ur (1984) points out that the biggest problem for L2 learners is the language which is used by normal people.

Q.15. Can you identify the redundant words when listening?

The answers show that about 67% of the students sometimes couldn't identify the redundant words during listening and about 21% of them usually face this problem and 6% said that always have this lack, whereas none of them said never and only 6% said rarely. Speakers provide listeners with more clues than they need for easy comprehension, but great deal of clues or information are unnecessary. They are redundant. The term redundancy as defined by Richards et al (1993:110) is the degree to which a message contains more information than is needed for it to be understood. Spoken language has a high degree of redundancy.

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The questionnaire which was answered by the students confirmed that the students at the college of Education who specialized in English language encounter problems when they listen to spoken language. They are unable to understand conversations outside the classroom. Accordingly, it is found out the following points:

1. Listening activities are not covered at the secondary stage which has a negative impact at university stage. The results showed that about 47% of the students never had listening activities and about 21% also usually had activities and 18% always got opportunity to have listening activities, whereas 4% sometimes of the learners and 10 rarely have such these activities.
2. Lectures do not explain the most difficult words or give information about the topic before tackling the listening activities. According to answers of question two, it is clear that about 37% of the lecturers never or rarely clarify some information to their students before starting the lesson and about 32% sometimes did, whereas about 5% to 6% said always did the same technique and 20% usually did this.
3. Listening to the radio or programs on TV is very important. The programs on TV or radio include the naturalness and spontaneity of ordinary speech. This helps them to cope with speakers in real life situations specially there are no native speakers to exchange conversations with them in the college. The results of question four indicate that about 40% of the students rarely listen to the radio or TV to improve their listening skill and 24% of them usually do the same technique

and 10% of the students always listen to the radio or TV programs, whereas from 6% to 10% sometimes do. Listening to these facilities provide the following features: natural rhythm, intonation and pronunciation. There is overlap between the speakers, fast and slow pace of delivery, there are incomplete sentences, false starters and hesitations. As indicated in the answers of question eleven, the learners do not listen to materials which full of hesitations, fillers or natural pauses. These features make the language difficult to be understood.

4. The answers of question six show that from 28% to 33% of the lecturers follow the normal technique during carrying out listening skill activity. They divide the lesson into three stages(pre-during-after) listening activity and 9% of them always do this, whereas 20% of the lecturers rarely follow this technique and 9% of them never do such these things.

5. Understanding the spoken language is hindered by the speed, false starters, accent and false interpretation. The answers of question 6 and 9 show that the students complain of the speed of the speakers and the accents they listen. The answers indicate that 60% faced problems of the speed 20% of learners said that their listening was hindered by it, 5% for sometimes and rarely whereas only 10% of the learners said always find problems of the speed and accent.

6. Pre-information before tackling any activity is important. This technique in teaching listening comprehension give the listeners extra information. In real life situation, it is unusual for people to listen to something without having some idea of what they are going to hear. When listening to a radio phone, they will probably know which topic is being discussed. When listening to an interview with a famous person, they probably already know something about that person. In our first language we rarely have trouble understanding listening. But, in a second language, it is one of the harder skills to develop - dealing at speed with unfamiliar sounds, words and structures. This is even more difficult if we do not know the topic under discussion, or who is speaking to whom. Many students are fearful of listening, and can be disheartened when they listen to something but feel they understand very little. It is also harder to concentrate on listening if you have little information about a topic or situation. According to answers of question number eight, it can be said that 42% of the students sometimes could get a general idea about the topic which being presented during listening skill and about 20% of them said the lectures always provided them the main idea about the topic before they started the activity, whereas 18% of them answered rarely. Only 20% said usually but no one said never.

7. The learners of the language indicated that the real problem in understanding conversation is confined to limitations of knowledge of vocabularies when the they listen to spoken language. They believed that the first priority in improving listening comprehension is to increase the vocabulary. According to the students' answers, it is obvious that 64% of the students usually spent time thinking of unknown words presented during listening skill and in this case they missed some parts of conversation. Only 14% of them always have this problem, whereas from 10% said sometimes and 12% never of the students have this defect.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The listening activities in secondary stage is not adequate. Many students did not get opportunity to get enough listening tasks. This skill should be given more importance. Many Students come to university stage without any listening basis.

2. Not all lecturers clarify the topic for the students before dealing with the listening activity. Since this technique helps students understanding. The lecturers should try to at least clarify some information before starting dealing with the activity.

3. Many students do not try improving their listening skill by themselves. They should allocate specific time to do such this activity. They should be encouraged to listen to the radio programs or TV outside the classroom to train their ear in catching the sound stream and get more new words. Listening ability cannot be developed unless the students listen to authentic materials and not imaginative activities.

4. Many students encounter problems of speed to understand spoken language. Lecturers should make their students familiar to this listening barrier by practicing them by using different activities.

5. Lecturers should help the students to get the main idea and summarize the topic and not to spend most of the allocated time thinking of every word they listen to.

6. Large number of the students do not have an idea about different accents of the target language. Lecturers should supply their students with various foreign language accents which is full of hesitations, pauses and fillers in order to make the students accustom with item.

7. Many students aren't aware of the informal language that used by normal people. Lecturers should introduce different types of the informal speech to help them understand conversations in real situations. Students are exposed to full forms of language. They have to be familiar to reduced forms and reductions. Teachers of language use bookish English in teaching listening comprehension which is standard. Students have to be provided with listening materials which contain colloquial and slang expressions.

6. CONCLUSION

It is known that listening is one of the four language skills used for teaching any foreign language. These skills are generally used adequately to help acquiring second language. This study indicates that large number of the students 64% did not have any listening activities during secondary stage. It can be said that they are unfamiliar with this issue which have a negative impact at university stage. It is clear that many lecturers didn't clarify the topic for the students before starting doing the activities which in turn causes problems to some students. Only 32% who always adopted this technique. According to this study it is obvious that many students did not listen to the radio or watch TV programs for the aim of practicing listening activity. It is also clear that large number of students didn't try improving their listening by allocating specific time for this. Only 9% of the lecturers who always sequences the material used in listening into (pre-during-post) sections. It is also obvious that speed could be considered as one of the main problems which encounter the students during listening activities. This study also showed that it is not easy for the students to get the main idea and summarize it easily during listening comprehension. Only 20% did this permanently. Not all lecturers of listening comprehension exposed their students to various accents to make them accustomed with these features. Only 18% who always did this technique. It is obvious that the majority of the students weren't aware of the natural speech which full of hesitations and pauses. Few lecturers who exposed their students to this conversation which has fillers or hesitations.. This study also introduces information that most of the students are not familiar with the informal speech because they weren't exposed to this kind of speech by their lecturers. Only 6% of the learners can understand the conversation which has these features.

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