

A Comprehensive Analysis Of Listening Errors Made By Undergraduate Students In College A Case Study of Undergraduate Students at Benghazi University, Jalu

Salah Abobaker Almabruk Shahat *

Department of English language, Benghazi University, Faculty of Arts and Science, Al-Wahat, Libya

تحليل شامل لأخطاء الاستماع لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية: دراسة حالة لطلاب جامعة بنغازي (فرع جالو)

صلاح أبوبكر المبروك شحات *

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة بنغازي - كلية الآداب والعلوم (الوحدات)، ليبيا

*Corresponding author: salah.shahat@uob.edu.ly

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Abstract:

This study investigates the listening errors and difficulties encountered by undergraduate students of English at Benghazi University, Al-Wahat campus. Listening is widely recognized as one of the most fundamental communication skills, yet it remains one of the most challenging to master for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). The study aims to identify the common listening problems students face, examine the importance of listening for EFL learners, and explore the underlying reasons behind listening proficiency issues.

The study employs a descriptive research design, using a questionnaire distributed to fifty undergraduate students across various semesters in the English Department. The questionnaire consisted of twenty items designed to uncover patterns and causes of listening errors in classroom settings.

The findings reveal that the majority of students (97%) experience difficulties in listening during lessons, with 50% reporting challenges in understanding their teachers during class. The research identifies several factors contributing to listening comprehension problems, including unfamiliar vocabulary, complex grammatical structures, speaker accents, poor concentration, classroom noise, lack of listening laboratories, and the use of code-switching (Arabic) by some lecturers. Additionally, students struggle to differentiate between words that share similar pronunciation but carry different meanings.

The study concludes that listening proficiency requires deliberate practice and institutional support. Recommendations include establishing listening laboratories, integrating audio-visual materials, training teachers to improve delivery methods, and encouraging students to engage in daily listening activities such as watching videos, listening to news, and practicing note-taking. The research emphasizes that without effective listening skills, learners cannot achieve competence in other English language skills, making listening instruction a critical component of English language teaching in higher education.

Keywords: Listening Errors, Listening Comprehension, Undergraduate Students, English As A Foreign Language, Listening Proficiency, Communication Skills.

الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة أخطاء وصعوبات الاستماع التي يواجهها طلاب المرحلة الجامعية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة بنغازي (فرع الواحات). يُعد الاستماع ركيزة أساسية من ركائز التواصل، ومع ذلك، يظل إتقانه تحدياً كبيراً لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL). تهدف الدراسة إلى تحديد مشكلات الاستماع الشائعة التي يواجهها الطلاب، وبيان أهمية الاستماع لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية، واستكشاف الأسباب الكامنة وراء ضعف الكفاءة في مهارة الاستماع. اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي، واستخدمت استبانة وزعت على خمسين طالباً وطالبة من مختلف المستويات الدراسية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية. وتضمنت الاستبانة عشرين بنداً صُممت للكشف عن أنماط وأسباب أخطاء الاستماع في البيئة الصفية. أظهرت النتائج أن غالبية الطلاب (97%) يواجهون صعوبات في الاستماع أثناء الدروس، حيث أفاد 50% منهم بوجود تحديات في فهم المعلمين داخل الفصل. وحدد البحث عدة عوامل تساهم في مشكلات استيعاب الاستماع، منها: المفردات غير المألوفة، والتراكيب النحوية المعقدة، ولهجات المتحدثين، وضعف التركيز، وضوضاء الفصل الدراسي، وغياب مختبرات الاستماع، ولجوء بعض المحاضرين إلى التناوب اللغوي (استخدام اللغة العربية). بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يجد الطلاب صعوبة في التمييز بين الكلمات التي تتشابه في النطق وتختلف في المعنى. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن إتقان مهارة الاستماع يتطلب ممارسة متعمدة ودعمًا مؤسسياً. وتشمل التوصيات: إنشاء مختبرات للاستماع، ودمج المواد السمعية والبصرية، وتدريب المعلمين لتحسين أساليب التدريس، وتشجيع الطلاب على الانخراط في أنشطة استماع يومية مثل مشاهدة مقاطع الفيديو، والاستماع إلى الأخبار، والتدريب على تدوين الملاحظات. ويؤكد البحث أنه بدون مهارات استماع فعالة، لا يمكن للمتعلمين تحقيق الكفاءة في مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية الأخرى، مما يجعل تدريس مهارة الاستماع عنصراً جوهرياً في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية في مؤسسات التعليم العالي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أخطاء الاستماع، استيعاب الاستماع، طلاب المرحلة الجامعية، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، كفاءة الاستماع، مهارات التواصل.

Introduction

Listening has been defined in various ways; however, it is widely considered the most important of all communication skills. To define listening adequately, the role of cognition must be recognized alongside its behavioral aspects (McKenzie & Clark, 1995). Although communication scholars have not agreed on a single definition of listening, they concur on certain core elements that should be included.

Listening skills are essential for success in the workplace, within the family, and in society. Strong listening skills are mandatory for careers in communications, management, planning, and sales. Listening involves a set of etiquettes, including questioning for clarification, showing empathy, and providing suitable responses. Good listening also includes understanding body language; eye contact with the speaker, sitting straight, and remaining alert are all gestures of a good listener.

Listening is a technique used to understand what is said by taking into account how it is said, along with the nonverbal signs and body language that accompany it. This technique requires practice, as listening is a very difficult skill. The listening process involves five stages: receiving, understanding, evaluating, remembering, and responding. Active listening is a particular communication technique that requires the listener to provide feedback on what he or she hears to the speaker. The three main degrees of active listening are repeating, paraphrasing, and reflecting.

1.1 Background of the Study

The skill of listening and good listening skills play key roles in communicating with others and are intended for listening, understanding, and interpretation. (Brownell, J. 2024), introduces foundational concepts in listening and explains how the HURIER model (Hearing, Understanding, Remembering, Interpreting, Evaluating, Responding) provides a behavioral framework for conceptualizing and applying listening.

In addition, Moustafa (1995) noted that speakers must possess a set of skills and capabilities to ensure the message reaches the recipient fully, namely:

1. The ability to identify the speaker's goal.
2. The ability to use courtesies and appropriate greetings.
3. The ability to attract and maintain the listener's attention.
4. The ability to focus on the important parts of the message.
5. The ability to deliver ideas in an organized manner.

1.2 Reasons for Choosing the Topic

Listening is one of the most important skills in learning English as a foreign language. Because learners encounter several problems during their study of English, the researcher has chosen to focus on this skill. The researcher also wishes to highlight the effect of different accents on learners, given that teachers at the institution come from various backgrounds. Many students have difficulty listening to their teachers inside the classroom, which may be attributed to the learner as a receiver. For these reasons, the researcher investigates this issue in order to help learners by offering suggestions and recommendations at the end of the research.

1.3 Problem Statement

The main problem addressed in this study is listening difficulty, particularly the challenges students face in understanding spoken English. The research questions are as follows:

1. What problems do students encounter during English listening?
2. What is the importance of listening for English language learners?
3. What factors contribute to students' listening proficiency problems?
4. What strategies can improve listening habits?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the problems students encounter during English listening.
2. To examine the importance of listening as a core language skill.
3. To determine the factors behind students' listening proficiency problems.
4. To propose strategies for developing effective listening habits and reducing ineffective ones.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its theoretical and practical contributions:

1. **Theoretically:** This research focuses on determining ways to improve students' listening ability.
 2. **Practically:** It is expected to make a positive contribution to English language learners in developing audio communication skills.
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2. Literature Review

Listening is a vital component in creating and maintaining productive speaking skills. It is the first skill developed, and from listening, language can be acquired and mastered (Lundsteen, 1979, p. 73).

Through listening, learners can be enhanced through dialogue, as indicated by the phenomenological tradition of communication.

Listening is an important skill that allows us to receive, understand, and evaluate information communicated to us. As human beings, we seek to interact daily with one another, and this interaction consists of two key elements: speaking and listening.

Mistakes made by students are caused by several factors, including different languages or accents, noise, fear or anxiety, anger, lack of attention, distraction, and hasty interpretation of what we imagine we hear from others.

Historically, the study of listening began with Paul Rankin's work in 1926, when listening was determined to be the most frequent mode of communication. However, it was not until the 1940s that more explicit attention was given to listening (Janusik, 2010, p. 195).

2.1 Types of Listening

Comprehensive listening involves understanding the message and its variables, including receiving, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding, as well as concentration and vocabulary (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996, p. 142). Specific behavioral skills include matching speech speed and thought speed, taking good notes, asking questions, and paraphrasing.

2.1.1 Receiving

This is the first and most basic stage of the listening process: the act of absorbing the information being expressed to you, whether verbally or non-verbally. Not all communication is done through speech, and not all listening is done with the ears. Regardless of how you are communicating with another person, the key at this stage is to pay attention. Focus all of your energy on the speaker by following three simple tips:

- Avoid distractions.
- Do not interrupt the speaker.
- Do not rehearse your response.

2.1.2 Understanding

This is the point in the listening process where you are able to plan your response. Understanding takes place after you have received the information from the speaker and begin to process its meaning. You can do this by asking questions or rephrasing parts of the speaker's message. This allows you to demonstrate your active engagement with their words and helps you better understand their key points.

2.1.3 Remembering

This stage of the listening process might seem very similar to the first two, but it goes beyond merely absorbing and processing information. Remembering is about retaining that information, and the most effective way to do so in an important conversation is to move the key elements of a message from your short-term memory into your long-term memory. There are numerous methods for doing this:

- **Identify the fundamental points:** By converting a collection of small details into a central theme, you can transform something potentially complicated into an easy-to-grasp general concept. The details will remain in your short-term memory, but isolating the main ideas will help you understand them better and remember them longer.

- **Make the message familiar:** Relate the main idea to something you already know. This should be easy to do, as there are few entirely new ideas, and chances are the discussion you are having will trigger old memories and past experiences. Use those to help you retain incoming information.

2.1.4 Evaluating

At this stage, you can begin to prepare for your response, but remember: you are still a listener, not a speaker. After the message has been absorbed, processed, and remembered, you can begin to sort the information into pieces. After interpreting the speaker's message through a combination of understanding, retention, and evaluation, you are ready to form a response.

2.1.5 Responding

If you have completed the receiving, understanding, remembering, and evaluating portions of the listening process, responding should be easier than ever. You will be prepared to address the speaker's most important points, with an awareness of the circumstances and context surrounding their words. It is important to understand the transition between listening and speaking and to be aware of the ways responding is still a part of the active listening process.

Practicing these tips makes you more conscious of the way you communicate and of the bad habits you should avoid in the listening process. Listening is the most important part of communication because if you fail to understand the message being expressed to you, you will also fail to provide a substantial and meaningful response. This is the root cause of many arguments, misunderstandings, and complications, whether at home, school, or work.

3. Methodology

This section describes the research design, subjects, sample, research instruments, and data collection procedures.

This study is a descriptive study; the researcher investigates the difficulties faced by undergraduate students in listening. It aims to describe the difficulties encountered by undergraduate students at Benghazi University. The researcher selected fifty subjects as a sample in order to identify the reasons behind listening proficiency issues by asking them twenty closed questions.

According to Saleh (2012), data collection is the peak activity in research, which means the researcher must meet the learners who will become the source of the research data. The researcher gathered data by means of a questionnaire. In this study, the researcher designed a questionnaire at Benghazi University, Al-Wahat, in the English Department. The analysis was conducted with students to check common errors in listening. The researcher asked fifty students their ages between 18 to 22 years to answer the questions across all semesters were chosen randomly from different level, from the first to the last semester. The researcher also attempted to interpret their responses to arrive at different conclusions.

4. Discussion Of Results

This chapter describes and analyzes the data obtained from the students' answers to the questionnaire. Twenty questions were included. The following sections present the results of the questions analyzed.

Question 1: Do you think the students find it difficult to listen during the lesson?

Options: a) Yes b) No c) Sometimes

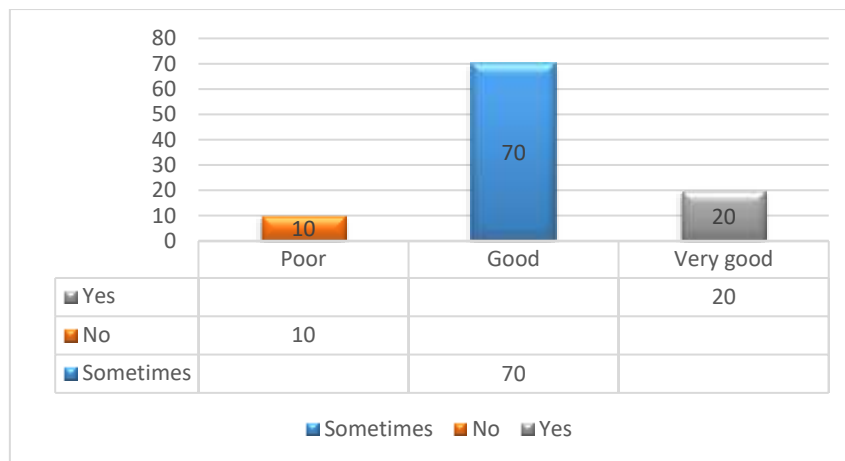


Figure 1 Students' Responses on the Difficulty of Listening During the Lesson

According to the chart, 97% of the students say "sometimes" because they find it difficult when listening to some words. A few students (3%) can understand words while listening without any mistakes; perhaps they have more experience than the others. In fact, most of them find listening difficult during the lesson, which means that listening is not an easy skill to master.

Question 2: Do you think students are able to follow what the teacher says during the lesson?

Options: a) Yes b) No c) Sometimes

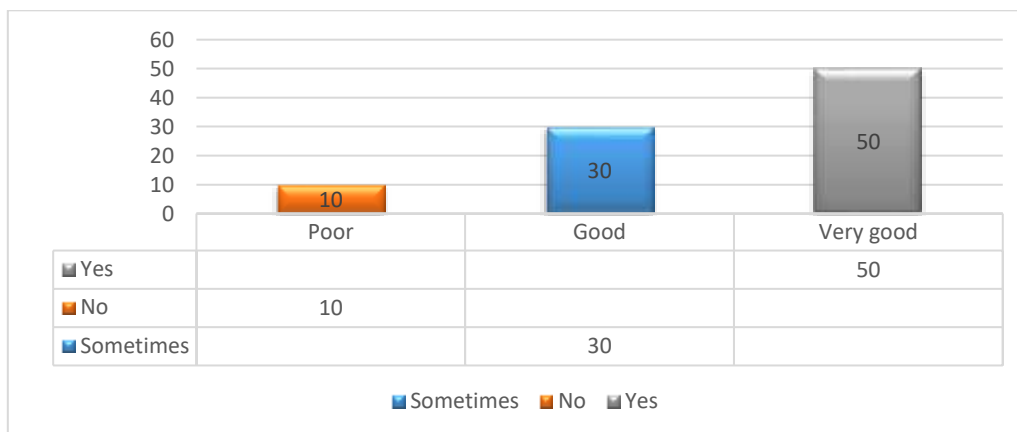


Figure 2 Students' Ability to Follow What the Teacher Says During the Lesson

According to the chart, 50% of the students have difficulty listening to the teacher. This could be because of poor listening ability or a lack of focus. In addition, the teacher's tone affects their ability to listen. Meanwhile, 30% say "sometimes," which is a negative point.

Question 3: Do you think similar words affect listening?

Options: a) Yes b) No c) Sometimes

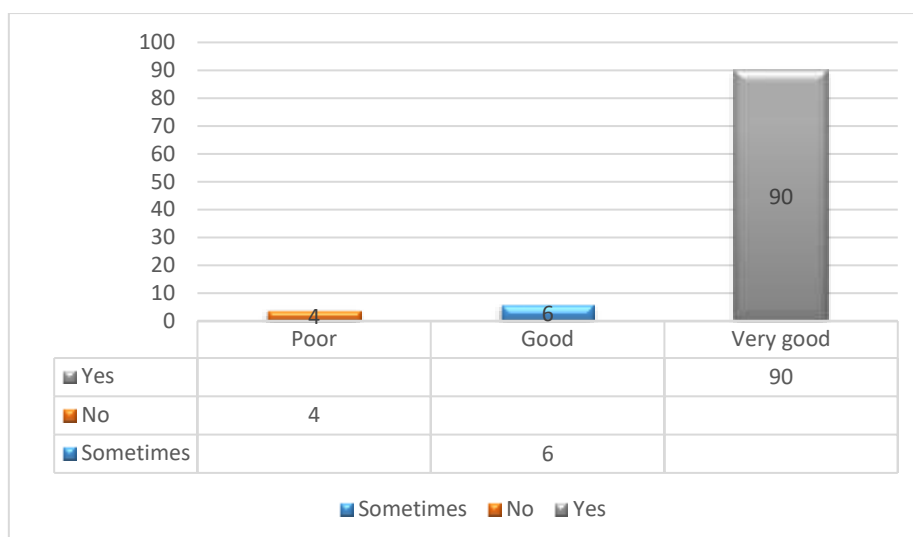


Figure 3 The Effect of Similar Words on Listening

According to the chart above, "Yes" is 90%, which is the highest percentage. This is a negative result: a large group of students have difficulty with similar words. In contrast, "Sometimes" is 6%, and "No" is 4%, which is a small percentage. This means that most students have problems and difficulties with similar words.

5. Answering The Research Questions

5.1 What problems do students encounter during English listening?

Factors causing listening problems can be classified into several categories: problems related to the text, problems related to tasks and activities, problems related to the listener, and problems related to teacher methodology.

Problems related to listening materials: Listening materials may deal with almost any area of life, including street conversations, new products, and situations unfamiliar to students. In a spontaneous conversation, speakers frequently change topics, and the material itself may be the main source of listening comprehension problems. In particular, unfamiliar words, difficult grammatical structures, and the length of the spoken text may cause difficulty in understanding. The major problem hindering listening comprehension was that the students' vocabularies were too limited to understand the content.

Problems pertaining to poor grammar: Grammatical structures cause much trouble for students. Difficulty in listening comprehension is partly due to the structural component of the text, and it is possible to infer that long spoken texts interfere with learners' listening comprehension. In general, the listening text itself can be the main source of listening comprehension problems. In particular, unfamiliar words, complex grammatical structures, long spoken texts, topics that cannot generate interest, complex sentences, and unfamiliar topics pose listening difficulties for EFL learners.

5.2 What is the importance of listening for English language learners?

Listening plays an important role in the process of teaching English as a foreign language, as it occupies a large portion of the time we spend communicating in the language. Consider the time you spend listening to others speak, or listening to songs, news, lectures, and YouTube videos.

Recently, advances in technology have served to raise the profile of listening skills in teaching English as a foreign language. Technology provides input that can be very significant for learning English as a

foreign language in general and for developing speaking skills in particular. Moreover, it promotes non-linear processing of language and encourages learners to develop holistic strategies for texts. As language teachers, we need to think about how we can incorporate listening into our teaching and outside the classroom so that our students are exposed to significant listening input.

5.3 What factors contribute to students' listening proficiency problems?

According to the students' answers, the researcher found that the main reason behind this issue is the lack of a laboratory. The learners encountered no laboratory, which leads to misunderstanding in many ways. Moreover, students face many difficulties in differentiating between vocabulary items that have the same pronunciation but different meanings, which means learners become confused at that stage.

Additionally, learners are exposed to real situations created by teachers. Most teachers have different accents that affect students' acquisition of pronunciation, especially for difficult and strange words in the subject inside the classroom. Students' concentration is weak during classes due to noise and disruption from some students, and there is a lack of management inside the classroom, for which the teacher is responsible.

5.4 What strategies can improve listening habits?

To improve listening habits, the study suggests a combined approach: learners should practice daily with graded audio, videos, news, and podcasts; take notes; listen for main ideas; and use minimal-pair and shadowing exercises to distinguish similar-sounding words. Teachers should speak slowly and clearly, use authentic but level-appropriate audio-visual materials, teach listening strategies explicitly, reduce code-switching to Arabic, and manage classroom noise and disruption. Institutions should establish well-equipped listening laboratories, integrate technology, provide teacher training, and give listening a clear place in the curriculum. Together, these learner, teacher, and institutional strategies address the main causes of listening problems found in the research—limited vocabulary, unfamiliar accents, poor concentration, lack of practice, and inadequate facilities—and help students develop more effective, consistent listening habits.

6. Conclusion

Through the analysis of feedback received from students based on the questionnaire, the researcher has traced the fact that, in order to improve oral communicative proficiency, students need to focus and take initiative in listening skills and cooperate with one another. Moreover, the researcher found that the real problems facing students are as follows:

- There is no laboratory in the college for listening.
- Some lecturers use the mother tongue (Arabic) during classes.
- There is a lack of attention from students and chaos in the classroom.

The researcher hopes that this research will be useful to everyone interested in knowing more about the difficulties faced by students in listening skills. This research also highlights measures to be undertaken in order to overcome these difficulties in the future and considers listening as the most important skill in English. Without true listening, one cannot master any other skill in English.

7. Recommendations

To find solutions for the problem of listening in the classroom, each student must practice listening in daily life. For example, students should:

1. Listen to material with or without a transcript to help with understanding and comprehension.
2. Try to write what they hear in English, even if incorrectly; this technique helps assimilation and access to understanding.
3. Listen to materials they are interested in, such as politics, economics, or novels.
4. Take notes, which helps focus on the message rather than just listening.
5. Listen for the main idea of a conversation and not focus on details until the main ideas are understood.

If the teacher's accent is not clear, it is difficult for students to understand what the teacher aims to say. This is one of the main reasons for listening mistakes. The teacher should speak slowly until he or she feels that what was said is understood by the learners, and give them enough time to recall their knowledge from the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) or through the use of modern teaching methods.

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