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Difficulties of Learning Listening Comprehension Faced by First Year English Department Students at Anbar University

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Keywords: -Difficulties - Learning - Listening Comprehension University. Article Info	Abstract: The present study aims at investigating difficulties of learning listening comprehension skill that face first-stage students who study English in the department of English/College of Education for Humanities/Anbar University and finding whether there is any significant difference in listening difficulties between males and females of the sample. The study is limited to the first-stage students who study English in the department of English/College of Education for Humanities/Anbar University in Ramadi city for the academic year (2017-2018). To achieve aims of the present study, two hypotheses are set. Firstly, it is hypothesized that first-stage students who study English in the department of English/College of Education for Humanities/Anbar University, face difficulties in learning listening comprehension skill. Secondly, it is hypothesized that there is a significant difference in the difficulties of learning listening comprehension skill between males and females of the sample according to the variable of gender at the level (0.05). The sample of this study includes 63 students (26 male and 37 female) who study English language in English department - College of Education for Humanities at Anbar University. The researcher used a questionnaire as the main instrument for collecting data. After subjecting the sample to the questionnaire, responses were analyzed by using means, standard deviations and percentages to achieve the first aim of the study. Moreover, t-test for independent samples was used to accomplish the second aim of this study. Results revealed that first stage English Department students in the College of Education for Humanities at Anbar University, face difficulties in learning listening comprehension skill. Also, it is found out that males and females of the sample face the same listening difficulties. Finally, on the basis of findings, the researcher offered suggestions, conclusions and recommendations.
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صعوبات تعلم مهارة الاستماع التي تواجه طلاب المرحلة الاولى في قسم اللغة الانكليزية في جامعة الانبار

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الخلاصة: تهدف هذه الدراسة لمعرفة وتشخيص الصعوبات التي تواجه طلاب المرحلة الاولى في قسم اللغة الانكليزية-كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية في جامعة الانبار، اثناء تعلم مهارة الاستماع. كما تهدف الدراسة ايضا الى معرفة فيما اذا كانت هناك فروق ذات دلالة احصائية في صعوبات الاستماع بين الذكور والاناث لعينة البحث تحت مستوى دلالة (0,05) حسب متغير الجنس. لذلك فان هذه الدراسة محدده لمعرفة الصعوبات التي تواجه طلاب المرحلة الاولى في قسم اللغة الانكليزية-كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية في جامعة الانبار، اثناء تعلم مهارة الاستماع في مدينة الرمادي للعام الدراسي (2017-2018). ولتحقيق اهداف البحث افترض الباحث بان عينة البحث تواجه صعوبات في تعلم مهارة الاستماع، كذلك افترض الباحث بان هنالك فروق ذات دلالة احصائية في صعوبات تعلم مهارة الاستماع بين الذكور والاناث تحت مستوى دلالة (0,05) حسب متغير الجنس. استخدم الباحث استبياناً يحتوي على سبع مجالات كاداة اساسية لجمع البيانات من افراد العينة. تم تطبيق الاستبيان على عينة مجموعها (63) طالبا وطالبة، تشتمل على (26) من الذكور و (37) من الاناث. من اجل تحليل البيانات استخدم الباحث الوسط الحسابي و الانحراف المعياري و النسبة المئوية لتحقيق الهدف الاول للدراسة، حيث اظهرت النتائج بان افراد العينة يواجهون صعوبات في تعلم مهارة الاستماع. من جانب اخر، استخدم الباحث الاختبار التائي لعينتين مستقلتين لتحقيق الهدف الثاني من الدراسة، حيث اشارت النتائج الى عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة احصائية في صعوبات تعلم مهارة الاستماع بين الذكور والاناث تحت مستوى اهمية (0,05) حسب متغير الجنس. كلمات مفتاحية: الصعوبات، تعلم، مهارة الاستماع، جامعة.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Problem and Significance of the Study:

As a skill, listening comprehension needs to receive close attention in classrooms and universities because every EFL teacher realizes that students' oral production ability is dependent greatly on their listening comprehension proficiency. Beside, in a typical day, we used to listen more than we speak. Subsequently, this enhances the importance of

listening comprehension skill (Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010:161). Moreover, studies deal with listening skill is nearly neglected specially for English as foreign language learners. So, we note studies related to listening are scarce in our country.

Rost (2002: 94) states that listening is strongly needed inside classrooms since it equips learners with input. This input (i.e. listening skill) functions a fundamental role in students' language development. Moreover, Krashan (1985: 261-276) and Hasan (2000: 138) agree that learners can acquire language by decoding linguistic features of what they hear. The existence of understandable input and ability to listen lead to understand language input. Also they consider that listening comprehension provides the correct conditions that lead to the development and acquisition of other skills (i.e. speaking, reading and writing).

Hunsaker (1990:184) stresses on the rule of listening on communicative abilities. He states that about three quarters of acquisition of children at school is reached through listening. Therefore, he considers listening skill as a leader among other skills and basis for their evolution.

In spite of the basic need for teaching listening comprehension in acquiring the target language, we find that it is neglected and poorly taught in classrooms and therefore this will cause difficulties for preparatory school students as well as universities students. This might be attributed to difficulties which are related to textbook, logistics, environment and psychological factors. Osada (2004: 65) goes inline since he stated that listening has not received enough attention from the side of both teachers and learners (i.e. students learn to how to listen but not comprehend).

This study is significant because of the absence of previous studies in the same field in this province. Also, it will help to diagnose listening difficulties that face first stage students who study English in the Department of English in College of Education at University of Anbar. Also, it will give teachers opportunity to examine difficulties of listening suffered by students and redirect strategies of teaching to enhance students' level of listening capability. Finally, findings will be useful to other researchers who work in this field for further studies.

1.2 Aims of the Study: This study aims at the following:

- 1- Investigating difficulties of learning listening comprehension skill that face first-stage students who study English in the department of English/college of education for humanities/Anbar University.
- 2- Finding out whether there is a significant difference in the difficulties of learning listening comprehension skill between male and female first stage English Department students at University of Anbar according to the variable of gender.

1.3 Hypotheses of the study:

1. First-stage students who study English in the department of English/College of Education for Humanities/Anbar University face difficulties in learning listening comprehension skill.
2. There is a significant difference in the difficulties of learning listening comprehension skill between male and female first-stage students who study English in the department of English/college of education for humanities/Anbar University, according to the variable of gender at the level (0.05).

1.4 Limits of the Study:

This study is limited to investigate difficulties of learning listening comprehension skill that face male and female students of English Department in the College of Education for Humanities at University of Anbar in Ramadi city for the academic year (2017-2018).

1.5 Definitions of Basic Terms:

1.5.1 Listening Comprehension:

It is the process of making recognition of verbal language, conventionally joined with voices and visible input, by advantaging from our existed knowledge and the listening situation. It is a pack of operations rather than a single process (Schmitt, 2012: 180).

The operational definition of listening comprehension refers to the ability of the first stage English department students to comprehend lecturers' outcomes and other recorded listening materials successfully.

1.5.2 Difficulties:

Goh (2000:28) defines listening difficulties as the internal and external obstacles and problems that might interrupt spoken text understanding and processing which occur in different levels of learning listening skill.

The operational definition of difficulties in this study indicates listening comprehension difficulties that face first stage English department students in the University of Anbar. These difficulties may be attributed to listening comprehension text, linguistic factor, concentration, psychological factor, listener, speaker and physical setting.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Listening Comprehension as Skill:

Traditionally, listening was considered as a passive skill, in which information poured in the ears of the receiver, and all the listener had to do was passively register the message. Nowadays, listening is considered as an 'active' process, and that good listeners are just as active when listening as speakers are when speaking (Schmitt, 2010: 181).

Rivers (1981:160-161) goes beyond that and gives listening skill more significance. She considers listening skill as a creative skill because in order to comprehend the sounds falling on our ears, we take the raw material of words, arrangements of words, the rise and fall of the voice, and from this material (i.e. linguistic arrangement the speaker has produced) we create meaning. Moreover, listening process involves three factors to be achieved from the listener's side. First, the listeners extract the linguistic information aurally from the sound signal uttered by the speaker. Second, the listeners should draw the relationship between what they have heard and what has been said and expect what will follow (i.e. situational context). Third, the listeners have to perceive the intention of the speaker so as to comprehend the message.

Listening comprehension as a skill has been dealt with differently by various methods of teaching English as a foreign language. At the beginning, Grammar Translation Method gives little attention to listening, while it receives more attention in the Direct Method since native language should not be used in the classroom. The Audio-Lingual Method puts listening comprehension first in the natural order of skills. So it receives most of the attention in this method. As for the Total Physical Response, believes that understanding the spoken language should precede its production. Communicative Approach stresses on listening as equally as on the other skills (Freeman and Anderson, 2011:18, 31, 45,110).

Moreover, the Comprehension Method gives prior significance for the skill of listening and this is the reason of being labeled so. James Arthur 1960s stresses that acquiring language begins primarily with perception and terminated with being able to produce language. He believes that within Comprehension Approach, the learner internalized the extensive map of how the target language works at the beginning, after that speaking will appear spontaneously. He compares this to the baby spending many months listening to people around it and makes sense out of what it hears, after that the child chooses to speak when it is ready to do so (Brown, 2007: 39).

2.2 Strategies Associated with Listening Comprehension Skill:

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002: 313), listening strategies are defined as cognizable plans that deal with incoming speech, especially if the listeners face difficulties due to incomplete understanding. Also, Chamot (1990: 71) defines listening strategies as "techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students can take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information". Moreover, he asserts on the necessity of teaching students about listening strategies because they help students to gain better listening achievements. Moreover they specify three types of listening strategies which are: cognitive, meta-cognitive and socio-affective (Ibid: 92).

Cognitive strategy stresses largely on the general cognitive processes that learner involve in language acquisition such as generalization, transfer, summarizing, simplification and restructuring. Another example of cognitive strategy is when learners sometimes fail to get the meaning of the spoken words; they resort to guess their meaning depending on the context (Hadley, 2003: 54). Cognitive strategy in listening includes two types. The first is top-down strategies. In this type the listener uses and activates shared knowledge, pragmatic knowledge and context to attain correct interpretation or realization of the message; and this type is usually used by advanced listeners. The second type is down-top strategies. In this type, the listener utilizes his own knowledge of syntax, phonology and lexicon to reach at an accurate decoding or interpretation of the spoken text (Schmitt, 2012: 13) and (Abdalhamid, 2012: 34).

Richard and Schmidt (2002: 329) state that meta-cognitive strategy involves thinking about the mental processes used in the learning process, monitoring the learning process while it occurs and finally evaluating learning process after it has finished. According to this strategy, a learner who is starting to learn new language may plan ways of how to remember new words, deciding the effective approaches of working out grammatical rules and evaluate his progress in order to decide what to concentrate on in the future. Moreover, Brown (2007: 134) describes meta-cognitive strategy as an executive function which involves planning the learning process, in-learning process thinking, monitoring of self production or comprehension and finally evaluating learning outcomes.

The other type is socio-affective strategies. These strategies are related to factors like view points and affections (Oxford, 1996: 82). Vandergrift confirmed that it have key role in reducing anxiety, enhance confidence while doing listening exercises and provide motive to improve listening abilities (Vandergrift, 1997: 398).

2.3 Previous Studies:

2.3.1 Hamouda (2013):

This study attempts to achieve the following aims:

1. Identify Saudi student's perception towards listening comprehension importance.

2. Identify skills emphasized in their previous education.
3. Discovering how much students have occasions to hear English.
4. Identifying problems of listening faced students of Qassim University.
5. Proposes suggestions for teachers to solve listening comprehension problems faced by their students.

The sample of this study includes sixty students who study English in the first year at English language and translation department in Qassim University. Members of the sample were chosen randomly. Also their ages range between twenty to twenty two years old.

The researcher used questionnaire and semi-instructed interview as the main instrument to gather data in this study. The questionnaire includes four sections. Section four of the questionnaire concentrates on listening problems and it is grouped into five categories. Data of questionnaire were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively, while data of interview were analyzed qualitatively. Results appeared that students of Qassim University have problems in learning listening comprehension related to variety of accents, words which are unfamiliar, length of spoken text and concentration.

2.3.2 Assaf (2015):

The goals of Assaf's study are investigating difficulties of listening problems encountered by students at American University in Jenin according to their viewpoints. Moreover, it aims at investigating listening difficulties according to the role of sex, level of study, academic year, kind of school and years of learning English. The sample has been chosen randomly. The sample consists of 189 students (95 male and 94 female) who study at the centre of English Language Center in the American University in Jenin. Regarding the tool of the study, the researcher used a questionnaire which consists of seven domains. Also he used a semi-structured interview as another instrument to collect data and achieve the aims of the study. The result of the first aim shows that the total average of the seven domains of the questionnaire showed that the level of listening comprehension difficulties is moderate. In regard to the second aim, result shows no statistical differences in the difficulties of listening between male and female students according to the variable of sex. With respect to the level of study, results show that there are no significant

differences in listening difficulties according to the level of study variable. This means that the level of study of students has no role on difficulties of listening. Also results elucidate that students' academic year has no effect on listening difficulties which students face. As for the kind of school variable, results show no statistical difference in listening difficulties between private school students and public school students. Results of the final aim indicate that there is no significant difference in listening difficulties according to the number of years of learning English.

2.3.3 Ismail (2015):

The aim of this study is to investigate problems of learning listening comprehension that face Algerian students who study English at Kasdi Merhab Ouargla University. The sample of this study includes fifty of the second class students at Kasdi Merhab Ouargla University for the academic year 2014-2015. The sample consists of (36 females) and (14 males). Moreover, the sample has been chosen randomly by the researcher. A questionnaire is used in this study as the main instrument to collect data. The questionnaire in this study consists of five sections. The fifth section is dedicated to problems of listening, and it includes seven domains. Results show that the sample finds listening comprehension difficult. Also, the sample face various problems of listening such as problems related to the content of listening text, related to speaker, related to listener and related to the psychological characteristics.

2.3 Discussions of Previous Studies:

Previous studies are discussed according to the following points as long as the present study is concerned.

2.3.1 Aims:

Some of the previous studies try only to investigate problems of learning listening comprehension that face students who study English such as Ismail (2015), while other studies try to achieve more aims such as Hamouda (2013) who is aiming at achieving the following: firstly, to identify Saudi student's perception towards listening comprehension importance. Secondly, is to identify skills emphasized in their previous education. Thirdly, discovering how much students have occasions to hear English. Fourthly, identifying problems of listening faced students of Qassim University. Fifthly, proposes

suggestions for teachers to solve listening comprehension problems faced by their students. In addition, Assaf's study (2015) aims at discovering difficulties of listening problems encountered by students at American University in Jenin. Moreover, it aims at investigating listening difficulties according to the role of sex, level of study, academic year, kind of school and years of learning English. This study aims to investigate difficulties of learning listening comprehension skill that encounter first-stage students who study English in the department of English/College of Education for Humanities/Anbar University and finding out whether there is a statistically significant difference in the difficulties of learning listening between males and females of the sample. Accordingly, this study has two mutual aims with Assaf (2015).

2.3.2 Samples:

The samples of previous study are nearly similar in kind and size except one. As for Ismail (2015) the sample includes fifty of the second class students at Kasdi Merhab Ouargla University for the academic year 2014-2015. The sample is divided into (36 females) and (14 males) who have been chosen randomly by the researcher. The sample of Hamouda (2013) consists of sixty students who study English in the first year at English language and translation department in Qassim University who have been also chosen randomly. Assaf (2015) selected randomly 189 students (95 males and 94 females) who study at the centre of English language - American University in Jenin. Whereas, the sample of this study includes sixty-three students (26 males) and (37 females) who study English at the first stage English Department in the College of Education for Humanities at University of Anbar for the academic year (2017-2018).

2.3.3 Instruments:

With respect to instruments, we find out that previous studies used nearly the same instrument to collect data needed to achieve aims. We see that Hamouda (2013) used a questionnaire and semi-instructed interview as the main instrument to gather data in this study. Likewise, Assaf (2015) employed a questionnaire and an interview to collect necessary data. Aslo, Ismail (2015) used a questionnaire to obtain data requested. As for this study, the researcher used a questionnaire which consists twenty-three items distributed on seven domains.

2.3.4 Statistical Means:

Previous studies employed various statistical means to get the required results. Ismail (2015) used frequencies and percentages to explain results of the study. Similarly, Homouda (2013) invested frequencies and percentages to explain result. On the other hand, Assaf (2015) used means, standard deviations and percentages to obtain results for listening problems. Also, he used t-test for two independent samples to find results according to the variable of sex and the variable of type of school. In addition, Assaf used One-Way ANOVA to find results conditioned to the variables level of study, academic year and years of learning English. With respect to this study, the researcher used mean, standard deviation and percentage to achieve the first aim of the study, while t-test for two independent samples is used to achieve the second aim in this study.

2.3.5 Results:

Results of studies previously mentioned are varying depending on their aims. Hamouda (2013) pointed out that students of Qassim University face problems in learning listening comprehension conditioned to variety of accents, length of spoken text, words which are unfamiliar and concentration. Assaf (2015) found out students at the Arab American University Jenin face listening comprehension difficulties. Also, results show that both males and females are equally facing listening difficulties according to the variable of sex, there are no significant differences in listening difficulties according to the variable of study level, students' academic year has no effect on listening difficulties, no statistical differences in listening difficulties between private school students and public school students and there is no statistically significant difference in listening difficulties in relation to years of learning English. Ismail (2015) pointed out that the sample face various problems of listening such as problems related to speaker, the content of the listening text, listener and related to the psychological characteristics. Regarding the present study, results show that first-stage students who study English in the department of English/College of Education for Humanities/Anbar

University face difficulties in learning listening comprehension skill. Also, results show that males and females of the first stage English Department in the college of Education for Humanities at University of Anbar face the same listening difficulties.

3. Procedures:

3.1 Population and Sample of the Study:

The whole first-stage students studying English in the department of English-College of Education in Anbar University for study year 2017-2018, represents the population of the study. The total number of the population is (124) male and female students. To choose the sample, the researcher excluded students who study for the second year in the same stage (i.e. 42 students) and extracted students who participated in the pilot study (i.e. 20 male and female students). After that, the researcher chose (63) students (26 males) and (37 females) randomly to be the sample of this study, see Table (1).

Table (1)
The Sample of the Study

Males	Females	Total
26	37	63

3.2 The Instrument:

A questionnaire is used as the main instrument to collect data in this study. Alkubaisi (2007: 224) defines a questionnaire as a scientific mean which is used widely to get information or data related to peoples' affairs, tendencies and trends. Moreover, it is used to test hypotheses of different types of researches. Also, it is defined as a group of questions related to a specific topic or topics which are designed to be answered by respondents. It is very important that questionnaires to be valid, reliable and clear (i.e. not ambiguous). It is used to collect data in various branches of applied linguistic, for instance needs analysis, attitudes and language surveys (Richards and Schmidt, 2002: 438). There are types of

questionnaire such as: open form, closed form and closed-open form (Dawood and Abid-Alrahman, 1990: 96-97).

It is worth mentioning that before deciding the final draft of the questionnaire in this study, the researcher acquainted on related previous studies. Moreover, the researcher benefited from the study of Homouda (2013) and Assaf (2015) to construct the questionnaire of this study. Hence, the questionnaire in this study consists of twenty three items distributed over seven domains. The first domain is related to the listening text that contains (3 items), the second is related to the linguistic factor (5 items), the third is related concentration (3 items), the fourth is related to psychological factor (2 items), the fifth is related to the listener (4 items), the sixth is related to the speaker (3 items) and the seventh domain is related to the physical setting (3 items). The questionnaire is of five-scale degrees (1= never), (2= sometimes), (3= often), (4= usually) and (5= always). In item number twenty two, the scale is reversed because it is positive item.

The researcher used Likert Scale to explain results of the questionnaire and as follows: (less than 35%) very low, (36%-51.9%) low, (52% - 67.9%) moderate, (68% - 83.9%) high and (84% - 100%) very high (Allam, 2000: 540). It is worth mentioning that intervals can be obtained through subtracting one integer from twenty. Subsequently, we will find that the interval between each period is (0.8). Also in order to get the scale of percentages, we multiply each interval by twenty since we have five-scale response questionnaire (i.e. $100 \div 5 = 20$). See Table (2) below, which shows Likert five-scale, intervals, percentages and effect degrees.

Table (2)
Likert Scale, Intervals, Differences, Percentages and Effect Degrees

Likert Scale	Intervals	Differences	Percentages	Effect Degrees
1	1 – 1.79	0.79	less than 35%	Very Low
2	1.8 – 2.59	0.79	36% - 51.9%	Low
3	2.6 – 3.39	0.79	52% - 67.9%	Moderate
4	3.4 – 4.19	0.79	68% - 83.9%	High

5	4.2 – 5	0.80	84% - 100%	Very High
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3.3 Validity:

Validity is an essential characteristic of tests as well as psychological and educational standards because it is deeply related to the aim for which the study is constructed for (Allam, 2000: 186). Alkubaisy (2007: 192) states that validity means to what extent the instrument of the study measures what is designed for and not to measure something else. Alkubaisy adds that validity of the instrument which is used for data collecting is the most difficult and important, since weak validity of the instrument leads to weak results and subsequently we will lose time and efforts. In this study, the researcher used face validity. The questionnaire has been presented to a jury of members to judge that items of the questionnaire serve the aims of this study and measures what it has been constructed for (*). The jury includes nine members of linguists and specialists of methodology who are qualified and experienced in English language teaching. Members of the jury are kindly demanded to propose their suggestions, remarks and modifications to ensure validity of the questionnaire. Some of them gave modifications, deletion or substitution for some items. The researcher greatly takes their valuable notes and suggestions into consideration and did all the necessary and essential changes on the questionnaire accordingly. The first draft of the questionnaire included twenty seven items. After following the jury recommendations, the researcher made the appropriate modifications, substitutions and deletion to make the final draft of the questionnaire consists of twenty three items.

(*)

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2. Asst. Prof. Harith Esmael Turkey, PhD (University of Koya, College of Arts)
3. Asst. Prof. Ala'a Chaloub, PhD (Anbar Univerity, College of Education)
4. Asst. Prof. Ayad Hamad Al-Assafi, M.A. (Anbar University, College of Arts)

5. Ins. Ali S. Jemil, PhD (Anbar University, College of Education)
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8. Asst. Ins. Hothifah Yousif Torky, PhD (Anbar University, College of Education)
9. Asst. Ins. Younis Mahdi Salih, M.A. (Anbar Directorate of Education)

3.4 Pilot administration:

The questionnaire has been administered on twenty male and female first stage students at English Department in the College of Education for Humanities in the University of Anbar, in order to estimate the appropriateness and suitability of the instrument. Also, pilot study helps to find ambiguous items in the questionnaire that students may not understand clearly. Moreover, pilot administration determines the average time required for answering the questionnaire and it demonstrated that time required is twenty minutes since students finish their responses between 18 – 22 minutes. The pilot administration took place at 27th of February 2018. Before beginning the pilot administration, the researcher explained the aims of the study and instructions of how to respond on the questionnaire items.

3.5 Reliability:

Reliability is an essential element for any research instrument before using it for collecting data. Reliable instrument ensures true results. Subsequently, this will save effort, time and money. There are different methods to measure reliability such as test-retest method, split-half method, equivalent-form and ...etc. To achieve reliability of the questionnaire items, Alpha Cronbach was used in this study. Result show that the value of Alpha Cronbach was (90%) and this value is considered highly recommended (Bachman, 2004: 163).

3.6 The Final Administration:

The final administration of the questionnaire took place at the second course at the academic year 2017-2018, more specifically at the 6th of March 2018. The questionnaire was applied to a sample of the study which is 63 (26 males and 37female) students. Before applying the questionnaire, members of the sample were told about the purpose of the research and were advised to be sincerely objective in answering the

items of the questionnaire. It is importantly to mention that the researcher translated all item into Arabic beside English to make the questionnaire more clearly for the sample both in the pilot and final administration.

3.7 Statistical Means:

To ensure the accuracy of the results in this study, the researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences Programme (SPSS). The researcher used the following statistical means to achieve the aims of his study:

- 1 - The researcher used Percentage to find disagreement and agreement of the jury members on the items of the questionnaire to obtain validity.
- 2 - Alpha Cronbach is employed in this study to find out the value of reliability of the questionnaire.

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum s^2_i}{s^2_x} \right) \quad (\text{Ibid, 2004: 165}).$$

- 3 - The researcher used the Mean to find the percent of student's responses on the questionnaire items.
- 4 - Standard Deviation Formula is used to find out the standard deviation values of the items of the questionnaire.
- 5 - Dependent samples t-test, used to discover if a statistical differences occur in listening difficulties between males and females of the sample.

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{(N_1 - 1)S_1^2 + (N_2 - 1)S_2^2}{N_1 + N_2 - 2} \left| \frac{1}{N_1} + \frac{1}{N_2} \right|}} \quad \text{Glass and Stanley (1970 : 295)}$$

4. Results and Discussions of Results:

In this section, results of the study will be presented. First, the researcher shows the results of means, standard deviations and percentages of the questionnaire items. Secondly the researcher presents the result regarded to the statistical differences between males and females.

4.1 Results in Relation to the Listening comprehension Difficulties:

After the final application of the questionnaire, the researcher analyzed the sample responses on the questionnaire items objectively by using the statistical package of social sciences programme. The mean, standard deviation and percentage are used to achieve the results for the first aim of the study.

4.1.1 Difficulties Related to the Listening Comprehension Text:

The first domain of the questionnaire is concerned with the difficulties related to the listening comprehension text. This domain contains three questions. The first question asks whether students face difficulty in comprehending each word of speech. Results show that (53.6%) of the sample agrees on this difficulty and the effect degree is moderate. This result goes in line with Underwood which maintains that the lack of vocabulary hinders students' listening comprehension (Underwood, 1989: 138). Regarding the second question, results show that (62.8%) agrees that complex grammatical structures hinder their listening comprehension and the effect degree is moderate for this item. As for the third question, the effect degree is moderate since results indicate that (66.6 %) percent of the sample asserts that unfamiliar topic listening texts are difficult to comprehend. This stresses on the need of background knowledge of listening texts. Hasan (2000: 150-152) assumes that if there is an association between the recently heard listening text and

prior knowledge, this will more probably lead to guess the meaning of the listening text. The total percentage of the first domain which concerned with difficulties related to the listening text is (61 %) with a moderate effect degree. See Table (3).

Table (3)
Difficulties Related to the Listening Comprehension Text

No.	Source of difficulty	Number of Sample	Standard Deviation	Mean	Percentage	Effect Degree
I	Difficulties Related to the Listening Comprehension Text					
1	I face difficulty in comprehending each word of speech.	63	.892	2.68	53.6 %	Moderate
2	Complex grammatical structures hinder my listening comprehension.	63	1.045	3.14	62.8 %	Moderate
3	I find it difficult to understand listening texts when the topic is unfamiliar.	63	1.107	3.33	66.6 %	Moderate
Total results of the listening difficulties related to the listening comprehension text		63	.732	3.05	61 %	Moderate

4.1.2 Difficulties Related to the Linguistic Factor:

The second domain concentrates on difficulties related to the linguistic factor. It includes items (4-5-6-7-8). The percentage of item number four is (50.02 %) with low effect degree. In item number five, (41%) of the sample encounters difficulty in perceiving hints of speaker's transition from one topic to other one with a low effect degree. We can see that item number six has a moderate effect degree since (61.1 %) of the sample stops listening when they encounter an unknown word and think about its meaning. Consequently, this strategy of comprehending word by word until work out the whole meaning leads to impaired understanding of the listening text (Underwood, 1989: 154). Result of item number seven indicates that, the percentage of students who face difficulty to conclude an unknown word meaning during listening, is

(63.2 %) and with a moderate effect degree. Rost (2002:33) believes that comprehending speech of language is mainly a process of inference that depends on understanding signs more than direct sounds meanings matching. Item number eight refers that (61.8%) percent of the sample finds long and complex sentences cause difficulties for them to trace the spoken text succession. Beside, this item has a moderate effect degree. The total percent of domain related to linguistic factor difficulties, is (55.4 %) with a moderate effect degree. See Table (4).

Table (4)
Difficulties Related to the Linguistic Factor

No.	Source of difficulty	Number of Sample	Standard Deviation	Mean	Percentage	Effect Degree
II	Difficulties Related to the Listening Comprehension Text					
4	I can recognize the pronunciation of some words, but fail to recognize their meaning.	63	1.105	2.51	50.2 %	Low
5	I encounter difficulty in perceiving the signal of speaker's transition from one topic to other one.	63	1.197	2.05	41 %	Low
6	I stop listening when I encounter an unknown word and think about its meaning.	63	1.548	3.08	61.6 %	Moderate
7	I face difficulty to conclude the meaning of unknown words during listening.	63	1.181	3.16	63.2 %	Moderate
8	Long and complex sentences cause difficulties for me to trace the spoken text succession.	63	1.270	3.09	61.8 %	Moderate
Total results of the listening difficulties related to the linguistic factor		63	.851	2.77	55.4 %	Moderate

4.1.3 Difficulties Related to Concentration:

The third domain is related to concentration. It consists of items (9-10-11) respectively. Item number nine shows that (63.8 %) of the sample feels abstracted when they listen to long spoken texts and the effect degree is moderate. Ur intensifies that there is partially a relationship between the listening text length and difficulties of learning

listening. Subsequently this will cause boredom to listeners and distract their concentration (Ur, 1984: 78). In item number ten the percent of the pupils who lose their concentration when they think about the meaning of new words is (57.2 %) with a moderate effect degree. Item number eleven the percent of the members of the sample who find it difficult to recall words or phrases they have just heard is (51.2 %) with a low effect degree. The total percent of difficulties related to concentration domain is (57.4 %) with a moderate effect degree. See Table (5).

Table (5)
Difficulties Related to Concentration

No.	Source of difficulty	Number of Sample	Standard Deviation	Mean	Percentage	Effect Degree
III	Difficulties Related to Concentration					
9	Long spoken texts abstract me during listening.	63	1.366	3.19	63.8 %	Moderate
10	When I think about the meaning of new words, I lose my concentration.	63	1.365	2.86	57.2 %	Moderate
11	I face difficulties to remember meanings of phrases and words which I have just heard.	63	1.305	2.56	51.2 %	Low
Total results of the listening difficulties related to concentration		63	.971	2.87	57.4 %	Moderate

4.1.4 Difficulties Related to the Psychological Factor:

The fourth domain is concerned with difficulties related to the psychological factor. It includes two items (12 – 13). Results of item number twelve show that (60 %) of the sample fears before listening to the spoken texts, that they cannot understand what they will hear. The effect degree for this item is moderate. As for item number thirteen, results prove that (68.8 %) of the sample feels anxious when they don't understand the spoken text with a high effect degree. The total percent of difficulties related to the psychological factor domain is (64.4 %) with a moderate effect degree. Yagang (1994: 48) confirms that if the person is nervous or psychologically anxious, this will affect greatly on his or her

ability to listen efficiently. Moreover, Georgi Lozanov emphasizes on the role of psychological barriers on learning, since it will make students unable to participate and will bound learning capacity. That is why Lozanov emphasizes that when learners bring these psychological barriers, the teacher should attempt to remove these barriers from his students (Freeman and Anderson, 2011: 71-76). See Table (6).

Table (6)
Difficulties Related to the Psychological Factor

No.	Source of difficulty	Number of Sample	Standard Deviation	Mean	Percentage	Effect Degree
IV	Difficulties Related to the Psychological Factor					
12	Before listening to the spoken texts, I feel afraid if I will not comprehend what I will hear.	63	1.308	3.00	60 %	Moderate
13	I become anxious if I fail to comprehend the listening text.	63	1.522	3.44	68.8 %	High
Total results of the listening difficulties related to the psychological factor		63	1.297	3.22	64.4 %	Moderate

4.1.5 Difficulties Related to the Listener:

The fifth domain is concerned with difficulties related to the listener. It contains four items (14-15-16-17) sequentially. In item number fourteen, we can see that (52.6 %) of the sample stops listening when they have problems in understanding a listening text and the effect degree of this item is moderate. Losing interest in listening skill from students' side makes them less efficient and maybe giving up listening. So it is recommended for teachers to motivate their students (Harmer, 2001: 98). In item number fifteen (53.4%) of the sample agrees that they face difficulties to comprehend generally the listening text from the first time of listening. The effect degree is moderate for this item. Item number sixteen shows that (48.8 %) percent of the sample assures that they face difficulties in guessing what is next coming in listening texts and the effect degree is low for this item. In item number seventeen, we can see that (51.4 %) of the sample admits that they used to understand some

words in written forms but they encounter difficulties to comprehend them completely in speech stream. Also the effect degree of item number seventeen is low. Hamouda (2013: 134) believes that when students try to learn new expressions or words, they often learn their written forms and their pronunciation through dictionary or by their teacher when he pronounces them carefully. But if students are not interested about the correct pronunciation of the new words, they may not be able to diagnose them in a stream of speech. The total result of listening difficulties related to the listener domain is (51.4 %) percent with a low effect degree. See Table (7) below.

Table (7)
Difficulties Related to the Listener

No.	Source of difficulty	Number of Sample	Standard Deviation	Mean	Percentage	Effect Degree
V	Difficulties Related to the Listener					
14	I stop listening when I have problems in understanding a listening text.	63	1.286	2.63	52.6 %	Low
15	I face difficulties to comprehend generally the listening text from the first time of listening.	63	1.308	2.67	53.4 %	Low
16	I find difficulty in guessing what would come next in the listening text.	63	1.147	2.44	48.8 %	Very low
17	I used to understand some words in written forms but I encounter difficulties to comprehend them completely in speech stream.	63	1.279	2.57	51.4 %	Low
Total results of the listening difficulties related to the listener		63	.856	2.57	51.4 %	Low

4.1.6 Difficulties Related to the Speaker:

The sixth domain consists of three items (18-19-20) and it is concerned with difficulties related to the speaker. The percent of item number eighteen is (62.2 %). This means that sixty two point two percent of the sample admits that they face difficulties to comprehend a speech if there are a lot of pauses and hesitance in it. This result is also found in the

previously discussed studies such as the one of Hasan (2000) as cited in (Ismail, 2014: 26) who states that pauses and hesitations during spontaneous speech cause errors in listening comprehension and perception especially for non-native speakers. Moreover, the effect degree of item number eighteen is moderate. Item number nineteen indicates that (51.2 %) percent of the sample faces difficulties in comprehending speech without looking at the body language of the speaker. The effect degree of this item is low. In regard to item number twenty, we see that (77.4 %) percent of the sample finds it difficult to understand well when speakers speak too fast. Underwood (1989: 74) states that this difficulty is widely occur since foreign language learners can't govern the speaker's speed of speaking. The effect degree of this item is high. The total result of listening difficulties related to the speaker domain is (63.6 %) percent with a moderate effect degree. See Table (8) below.

Table (8)
Difficulties Related to the Speaker

No.	Source of difficulty	Number of Sample	Standard Deviation	Mean	Percentage	Effect Degree
VI	Difficulties related to Speaker					
18	I face difficulties to comprehend a speech if there are a lot of pauses and hesitations in it.	63	1.289	3.11	62.2 %	Moderate
19	I face difficulties in comprehending speech without looking at the body language of the speaker.	63	1.271	2.56	51.2 %	Low
20	I find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak too fast.	63	1.251	3.87	77.4 %	High
Total results of the listening difficulties related to the speaker		63	.901	3.18	63.6 %	Moderate

4.1.7 Difficulties Related to the Physical Setting:

The seventh and final domain is related to the physical setting difficulties, which consists of the items (21-22-23) respectively. In item number twenty one, (80.6 %) of the sample faces difficulty to concentrate when the place is noisy. Also, the effect degree for this item is high. Bingol (2014: 4) states that interior annoyance of classroom influences negatively on listening comprehension efficiency, especially in crowded classrooms. We can see that students who sit on the back seats cannot hear as clearly as students who sit in the front seats. Moreover, exterior annoyance affects badly on students' perception. Students who sit next to windows are affected by noises from outside, as well as sounds that come from corridors out of the class. In addition there are other physical setting obstacles such as temperature inside the classes and lack of air conditions in classes.

Item twenty two shows that (51.6 %) of the sample agrees that they use sound laboratory to develop their listening comprehension with a low effect degree. It is worth mentioning that the scale of this item is reversed since it is a positive item. Results of item number twenty three shows that (62.6 %) of the sample agrees that unclear sounds resulting from poor quality equipments and CD-player hinder their listening comprehension ability. The effect degree for this item is moderate. The total percent of difficulties related to the physical setting domain is (64.8 %) percent with a moderate effect degree. See Table (9).

Table (9)
Difficulties Related to the Physical Setting

No.	Source of difficulty	Number of Sample	Standard Deviation	Mean	Percentage	Effect Degree
VII	Difficulties Related to the Physical Setting					
21	I face difficulties in concentration when the place is noisy.	63	1.295	4.03	80.6 %	High
22	We use sound laboratory to develop our listening comprehension.	63	.820	2.58	51.6 %	Low

23	I face difficulties in comprehending listening texts, due to the unclear sounds produced from CD's and equipments that are of bad qualities.	63	1.289	3.13	62.6 %	Moderate
Total results of the listening difficulties related to the physical setting		63	.732	3.05	61 %	Moderate

4.1.8 The Total Results of Domains and the Questionnaire:

For more clarification, the seven domains rank as follow according to their percentages. Firstly, there is the domain related to the physical setting with (64.8%) percent. Secondly, ranks the domain related to the psychological factor with (64.4%) percent. In the third rank, we have the domain related to the speaker with (63.6%) percent. In the fourth rank comes domain related to the listening comprehension text with (61%) percent. In the fifth rank comes the domain related to concentration with a percent of (57.4 %). In the sixth rank the domain related to the linguistic factor is located with (55.4 %) percent. Finally, the domain related to the listener comes at the seventh rank with (51.4 %) percent. Moreover, the total percent of the questionnaire is (58.8%).

The total results of the questionnaire shows that the standard deviation of listening comprehension difficulties is (.665). Moreover, the total mean of responses of the questionnaire is (2.94). Also, the percentage of the total questionnaire is (58.8 %) which ranges in the moderate effect degree. So, with respect to the first hypothesis of the study which states that first-stage students of English Department-College of Education for Humanities in Anbar University face difficulties in learning listening comprehension skill, we find out the sample of the study face difficulties in learning listening comprehension skill on a moderate effect degree.

The result of the first hypothesis is in line with the outcomes of (Ismail: 2015) which found out that the sample of the face different listening problems that is conditioned to the content of the listening text, psychological characteristics, listener and speaker. Moreover, first

hypothesis result matches with (Hamouda: 2013) and (Assaf: 2015), since these studies prove that students of English as a foreign language face difficulties in learning listening comprehension skill. See Table (10).

Table (10)
The Total Results of Domains and the Questionnaire

No.	Name of Domain	Number of Sample	Standard Deviation	Mean	Percentage	Effect Degree
1	Difficulties Related to the Listening Comprehension Text	63	.732	3.05	61 %	Moderate
2	Difficulties Related to the Linguistic Factor	63	.851	2.77	55.4 %	Moderate
3	Difficulties Related to Concentration	63	.971	2.87	57.4 %	Moderate
4	Difficulties Related to the Psychological Factor	63	1.297	3.22	64.4 %	Moderate
5	Difficulties Related to the Listener	63	.856	2.57	51.4 %	Low
6	Difficulties Related to the Speaker	63	.901	3.18	63.6 %	Moderate
7	Difficulties Related to the Physical Setting	63	.678	3.24	64.8 %	Moderate
Total results of the whole domains of listening comprehension difficulties.		63	.665	2.94	58.8 %	\ Moderate

4.2 The Result of Difficulties of Learning Listening between Male and Female Students:

The second hypothesis states that there is a significant difference in the difficulties of learning listening skill between male and female first-stage students who study English in the department of English/College of Education for Humanities/Anbar according gender variable at the level of significance (0.05). To achieve this aim, the researcher used t-test for two independent samples. Independent-samples t-test usually used when we want to compare the mean scores that belongs to two different peoples groups or conditions (Pallant, 2010: 239). Results show that the mean score of male group is (66.42) and their standard deviation is (14.76). On the other hand, the mean score of female group is (65.86) and their standard deviation is (15.89). The computed t-test value is (0.141). When we compare the computed t-test value with the tabulated t-test value which is (2.00) on the degree of freedom (61), we find out that the computed t-test value is less than the tabulated t-test value when the level of significance is (0.05). This means there is no statistically significant difference in listening comprehension difficulties between males and females of the sample according to the variable of gender at the level (0.05), see Table (11) below.

Table (11)

The t-test value of listening comprehension difficulties between males and females

Gender	No. of Students	Mean	Standard Deviation	<i>df</i>	Calculated t- Value	Tabulated t-test Value	LS
Male	26	66.42	14.76	61	0.141	2.00	0.05
Female	37	65.86	15.89				

This means that male and female students face the same listening comprehension difficulties. The result of the second hypothesis goes in line with Assaf (2014) since he proved the same result.

5. Conclusions, Suggestions and Recommendations:

5.1 Conclusions:

1. After finding and discussing results, we can conclude that first-stage students, who study English in the department of English/College of Education for Humanities/Anbar University, face difficulties in

learning listening comprehension skill. These difficulties may be attributed to the lack of focusing on the importance of listening strategies that help students to improve their listening abilities.

2. Also it is concluded that males and females of the sample face the same listening difficulties.

5.2 Suggestions for further Studies:

1. The researcher suggests making other studies for colleges of Arts and colleges of Languages.
2. The researcher suggests the importance of making the same study on the students of preparatory and secondary schools.
3. Constructing a study by using two questionnaires one is dedicated to learners and another questionnaire dedicated to the teachers and lecturer to investigate the appropriate listening strategy depending on their responses on the two questionnaires.

5.3 Recommendations:

1. Teachers have to try as much as possible to break the psychological barriers of their students towards learning listening comprehension skill because if teachers neglect this side, it will effect negatively on students' progress to surpass difficulties of listening.
2. Teachers highly recommended cooperating with their students to reach at the most useful listening strategy so as to be used inside the classes.
3. Teachers recommended to provide authentic listening materials so as to helps their students to listen for speech uttered by native speakers of the target language.
4. Teachers have to give their students motivation to learn listening skill as equal as other skills.
5. Encourage students not to be limited to listening activities in the class, they should get benefit from variety of inputs such as radio programs, movies, plays, documentaries, advertisements and TV channels in the target language.

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Appendix

The Questionnaire of Listening Comprehension Difficulties

No.	Source of difficulty	never	sometimes	often	usually	Always
I	Difficulties Related to the Listening Comprehension Text					
1	I face difficulty in comprehending each word of speech.					
2	Complex grammatical structures hinder my listening comprehension.					
3	I find it difficult to understand listening texts when the topic is unfamiliar.					
II	Difficulties Related to the Linguistic Factor					
4	I can recognize the pronunciation of some words, but fail to recognize their meaning.					

5	I encounter difficulty in perceiving the signal of speaker's transition from one topic to other one.					
6	I stop listening when I encounter an unknown word and think about its meaning.					
7	I face difficulty to conclude the meaning of unknown words during listening.					
8	Long and complex sentences cause difficulties for me to trace the spoken text succession.					
III	Difficulties Related to Concentration					
9	Long spoken texts abstract me during listening.					
10	When I think about the meaning of new words, I lose my concentration.					
11	I face difficulties to remember meanings of phrases and words which I have just heard.					
IV	Difficulties Related to the Psychological Factor					
12	Before listening to the spoken texts, I feel afraid if I will not comprehend what I will hear.					
13	I become anxious if I fail to comprehend the listening text.					
V	Difficulties Related to Listener					
14	I stop listening when I have problems in understanding a listening text.					
15	I face difficulties to comprehend generally the listening text from the first time of listening.					
16	I find difficulty in guessing what would come next in the listening text.					
17	I used to understand some words in written forms but I encounter difficulties to comprehend them completely in speech stream.					
VI	Difficulties Related to the Speaker					
18	I face difficulties to comprehend a speech if there are a lot of pauses and hesitations in it.					
19	I face difficulties in comprehending speech without looking at the body language of the speaker.					
20	I find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak too fast.					
VII	Difficulties Related to the Physical Setting					
21	I face difficulties in concentration when the place is noisy.					

22	We use sound laboratory to develop our listening comprehension.					
23	I face difficulties in comprehending listening texts, due to the unclear sounds produced from CD's and equipments that are of bad qualities.					

صعوبات تعلم مهارة الاستماع التي تواجه طلاب المرحلة الاولى في قسم اللغة الانكليزية في جامعة الانبار

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مستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة لمعرفة وتشخيص الصعوبات التي تواجه طلاب المرحلة الاولى في قسم اللغة الانكليزية-كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية في جامعة الانبار، اثناء تعلم مهارة الاستماع. كما تهدف الدراسة ايضا الى معرفة فيما اذا كانت هناك فروق ذات دلالة احصائية في صعوبات الاستماع بين الذكور والاناث لعينة البحث تحت مستوى دلالة (0,05) حسب متغير الجنس. لذلك فان هذه الدراسة محدده لمعرفة الصعوبات التي تواجه طلاب المرحلة الاولى في قسم اللغة الانكليزية-كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية في جامعة الانبار، اثناء تعلم مهارة الاستماع في مدينة الرمادي للعام الدراسي (2017-2018). ولتحقيق اهداف البحث افترض الباحث بان عينة البحث تواجه صعوبات في تعلم مهارة الاستماع، كذلك افترض الباحث بان هنالك فروق ذات دلالة احصائية في صعوبات تعلم مهارة الاستماع بين الذكور والاناث تحت مستوى دلالة (0,05) حسب متغير الجنس. استخدم الباحث استبياناً يحتوي على سبع مجالات كاداة اساسية لجمع البيانات من افراد العينة. تم تطبيق الاستبيان على عينة مجموعها (63) طالبا وطالبة، تشتمل على (26) من الذكور و (37) من الاناث. من اجل تحليل البيانات استخدم الباحث الوسط الحسابي و الانحراف المعياري و النسبة المئوية لتحقيق الهدف الاول للدراسة، حيث اظهرت النتائج بان افراد العينة يواجهون صعوبات في تعلم مهارة الاستماع. من جانب اخر، استخدم الباحث الاختبار التائي لعينتين مستقلتين لتحقيق الهدف الثاني من الدراسة، حيث اشارت النتائج الى عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة احصائية في صعوبات تعلم مهارة الاستماع بين الذكور والاناث تحت مستوى اهمية (0,05) حسب متغير الجنس.

كلمات مفتاحية: الصعوبات، تعلم، مهارة الاستماع، جامعة.