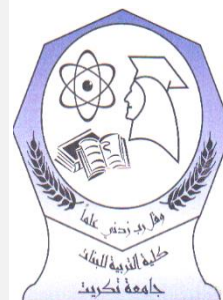




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Difficulties of Learning Listening Comprehension Faced by First Stage English Department Students at Anbar University

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Keywords: -Difficulties Learning Listening - Comprehension	Abstract: The present study aims at investigating difficulties of learning listening comprehension skill that faces 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 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 the aims of the present study, two hypotheses are set. Firstly, it is hypothesized that first-stage EFL students 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). A questionnaire was used as the main instrument for collecting data. After subjecting the sample to the questionnaire, responses were analyzed by obtaining the means, standard deviations and percentages of the collected data to achieve the first aim of the study. Moreover, t-test for independent samples was used to accomplish the second aim. Results revealed that EFL students in face difficulties in learning listening comprehension skill. Also, it is found that there are no significant differences between male and female students in their listening difficulties. Finally, on the basis of the findings, the researcher offered suggestions, conclusions and recommendations.
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صعوبات تعلم مهارة الاستماع التي تواجه طلاب المرحلة الأولى في قسم اللغة الانكليزية في جامعة الانبار

محمد طالب ياسين الهيتي

المديرة العامة لتربية الانبار

الكلمات الدالة:-	الخلاصة.
-الصعوبات - تعلم - مهارة الاستماع	تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى معرفة 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 تعلم مهارة الاستماع بين الذكور والاناث لعينة البحث 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 استبيانا يحتوي على سبع مجالات كأداة 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. .
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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem and Significance of the Study:

Listening comprehension skill 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. Besides, in a typical day, we used to listen more than to speak. Subsequently, this enhances the importance of listening comprehension skill (Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010:161). Moreover, studies deal with listening skill is nearly neglected especially for English as foreign language learners. So, we note studies related to listening are scarce (Mendelsohn, 1994, p. 9).

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 the effect of listening skill on communicative abilities. He states that about three-quarters of acquisition of children at school are reached through listening. Therefore, he considers listening skill as a leader among other skills and basis for their evolution.

Despite 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 may cause difficulties for preparatory school students as well as university students. This might be attributed to difficulties which are related to the 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 how to listen but not comprehend).

This study is significant because of the rareness of previous studies in the same field. Also, it will help to diagnose listening difficulties that face first stage EFL students. Also, it will give teachers the opportunity to examine the difficulties of learning listening comprehension skill 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:

1- Investigating difficulties of learning listening comprehension skill that face first-stage EFL students.

2- Finding out whether there is a significant difference in the difficulties of learning listening comprehension skill between male and female first stage EFL students.

1.3 Hypotheses of the study: This study hypothesizes that:

1. First-stage EFL students 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 EFL students at the (0.05) level.

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 the 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 comprehension 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, the 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. In the beginning, the 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 to the skill of listening and this is the reason of being labelled so. James Arthur 1960s stresses that acquiring language begins primarily with perception and terminated with being able to produce language. He believes that within the 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 he 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 (1987: 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 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 involves 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 strategy and 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 the down-top strategy, in which 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 is finished. According to this strategy, a learner who is starting to learn a 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 the 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 the socio-affective strategy. This strategy is related to factors like viewpoints and affections (Oxford, 1996: 82). Vandergrift confirms that it has a 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 students' perception towards the importance of listening comprehension.
2. Identify skills emphasized in students' previous education.
3. Discovering how much students have occasions to hear English.
4. Identifying problems of listening faced by 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 a questionnaire and semi-instructed interview as the main instruments 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 show that students of Qassim University have problems in learning listening comprehension related to the variety of accents, words which are unfamiliar, length of spoken texts and concentration.

2.3.2 Assaf (2015):

The goals of Assaf's study are investigating difficulties of listening comprehension 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 and consists of 189 students (95 male and 94 female) who study at the English Language Center at the American University in Jenin. Regarding the tool of the study, a questionnaire of seven domains was used. Also, a semi-structured interview was used 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. Regarding the second aim, the result shows that there is no statistical difference 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 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-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 of five sections is used in this study as the main instrument to collect data. The fifth section is dedicated to problems of listening, and it includes seven domains. Results show that listening comprehension is difficult for the involved sample. Also, the sample face various problems of listening such as problems related to the content of the listening text, related to the speaker, related to the 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 EFL students face such as Ismail (2015), while other studies try to achieve more aims such as Hamouda (2013) who aims 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 by students of Qassim University. 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 encounters 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 comprehension between males and females. Accordingly, this study has two mutual aims with Assaf (2015).

2.3.2 Samples:

The samples of previous studies 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 at 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 the University of Anbar for the academic year (2017-2018).

2.3.3 Instruments:

With respect to instruments, the previous studies used nearly the same instrument to collect data needed to achieve their aims. We see that Hamouda (2013) used a questionnaire and semi-instructed interview. 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, a questionnaire which consists twenty-three items distributed on seven domains is used.

2.3.4 Statistical Means:

Previous studies employed various statistical means to get the required results. Ismail (2015) used frequencies and percentages to explain the results of the study. Similarly, Homouda (2013) invested frequencies and percentages to explain the result. On the other hand, Assaf (2015) used means, standard deviations and percentages to obtain results for listening problems. Also, he used the t-test for two independent samples to find results according to the variable of sex and the variable of the 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. In this study, means, standard deviations and percentages were used to achieve the first aim of the study, while t-test for two independent samples was used to achieve the second aim of 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 the variety of accents, length of the 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 the speaker, the content of the listening text, listener and related to the psychological characteristics.

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 at Anbar University for the study year 2017-2018, represents the population of the study. The total number of the population is (124) male and female students. Students who study for the second year in the same stage (i.e. 41 students) and those who participated in the pilot study (i.e. 20 male and female students) have been excluded. Then, sixty-three students (26 males) and (37 females) are chosen to be the sample of this study, as shown in Table (1).

Table (1)
The Sample of the Study

Gender	Population	Excluded Students	Selected Sam
Males	58	32	26
Females	66	29	37
Total	124	61	63

3.2 Instrument of the Study:

A questionnaire is used as the main instrument to collect data in this study. Alkubaisi 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 and it is necessary for any questionnaire to be valid, reliable and clear (i.e. not ambiguous) (الكبيسي، 2007: 224). Also, it is used to collect data in various branches of applied linguistics, 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 open-closed form (داود و عبد الرحمن، 1990: 96-97).

It is worth mentioning that before deciding the final draft of the questionnaire in this study, the researcher acquainted with related previous studies. Moreover, the researcher benefited from the study of Homouda (2013) and Assaf (2015) to construct the questionnaire. Hence, the questionnaire consists of twenty-three items distributed to seven domains. The first domain is related to the listening text that contains three item, the second is related to the linguistic factor which consists of five items, the third is related to concentration that includes three items, the fourth is related to psychological factor and it consists two items, the fifth is related to the listener which involves four items, the sixth is related to the speaker that contains three items and the seventh domain is related to the physical setting which involves three 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 a positive item.

Likert Scale is used to interpret 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 value of percentages, we multiply each interval by twenty since we have a five-scale response questionnaire (i.e. $100 \div 5 = 20$). See Table (2), which shows Likert five-scale, intervals, percentages and effect degrees.

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

Likert Scale	Intervals	Differences	Percentages	Effect Degree
1	1 – 1.79	0.79	less than 35%	Very Low

2	1.8 – 2.5	0.79	36% - 51.9%	Low
3	2.6 – 3.3	0.79	52% - 67.9%	Moderate
4	3.4 – 4.1	0.79	68% - 83.9%	High
5	4.2 – 5	0.80	84% - 100%	Very High

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 (علام، 2000 :186). Moreover validity means to what extent the instrument of the study measures what is designed for and not to measure something else . Besides, validity of an instrument which is used for data collecting is the most difficult and important since the weak validity of the instrument leads to weak results and subsequently we will lose time and efforts (الكبيسي، 2007 : 192). 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 the validity of the questionnaire.

(*)

1. Prof. Mosleh Shuaish Al-Heity, PhD (Anbar Univerity, College of Education)
2. Asst. Prof. Harith Esmael Turkey, PhD (the 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)
6. Ass. Ins. Abdulsattar Ibraheem Shibebe. M.A. (Directorate of Education in Anbar)
7. Ass. Ins. Hafith Ibraheem Shibebe, M.A. (Anbar Directorate of Education)
8. Asst. Ins. Hothifah Yousif Torky, PhD (Anbar University, College of Education)
9. Asst. Ins. Younis Mahdi Salih, M.A. (Anbar Directorate of Education)

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.

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 to 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 is used in this study. The result shows 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 on 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, the sample was told about the purpose of the research and was advised to be sincerely objective in answering the items of the questionnaire. The items have been explained in Arabic to the students to make the questionnaire clear for the pilot and final administration.

3.7 Statistical Means:

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

1 – Percentage is used 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 - Means are used to finding the percentages 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 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:

In this section, the results of the study are presented. Results of means, standard deviations and percentages of the items of the questionnaire are presented. Then, the results of t-test for two independent samples are presented.

4.1 Results in Relation to Listening comprehension Difficulties:

After the final application of the questionnaire, the researcher analyzed the responses of the sample on the questionnaire items objectively

by using SPSS programme. The mean, standard deviation and percentage are used to obtain 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 agree 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 item, results show that (62.8%) agree that complex grammatical structures hinder their listening comprehension and the effect degree is moderate for this item. Concerning the third item, 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 the need for 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 is concerned with difficulties related to the listening text is (61 %) with a moderate effect degree. See Table (3).

Table (3)
Difficulties Concerning Listening Comprehension Texts

No	Source of difficulty	Number Student	Standard Deviation	Mean	Percentage	Effect Degree
I	Difficulties Related to the Listening Comprehension Texts					
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		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 reveals that (50.02 %) of the sample recognize the pronunciation of some words, but they fail to recognize their meanings. The effect degree of this item is low. In item number five, (41%) of the sample encounters difficulties in perceiving hints of speaker's transition from one topic to another with a low effect degree. We notice 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 an impaired understanding of the listening text (Underwood, 1989: 154). The result of item number seven indicates that the percentage of students who face difficulties to conclude the meaning of an unknown word during listening is (63.2 %) 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 reveals that (61.8%) percent of the sample found that long and complex sentences cause difficulties for them to trace the spoken text succession besides this item has a moderate effect degree. The total percentage of domain related to the linguistic factor difficulties is (55.4 %) with a moderate effect degree. See Table (4).

**Table (4)
Difficulties of the Linguistic Factor**

No.	Source of difficulty	Number of Students	Standard Deviation	Mean	Percentage	Effect Degree
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II	Difficulties Related to the Linguistic Factor					
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 another 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		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 percentage of the students who lose their concentration when they think about the meaning of new words is (57.2 %) with a moderate effect degree. In item number eleven, the percentage of the members of the sample who find it difficult to recall words or phrases which have been just heard is (51.2 %) with a low effect degree. The total percentage of difficulties related to concentration domain is (57.4 %) with a moderate effect degree. See Table (5).

**Table (5)
Difficulties of Concentration**

No.	Source of difficulty	Number of Students	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 the meanings of phrases and words which I have just heard.	63	1.305	2.56	51.2 %	Low
Total		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 are afraid of not understanding the spoken texts which they will hear. The effect degree for this item is moderate. As for item number thirteen, results prove that (68.8 %) of the sample feel anxious when they don't understand the spoken text and the effect degree is high. The total percentage 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 the role of psychological barriers to 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 of the Psychological Factor

No.	Source of difficulty	Number of Students	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		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 notice 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 confirm that they face difficulties in guessing what is coming next in listening texts. The effect degree is low for this item. In item number seventeen, it is noticed 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. 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 the dictionary or by their teacher when he pronounces them carefully. But if students are not interested in 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 Student	Standard Deviation	Mean	Percentage	Effect Degree
V	Difficulties Related to the Listener					
14	I stop listening when I have problems understanding a listening text.	63	1.286	2.63	52.6 %	Low
15	I face difficulties to comprehend general 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		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 percentage of item number eighteen is (62.2 %). According to this percentage, the sample admit that they face difficulties in comprehending speech if there are many pauses and if there is hesitancy in it. The effect degree of this item is moderate. 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. 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. As regards item number twenty, it is noticed that (77.4 %) percent of the sample find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak too fast. Underwood (1989: 74) states that this difficulty is widely occurring since foreign language learners can't govern the speaker's speed of speaking and 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 Students	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		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. Item twenty-one reveals that (80.6 %) of the sample face difficulties to focus on the material when the place is noisy. 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 affirm that they use the 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 show that (62.6 %) of the sample agrees that unclear sounds resulting from poor quality types of equipment and CD-players hinder their listening comprehension ability. The effect degree for this item is moderate. The total percentage of difficulties related to the physical setting domain is (64.8 %) with a moderate effect degree. See Table (9).

Table (9)
Difficulties of the Physical Setting

No.	Source of difficulty	Number of Students	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 the 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 CDs and types of equipment that are of bad qualities.	63	1.289	3.13	62.6 %	Moderate
Total		63	.732	3.05	61 %	Moderate

4.1.8 The Total Results of the Domains of the Questionnaire:

For more clarification, the seven domains rank as follows according to their percentages. The domain of difficulties of the physical setting comes first with (64.8%) percent. The domain of difficulties related to the psychological factor ranks second 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 percentage 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 percentage of the questionnaire is (58.8%).

The total results of the questionnaire show that the standard deviation of listening comprehension difficulties is (0.665). Moreover, the total mean of the responses to the questionnaire is (2.94). Also, the percentage of the total questionnaire is (58.8 %) which ranges in the moderate effect degree. So, 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 is accepted.

The result of the first hypothesis is in line with the outcomes of (Ismail: 2015) which found out that the sample face different listening problems that are conditioned to the content of the listening text, psychological characteristics, listener and speaker. Moreover, this result matches with (Hamouda: 2013) and (Assaf: 2015), since these studies prove that students of English as a foreign language face difficulty in learning listening comprehension skill. Check Table (10).

Table (10)
The Total Results of Domains

No.	Name of Domain	Number of Students	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 Questionnaire		63	.665	2.94	58.8 %	Moderate

4.2 Results of Difficulties of Learning Listening of 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 according to the variable of gender at the level of significance (0.05). To achieve this aim, the researcher used the t-test for two independent samples. Independent-samples t-test usually used when we want to compare the mean scores that belong to two different peoples groups or conditions (Pallant, 2010: 239). Results show that the mean score of the male group is (66.42) and their standard deviation is (14.76). On the other hand, the mean score of the 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) at 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 that 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. It is concluded that first-stage students 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. Listening comprehension skill is neglected both in preparatory schools for females as well as boys'.

5.2 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 affect negatively on students' progress to surpass difficulties of listening.

2. Teachers are highly recommended to cooperate with their students to reach the most useful listening strategy so as to be used inside the classes.

3. Teachers are recommended to provide authentic listening materials so as to help their students to listen to speech uttered by native speakers of the target language.

4. Teachers have to arouse motivation to learn listening comprehension skill as equal to other skills.

5. Encouraging students not to be limited to listening activities in the class, they should get benefit from the variety of inputs such as radio programmes, movies, plays, documentaries, advertisements and TV channels in the target language.

5.3 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.

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Appendix

The Questionnaire of Listening Comprehension Difficulties

No ·	Source of difficulty	never	sometimes	often	usually	Always
I	Difficulties Related to Listening Comprehension Texts					
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 another 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 the 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.					
VI I	Difficulties Related to the Physical Setting					
21	I face difficulties in concentration when the place is noisy.					
22	We use the sound laboratory to develop our listening comprehension.					
23	I face difficulties in comprehending listening texts, due to the unclear sounds produced from CDs and types of equipment that are of bad qualities.					

