Research Article   &**Open Access**

Challenges in Developing Listening Skills in English as a Foreign Language Learning (EFL)

Fathia Othman*1

1*Corresponding author:
fathiabobaker1989@gmail.com
Adjabiya University, Libya

Abstract: Reading, speaking, listening and writing are generally known as the fundamental abilities of acquiring a second foreign language, with listening being the most important. To communicate, most language learners aim to master one of the four primary language skills and use the language successfully. According to some language learners, Practice and improvement are necessary to master listening, which is one of the hardest abilities. Thus, this study's primary goal was to investigate second language learners' difficulties regarding their listening skills. Therefore, the present study examined listening comprehension problems in a sample of Libyan English learners. Students' perceptions of problems in listening to spoken content were reviewed to improve their oral perception and comprehension skills in the future. A questionnaire on listening comprehension problems was used, and 56 Libyan students provided data. The study results demonstrated that Libyan students had many listening problems. This not only affected their language learning performance but also their overall academic performance. Based on these findings, these recommendations were made to EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners in Libya, foreign language teachers, text designers, and program.

Keywords: challenges, listening, EFL.

1*الباحث الأول:

فتحية بوبكر محمد عثمان: جامعة اجدابيا،
ليبيا

التحديات في تطوير مهارات الاستماع في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

المستخلص: القراءة، التحدث، الاستماع، والكتابة تُعرف عمومًا على أنها المهارات الأساسية لاكتساب لغة أجنبية ثانية، ويُعتبر الاستماع أهمها. يسعى معظم متعلمي اللغات إلى إتقان إحدى هذه المهارات الأساسية الأربع لاستخدام اللغة بنجاح في التواصل. وفقًا لبعض متعلمي اللغات، فإن الممارسة والتطوير ضروريان لإتقان مهارة الاستماع، والتي تُعد واحدة من أصعب المهارات. لذلك، كان الهدف الأساسي من هذه الدراسة هو البحث في الصعوبات التي يواجهها متعلمو اللغة الثانية فيما يتعلق بمهارات الاستماع وبالتالي، تناولت هذه الدراسة مشكلات فهم الاستماع لدى عينة من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية من ليبيا. تم استعراض تصورات الطلاب حول المشكلات التي تواجههم عند الاستماع إلى المحتوى المنطوق بهدف تحسين إدراكهم الشفهي ومهارات الفهم في المستقبل. تم استخدام استبيان حول مشكلات فهم الاستماع، وقدم 56 طالبًا ليبيًا بيانات لهذه الدراسة. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن الطلاب الليبيين يواجهون العديد من المشكلات في مهارات الاستماع، مما لم يؤثر فقط على أدائهم في تعلم اللغة، بل أيضًا على أدائهم الأكاديمي بشكل عام. بناءً على هذه النتائج، تم تقديم توصيات لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ليبيا، ولمعلمي اللغات الأجنبية، ولمصممي النصوص، ولبرامج تعلم اللغة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: صعوبات، الاستماع، اللغة الأجنبية.

1   Introduction

The ability to communicate in English is crucial to contemporary living. It is believed that English is a universal language. Business, education, politics, society, technological advances, the economy, tourism, healthcare, and even sports are just a few of the many fields in which English is employed. It is a crucial language that breaks down barriers and unites people. Since English is a universal language of business, an increasing number of multinational corporations are now hiring staff members who have a solid comm and of the language. Candidates who are proficient in English are at a larger advantage than others. Therefore, learning English provides them with much more chances of success in life and job progression (Nguyen & Luu, 2022). English has become a global language which points to the need for people to hone essential skills like listening, a critical component of learning language and communication. Krashen (1985) pointed out that listening is an internal, invisible process that needs to be developed in the context of learning English as a second language. According to Luo (2008), listening is the primary social interaction skill and people mostly learn new information through listening rather than reading. According to Krashen (1985), language acquisition requires a substantial amount of input, which listening is the only way to achieve. To communicate effectively, meaningfully, and naturally, students need to consistently listen. This means that since listening gives linguistic input, students cannot learn a language without improving their listening skills (Jyoti, 2020). According to Hamouda (2013), listening comprehension is crucial for obtaining intelligible input; without input, learning cannot take place. This claim was supported by Rost (1994), who confirmed that listening is crucial in language classrooms since it provides pupils with feedback. This input lays the base for other language skills like speaking, reading and writing so that students are able to express themselves well. Likewise, listening is described by Brown (2001) as an interactive process that incorporates a variety of psychomotor, cognitive and affective processes. The development of students' linguistic skills depends heavily on their ability to listen. (Jyoti, 2020). Additionally, because colleges focus on vocabulary and grammar, English language learners face significant listening difficulties. Speaking and listening comprehension are not important

components of books, thus teachers do not take these abilities into account in their lessons (Hamouda, 2013).

Students must listen to a variety of difficult topics during the listening assignments. It goes without saying that many pupils experience anxiety and nervousness prior to listening because they fear misunderstanding the content or failing to keep up with the speaker's pace (Hamouda, 2013). This results in limited comprehension and inefficiency. The majority of students are insecure while speaking with foreigners, particularly their professors. They dare not ask foreigners to repeat themselves, even if they cannot comprehend what they are saying, since they fear saying something incorrectly. Therefore, this study has been carried out to address the common challenges students face in listening comprehension, including anxiety, fear of misunderstanding, and hesitation in seeking clarification, particularly when interacting with foreign speakers. It is anticipated that this study will give a general overview of the difficulties in the listening and comprehension process so that educators and learners can identify appropriate and practical solutions

1.1 Statement of the problem

Researchers have observed that listening comprehension is challenging for students (Hamouda, 2013). Students struggle to understand what the teacher says in English, such as the teacher's directions, and they cannot recognize what is being spoken in front of them and complete tasks based on it (Nguyen & Luu, 2022). Thus, in order to find ways to improve students' listening comprehension, it is vital to look into the issues that students face in this area.

1.2 Research Questions:

The following questions are answered by this study:

1. What are the challenges encountered by foreign language learners in listening skill?
2. What are the possible solutions to solve these problems?

1.3 Aims of the study

This study aims to:

1. To explore the challenges encountered by foreign language learners in listening skill.

2. To offer solutions and suggestions to these challenges that encountered by students in listening comprehension.

1.4 Significance of the study

Recognizing how crucial listening comprehension is to learning a second language (L2) and foreign language (EFL), it is crucial to draw attention to the challenges that L2 and foreign learners face regarding listening comprehension. Additionally, knowing why students struggle with listening comprehension helps teachers develop effective teaching methods that will assist students overcome their challenges. This survey also aims to discover what students believe about the challenges and obstacles they encounter when listening to English.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Listening

Listening can be defined as intentional sound response or reception. Although it is not as high as listening activities, paying close attention to what other people are saying has started to involve the mental aspect, indicating that mental activity has emerged. In order to collect data, document information, and grasp the meaning of communication that the speaker does not provide by spoken language or examinations, listening involves paying attention to, comprehending, enjoying, and interpreting oral symbols (Rajagukguk & Sirait, 2019).

"Listening is the act of perceiving, paying attention to, and interpreting sounds and other acoustic signals" according to Wolvin and Coakley (Ige, 2005). "Listening skill involves the reception, processing, interpretation, and understanding of aural stimuli," according to Otagburuagu (n.d.). The essential idea behind the aforementioned criteria is that listening cannot be considered complete unless the listener processes and comprehends the sounds they hear. This implies that an effective listener should be able to decipher the speaker's

message and recognize its underlying meaning. Four factors are at play in this communication process; they consist of the speaker, the message, the audience, and the interpretation of the content for comprehension or significance. The last or fourth triangular point may be the product of the first trio or near the centre of the first three triangular points (Regis et al., 2023).
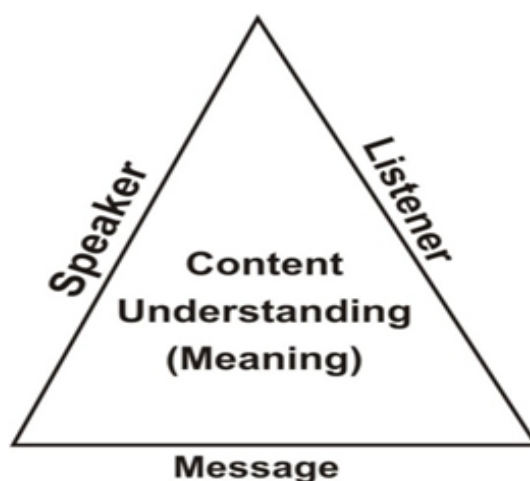

Figure 1 The communication process (Regis et al., 2023)

The aforementioned supports the idea that understanding the message is the main objective of listening. "Listening is deemed successful when the listener can comprehend the speaker's message," according to Nwankwo (2008, p.118). The goal of listening, according to Nwankwo (2008), is to be able to "understand spoken English without difficulty, which satisfies the requirements of national and international intelligibility" (Regis et al., 2023).

Listening is the first step toward speaking (Nation & Newton, 2009). People begin by listening while learning and developing their first or second language. In contrast, according to Brown in Yusnida et al. (2017), listening is reacting to and comprehending what is heard. Therefore, when listening, it is important to practice responding because being unable to do so can result in the inability to respond to the speaker. Meanwhile, listening management is another linguistic requirement, according to Sadiku (2015). By listening, people can comprehend what is being heard. The meaning of all that is heard will be relatable to one another (Regis et al., 2023).

According to Walberg (2004, p. 14), listening is a skill that enhances understanding and knowledge and facilitates effective communication with others. Schmitt (2010) added that listening is an ability that entails comprehending spoken language, which is defined by the process of identifying the speaker's voice, observing the intonation pattern used, and drawing their interpretation from the speaker's words. Additionally, Bite (2013) explained that the secret to successfully listening to messages incorporates both auditory and psychological engagement with the speaker, and listening necessitates intense focus (Regis et al., 2023).

2.2   Types of Listening/Listeners

Regis et al. (2023) mentioned different types of listening and listeners

2.2.1   Active/Reciprocal Listening/Listener

Active listeners pay close attention to what they listen to by participating in the mental and physical listening process. Active listening entails the listener's interpretation and comprehension of the message, followed by a suitable response. They engage in reciprocal listening when they respond to the message (Regis et al., 2023). To clarify ideas or add to the body of knowledge, the response may take the shape of questions. The listener actively participates in the conversation by writing down the speaker's or teacher's points or visualizing them (Regis et al., 2023). The sympathetic listener is one kind of active listener. He is an attentive listener who maintains and grows interested in the message (Regis et al., 2023).

2.2.2   Passive/Apathetic Listening/Listener

A scenario known as passive listening occurs when the listener listens without paying attention. It is possible to argue that the listener listens but does not pay attention; therefore, he is not mentally aware of the message. This kind of listening is situational in that when the listener comes across a challenging subject, he loses interest. This frequently occurs in the classroom when students are taught challenging topics and subjects. In these circumstances, the learner listens with little interest because he perceives the message as

burdensome or dull. A passive or apathetic listener becomes disinterested in the message and turns their focus elsewhere (Regis et al., 2023).

2.2.3 Reactionary/PrejudicedListening/Listener

Subjective listening is another term for this kind of listening. The listener adopts a subjective approach because he approaches the speaker/teacher and the message from a preconceived personal perspective. He is more interested in verbally responding to the speaker than understanding the message's meaning. The hypocritical listener, who criticizes and searches for fictitious gaps in the message, is an example of this kind of listener. Because of his bias, he manipulates facts to suit his needs. Such listeners "hear what they want to hear rather than what a speaker says," according to Otagburuagu (n.d., p. 18). To put it another way, their responses are predicated on their perception of and personal animosity toward the speaker; to put it further, they always want to harm the speaker since their responses are motivated by their grievances and opinions about him (Regis et al., 2023).

2.2.4 Non-Reciprocal Listening/Listener

This creates a scenario in which the listener hears the message but is not required to participate or respond. This differs from passive listening in that while listening intently, there is no response to the information being heard. Their differences can also be explained by the peculiarities of their various listening settings (Regis et al., 2023). Church sermons, radio newscasts and news talk, court proceedings, eavesdropping, monologues, orations, speeches by chancellors or rectors during matriculation or convocation, etc., are examples of non-reciprocal listening contexts (Regis et al., 2023). There is focus in these listening situations but no anticipated reaction to the content. In contrast, passive listening occurs when people listen to music, often to unwind, and they are not paying attention or responding to the information (Regis et al., 2023).

2.2.5 Critical Listening/Listener

An attitude of questioning while listening characterizes critical listening. Similar to active and academic listening, critical listening requires mental acuity. A critical listener scans the

speaker's message for contradictions, illogical statements, facts, and viewpoints. In this kind of listening, the message is criticized, but the critique is made to grasp better and clarify the facts (Regis et al., 2023). When critiquing the speech's illogicalities, biases, and prejudices, the listener is impartial. He addresses the message rather than the speaker/teacher to elucidate and support the information presented. The critical listener also seeks evidence of the speaker's credibility and motivation (Regis et al., 2013). The speaker's sincerity is another issue that worries him. Stated differently, critical listening is an objective rather than a subjective process (Regis et al., 2023).

2.2.6 Appreciative Listening/Listener6

This listener aims to recognize the speaker's word choice and usage skills, voice clarity and quality, rendition style, rhyming of sounds or emotions, and presenting style and body language. Put another way, an appreciative listener appreciates the presentation technique rather than its imperfections or abnormalities. This is present in performing a poem, the words or melody of a piece of music, an orator's speech, a political manifesto, etc. (Regis et al., 2023).

2.2.7 Transactional Listening/Listener

Transactional listening aims to receive guidance from someone and then have the message's requirements fulfilled. Instructions might come from parents to children, colleagues to others or from a boss at an office to his subordinate. It may also occur when negotiating, purchasing or selling goods (Regis et al., 2023).

2.2.8 Mute Listening/ Listener

A slower learner is frequently a mute listener. His failure to focus, comprehend a message, and provide the necessary reaction right away indicates that he has an intellectual disability. He should always read the curriculum or course overview before class and stay focused (Regis et al., 2023).

Figure 2 Types of Listeners (Regis et al., 2023)

2.3   The importance of listening

According to Eatough (2022), listening is crucial for the following reasons: it is the most crucial element of communication, it is the foundation of successful communication, it is necessary for effective collaboration, and it is crucial for comprehension. Listening is essential because it accounts for a significant amount of the time we spend speaking the language, provides input that can be very significant for the development of speaking abilities in particular and for the acquisition of second languages in general, promotes non-linear processing of language, and encourages students to take "holistic" approaches to writings, according to Karimova et al. (2020). Furthermore, being one of the four primary abilities in language acquisition, listening is essential for learning English, according to Nabiyev and Idiyev (2022). Since language is a receptive skill that humans first acquire, it awakens awareness of the language. Listening to the target language enhances linguistic proficiency (meaningful and substantive response). Listening is particularly crucial when learning a language for communication since it may aid in acquiring vocabulary, grammar, word stress, and pronunciation. Furthermore, accent, pitch, and voice tone alone may be sufficient to convey meaning (Gultom et al., 2023).

2.4   EFL listening skill challenges

Hardiyanto et al. (2021) noted in their research on listening challenges that students usually have trouble listening since they do not have many languages preserved in their memory. Yilmaz and Yavuz (2015) state that the most common listening issues that students encounter include not recognising words they are acquainted with, quickly forgetting what they have heard, understanding the message but not its apparent meaning, dismissing the next section while thinking about the meaning, and being able to create a

psychological picture from words listened to. Furthermore, according to Yagang (1994), listening difficulties have four primary causes: the speaker, the listener, the message content, and the physical surrounding.
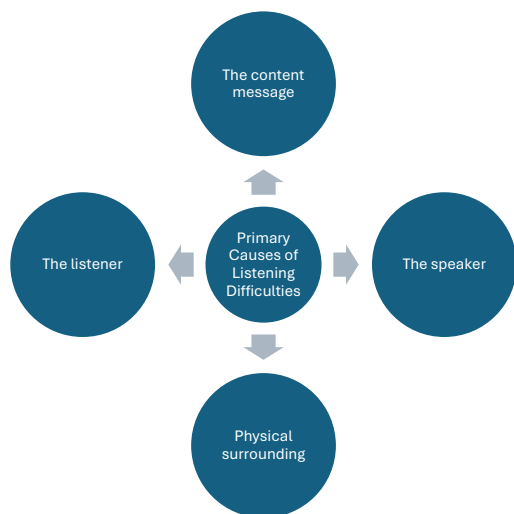

Figure 3 Primary Causes of Listening Difficulties (Yagang, 1994)

2.4.1 The content messages

Almost any aspect of life could be covered in the listening lesson. It might cover everyday pursuits, interests, and other circumstances in students' lives. Speakers frequently shift topics, and the information is disorganized, even in casual or direct conversations (Hamouda, 2013). In many instances, whether a regular conversation or a news item on aural media like the radio, listeners cannot anticipate what speakers will say or hear them slowly. It appears complex to order the speaker to repeat anything as long as the audience wants, even during discourse. Listening difficulties are caused explicitly by longer spoken texts, complex grammatical structures, unfamiliar terms or topics, and topics that fail to pique listeners' interest (Hamouda, 2013).

2.4.2 The speaker

One element of the content that facilitates students' hearing is the speaker. Trismasari et al. (2016) claim that since the speaker talks too rapidly, pupils may have trouble listening to them. The listener may get sidetracked and unable to process the information further if the

speaker pronounces words unclearly. According to Juan and Abidin (2013), students may find it challenging to comprehend speakers due to their varied accents.

2.4.3 The listener

According to Flowerdew and Miller (1992), a student's incapacity to focus is a significant issue in listening comprehension. Lack of attention may cause some students to lose out on subject matter, ultimately impacting their learning of the topic. Because they have limited time to digest and comprehend the newly provided information, students must pay close attention during the listening process (Hamouda, 2013).

2.4.4 Physical settings

According to Yagang (1994), background and base noise on the recording may divert the listener's attention from the listening passage's content. Noises would distract them no matter how hard they tried to concentrate. Additionally, listening devices like tapes, video recording equipment, and other gadgets may be the source of the challenge. Tapes or disks with poor recording quality also make it difficult for the listener to understand.

2.4.5 Psychological problems

One aspect of the psychological process that is somewhat complicated in listening comprehension is concentration. Students find it challenging to focus on understanding unfamiliar words, sounds, and sentences (Yagang, 1994). If they cannot understand a specific phrase or term, the listener will be discouraged. Tolerance for ambiguity and imperfect understanding is standard and boosts one's self-esteem, which might encourage learning progress. According to Susanti (2018), students' self-esteem is a crucial component in helping them develop a good self-image that will optimize their achievement potential so that in addition to establishing their knowledge, people may also better themselves (Hardiyanto et al., 2021).

2.5 Relevant previous studies

Various researchers have investigated on listening comprehension difficulties of students. For instance, Hamouda (2013) investigated the listening comprehension difficulties of

Saudi students. Self-generated listening difficulties of 60 first-year English and Translation majors at Qassim University, aged 20 to 22 include pronunciation, speech rate, vocabulary, speaker accent, inability to concentrate, stress, and forgetfulness. Yilmaz and Yavuz (2015) have also investigated the listening comprehension problems of Turkish students, which are divided into three groups: teacher factors, learner factors, and psychological factors. They pointed out that challenges in phonetics had become a major concern for the learners. Yahmun et al. (2020) studied listening problems of students in private universities in Malang. They considered the speed and length of the recorded audio as the main challenges towards effective listening comprehension. In 2021, Hardiyanto did a qualitative case study on the listening comprehension problems of EFL students. This study involved 6 students from the University Muhammadiyah Kotabumi, at the third semester for English education major, of which the participants were categorised according to proficiency level: low, moderate, and high. The findings showed that low-proficiency students had problems in terms of speech tempo and speech repertoire. While moderately skilled students found issues in the aspects of tempo and background noise of real-life conditions, even the high skilled students could find it difficult to handle the lengthy spoken content, regional variations of the speaker and external noise. The study also showed that the difficulty in comprehending what is said by the teacher affects students depending on their level of English proficiency.

3   Methodology

3.1   Data Collection

The research approach follows the quantitative approach in collecting and analysis of the data. The Quantitative methods focus on the objective measurement and statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through surveys, questionnaires, or through the manipulation of pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques. Quantitative research focuses on collecting numerical data and generalizing it to groups of people or explaining a particular phenomenon. The instrument that is used to collect the data is questionnaire, distributed among the second and third university students. In the

questionnaire we used simple language that carries the meaning of the essential questions of the study. The questionnaire was divided into five tables of closed ended questions, each table had three options (yes, no, and sometimes) the students get to mark which option might express their opinion. The questionnaire covered the following topics : difficulties that related to listening material, difficulties related to the listener, difficulties related to speaker and physical setting, difficulties related to psychological characteristics and health conditions, and difficulties related to linguistic features.

3.2 Participants

The participants in this current study consisted of 56 undergraduate students. The participants were in the second and third semester. They were selected from Ajdabiya University, Faculty of arts, Department of English Language Libya. Most of them are female (89.3%), with majority of 48.2% for second semester students, and 51.8% for third semester students. The mean of their age was 20.91.

3.3 Data Analysis

Table 1 Distribution of students according to their Semester

Semester		
	Frequency	Percent
Second semester	27	48.2
Third semester	29	51.8
Total	56	100%

Figure 1 shows that the vast majority of the students' semesters were the Third semester (51.8%), while the second semester is (48.2%).
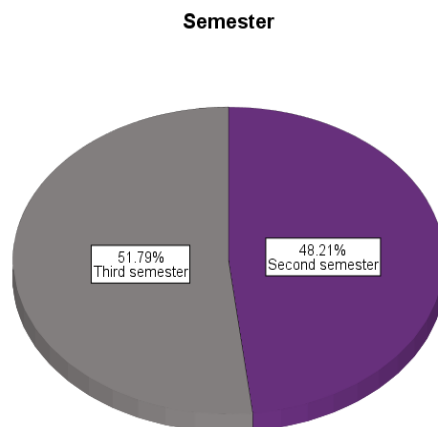
Semester

Table2 Distribution of duration of students: Have you previously studied the subject (listening Comprehension)

Listening Comprehension		
	Frequency	Percent
yes	25	44.6
no	31	55.4
Total	56	100%

Table3 Distribution of the students according to Age

No. Of students	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
56	20.91	18	41

The study included fifty-six students, aged between 18 and 41 years, with mean of 20.91 years.

Table 4 Distribution of the students according to (Semester and Listening)

Semester * Listening					
			Listening		Total
			yes	no	
Semester	Second semester	Count	7	20	27
		% within Semester	25.9%	74.1%	100.0%

		Count	18	11	29
	Third semester	% within Semester	62.1%	37.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	25	31	56
		% within Semester	44.6%	55.4%	100.0%

The table shows that 44.6% of the students studied the Listening Concepts course, of whom 25.9% are from the second semester and 62.1% are from the third semester. Additionally, 55.4% of the students did not study the Listening Concepts course, of whom 74.1% are from the second semester and 37.9% are from the third semester. For all items on the questionnaire, the frequencies and percentages were used and they included the following:

Table 5 Difficulties related to listening material.

Question	Yes	No	Sometimes
Do you understand listening text in which there are too many unfamiliar words including jargons and idioms?	27 %48.2	5 %8.9	24 %42.9
Do listening comprehension have complex grammatical structures?	26 %46.6	17 %30.4	13 %23.2
Do you find difficult to interpret the meaning of a long spoken text?	21 %37.5	17 %30.4	18 %32.1
Do you find difficult to understand listening text when the topic is unfamiliar?	20 %35.7	17 %30.4	19 %33.9
Do you use your own personal experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the spoken text?	34 %60.7	8 %14.3	14 %25

From the previous table, we find that approximately 48% of the students understand listening texts that contain many unfamiliar words, while 46.6% believe that listening involves complex grammatical structures. Additionally, 37.5% find it challenging to comprehend listening texts when they are unfamiliar. The results also show that 60.7% of the students use their personal experiences and background knowledge of the topic to understand spoken texts.

Table 6 Student's difficulties related to the listener

Question	Yes	No	Sometimes
Before doing listening, do you fear you cannot understand what you will hear?	27	18	11
	%48.2	%32.1	%19.6
Do you find the pronunciation familiar but you cannot recognize the word?	19	14	23
	%33.9	%25	%41.1
When encountering an unknown word, I stop listening and think about the of the word?	26	11	19
	%46.4	%19.6	%33.9
It is difficult to infer the meaning unknown word while listening?	24	13	19
	%42.9	%23.2	%33.9
Do you lose concentration when you think the meaning of new words?	16	16	24
	%28.6	%28.6	%42.9
Do you find difficult to recognize the word that you know because the way speaker pronounced?	21	16	19
	%37.5	%28.6	%33.9
Do you find difficult to answer question which require other than short answer?	20	22	14
	%35.7	%39.3	%25
Do you find difficult when listening without transcript?	18	18	20
	%32.1	%32.1	%35.7

From the previous table, it is observed that approximately 48% of the students fear not understanding words before listening, while 41.1% sometimes find the pronunciation familiar but cannot recognize the words. Additionally, 46.4% stop listening and thinking when faced with unfamiliar words. The results also indicate that 42.9% of the students find it difficult to infer the meaning of an unknown word while listening, and the same percentage (42.9%) sometimes lose focus when thinking about the meaning of new words. Moreover, 33.9% of the students sometimes struggle to recognize a word they hear due to the way it is pronounced by the speaker. On the other hand, 39.3% of the students do not find it difficult to answer questions beyond short responses, and 35.7% sometimes face challenges when listening without a transcript.

Table 7 Student's difficulties related to speaker and physical setting

Question	Yes	No	Sometimes
Do you have emotional disturbances like moody, irritable, angry, or unhappy in learning listening comprehension?	15	29	12
	%26.8	%51.8	%21.4
Do you think the lectures have used attractive teaching methods and techniques?	25	18	13
	%44.6	%32.1	%23.2
Do the media and tools used during listening often have problems?	21	19	16
	%37.5	%33.9	%28.6
Are the tools and resources for learning activities adequate?	21	17	18
	%37.5	%30.4	%32.1
Are the laboratory situations conducive to learn listening?	17	24	15
	%30.4	%42.9	%26.8
Do the lectures explain the orders or instructions of the material clearly?	25	12	19
	%44.6	%21.4	%33.9
Do the lectures explain the learning materials too quickly?	18	21	17
	%32.1	%37.5	%30.4
Do the situations or teaching learning processes stimulate you to be active?	24	19	13
	%42.9	%33.9	%23.2
Do you have interaction with the lecturer in the learning process?	22	12	22
	%39.3	%21.4	%39.3

lecturers use engaging training methods. Additionally, 37.5% of the students often face problems using media and tools during listening, and the same percentage (37.5%) consider the tools and resources for learning activities sufficient. However, 42.9% state that the laboratory conditions are unfavorable for learning listening. The results also show that 44.6% of the students find clarity in the lecturers' explanations of course instructions, while 37.5% do not find the pace of the lectures too fast for the educational materials. Furthermore, 21.4% of the students report no interaction with the lecturer during the learning process, while the rest describe their interaction as either always or occasionally active, with an equal percentage of 39.3%.

Table 8 Student's difficulties related to psychological characteristics and health conditions

Question	Yes	No	Sometimes
Do you feel nervous and worried when you do not understand the spoken text?	30	10	16
	%53.6	%17.9	%28.6
Do you stop listening when you have problems in understanding a listening text?	16	23	17
	%28.6	%41.1	%30.4
Do you feel disappointed if you do not arrive at a total comprehension an oral text?	27	11	18
	%48.2	%19.6	%32.1
Do you have low motivation in studying listening?	12	31	13
	%21.4	%55.4	%23.2
Can you concentrate when listening to the listening material?	33	9	14
	%58.9	%16.1	%25
Do you depend on others when you find something difficult to understand like cheating or waiting for an answer from a friend?	12	31	13
	%21.4	%55.4	%23.2
You feel shame to ask if there is something unclear?	19	19	18
	%33.9	%33.9	%32.1

From the previous table, it is evident that 53.6% of the students feel stressed and anxious when they do not understand the spoken text, while only 28.6% stop listening when they face difficulties in understanding the text. Additionally, 48.2% feel disappointed if they fail to achieve full comprehension of the spoken text. The data also shows that 55.4% of the students have low motivation to study listening, while 58.9% can maintain focus when listening to the material. Moreover, 55.4% do not rely on others when they face difficulties in understanding, and finally, 32.1% of the students feel shy about asking questions when something is unclear.

Table 9 Student' difficulties related to linguistic features.

Question	Yes	No	Sometimes
Do you find it difficult to deal with colloquial language and slang?	25	18	13
	%44.6	%32.1	%23.2
Do you find it difficult to recognize the words although you find the pronunciation familiar?	23	19	14
	%41.1	%33.9	%25

Do you pay attention to the intonation of the speaker?	34	7	15
	%60.7	%12.5	%26.8
Do you find it difficult to understand reduced forms?	18	12	26
	%32.1	%21.4	%46.4
Do you find it difficult to recognize the signals which indicate the speaker is moving from one point to another?	20	18	18
	%35.7	%32.1	%32.1
Do you find it difficult to guess the meaning of an unknown word while listening?	17	19	20
	%30.4	%33.9	%35.7
Do you find it difficult to follow the sequence of the spoken text when the sentences are too long?	21	20	15
	%37.5	%35.7	%26.8

From the previous table, it is observed that 44.6% of the students find it difficult to deal with colloquial and informal language, while 41.1% struggle to recognize words even when the pronunciation seems familiar. Additionally, 60.7% of the students pay close attention to the speaker's tone, and 46.4% sometimes find it challenging to understand shortened forms. Furthermore, 35.7% face difficulty recognizing cues indicating a transition from one point to another, and the same percentage (35.7%) struggle to guess the meaning of unknown words while listening. Finally, the results show that 37.5% find it difficult to follow the sequence of spoken text when the sentences are too long.

4 Discussion and conclusion

As listening provides information to the student, it plays an important role to language learning. That is why students cannot learn when they cannot understand what is being listened to. To sum up, it is necessary to notice that listening plays a significant role not only in people's communication but also in the process of language learning. However, it has been found that students have many different listening problems and listening comprehension is the weakest skills. To enhance the understanding of the teaching and learning of listening comprehension, this study was conducted with the following objectives: To determine the factors that lead to listening comprehension difficulties and to assist teachers and students to adopt the recommended strategies.

Based on the research conclusions, the following conclusions were made:

Students at Ajdabiya University have listening comprehension problems, including guessing unknown words, comprehending grammatical structures, topics they are not familiar with, anxiety before and during the listening activities in the laboratory, dealing with slang and colloquial language, length of the text, various accents, lack of concentration, and poor pronunciation. Teachers and students can resolve listening comprehension difficulties in two ways: using improved listening resources and modifying the techniques used by teachers. Students should improve their listening skills and the English language to deal with these difficulties.

5   Recommendations

The following suggestions are made based on the findings of the study:

- Listening materials become interesting and inspiring only when they are just beyond the reach of the student's knowledge and preferred topics, teachers must use and adapt them to the students' interests and knowledge level.

- Teachers should make their students learn some particular words for listening comprehension because absence of word recognition is one of the key factors that hinder listening comprehension. It is recommended that students be encouraged to guess the meaning of the words used in the listening context before the definition is given as this provides the students with a way of relating to what they already know with what they are expected to listen.

- Besides, the instructor should provide students with the following information: lectures, radio news, movies, TV plays, announcements, informal conversations, interviews, and stories.

- To foster this type of guessing and imaging, teachers should use visuals or draw pictures and maps relative to the listening themes. Teaching aids help students develop interest in the lesson and desire for the subject and facilitate the student's connection to the content of the spoken word. They also make it easier for the

listener to overcome barriers that may include unfamiliarity with the words used or a lack of word pairs.

- Teachers have a responsibility to help students expose themselves and get used to the way native speakers pronounce words. This will be highly beneficial for students, as it makes listening to native speakers much easier and faster for them.

- Most students are more conscious of the various native speakers' accents. It is self-evident that regional accents are unsuitable for listening instruction; nevertheless, native speakers do have accents when they are speaking informally. In addition, the American accent is different from the British and Australians accents. Therefore, it is necessary to equip children with tools that would enable them to handle other dialects, especially when they are so absorbed in something.

- One of the most important determinants of the quality of learning and teaching listening skills is the listening laboratory which embraces cassettes, tapes, tape recorders and written listening texts. The study concludes that students are dissatisfied with the current learning environment. The students have said this attributing it to the fact that there is no fully functional listening lab. For that reason, the attention of students during listening is usually drawn in different directions. Thus, it is necessary to remodel the current laboratory to ensure that each student has a fair and adequate chance to practise listening skills in such a motivating environment

6   References

Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Longman.

Eatough, E. (2022). 7 types of listening that can change your life and work. *BetterUp.* https://www.betterup.com/blog/types-of-listening

Flowerdew, J., & Miller, L. (1992). Student perceptions, problems, and strategies in second language lecture comprehension. *RELC Journal, 23*(2), 60-80. https://doi.org/10.1177/003368829202300205

Gultom, Q. Z., Utari, P., & Rahmawati, W. T. (2023). The importance and difficulties of listening skill. *Excellence Journal of English and English Education, 3*(1).

Hamouda, A. (2013). An investigation of listening comprehension problems encountered by Saudi students in the EL listening classroom. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development, 2*(2), 113-155.

Hardiyanto, A., Tanjung, M., & Suharjono, S. (2021). Listening comprehension difficulties: A case study of EFL students in listening class. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics, 6*(1), 1-14.

Ige, B. (2005). Imperatives of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for second language learners and teachers. *English Language Teaching, 5*(1), 46–48.

Juan, W. X., & Abidin, M. J. Z. (2013). English listening comprehension problems of students from China learning English as a foreign language. *Asian Social Science, 9*(9), 63-68. https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v9n9p63

Jyoti, R. (2020). Exploring English language students' difficulties in listening comprehension. *Journal La Edusci, 1*(3), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.37899/journallaedusci.v1i3.125

Kaplan-Rakowski, R., & Ye, Y. (2023). Listening tasks in virtual reality: A pilot study. In *CALL for all Languages - EUROCALL 2023 Short Papers* (pp. 104–109). https://doi.org/10.4995/EuroCALL2023.2023.16960

Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications.* Longman.

Luo, J. (2008). Teaching "listening" as an English language skill. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/3601984/Teaching_listeningas_an_English_Language_Skill

M., Karimova, et al. (2020). The importance of listening skill in learning English. *International Journal on Integrated Education, 3*(12), 400-402. https://doi.org/10.31149/ijie.v3i12.1040

Nation, I. S. P., & Newton, J. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL listening and speaking.* Routledge.

Nguyen, N. H. T., & Luu, N. T. T. (2022). Difficulties in listening of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University in Vietnam. *European Journal of English Language Studies, 2*(1), 17-33.

Nwankwo, C. A. (2008). Listening comprehension and students' academic performance. *Journal of Educational Research, 118*, 115-120.

Otagburuagu, E. J. (n.d.). *Listening skills.* Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378178653_Listening_Skills

Rajagukguk, H., & Sirait, J. (2019). *Critical listening. International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences.* Retrieved from https://ijels.com/book-holmes-rajagukgu-critical-listening/

Regis-Onuoha, A., & Agwuocha, U. (2023). Listening skills. In A. Regis-Onuoha & U. Agwuocha (Eds.), *Effective language skills development* (pp. 45-60). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.12973/ejels.2.1.17

Rost, M. (1994). *Introducing listening.* Penguin English.

Sadiku, L. M. (2015). The importance of four skills: Reading, speaking, writing, listening in a lesson hour. *European Journal of Language and Literature Studies, 1*(1), 29-31.

Schmitt, N. (2010). *An introduction to applied linguistics* (2nd ed.). Hodder Education.

Susanti, R. (2018). The role of self-esteem in developing students' English language skills. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Research, 2*(2), 85-97.

Trismasari, D., Rahmat, A., & Handayani, T. (2016). Listening comprehension problems in EFL classroom: An investigation on students' difficulties and strategies. *Proceedings of the English Education International Conference, 7*(1), 171-175.

Walberg, H. J. (2004). *Improving educational productivity.* Information Age Publishing.

Yagang, F. (1994). Listening: Problems and solutions. *English Teaching Forum, 32*(3), 16-19.

Yahmun, M., Sumarti, S. S., & Setyowati, R. (2020). Listening comprehension difficulties: A case study of EFL students in listening class. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics, 5*(3), 349-359.

Yılmaz, H., & Yavuz, F. (2015). The problems young learners encounter during listening skills. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 197*, 2046-2050. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.571

Yusnida, D., Syafrizal, S., & Putri, Z. (2017). Improving students' listening skill by using bottom-up and top-down processing at the second-semester students of English study program in University of Pasir Pengaraian. *Edu Research, 6*(1), 12-25.