



An Investigation of Listening Comprehension Difficulties Encountered by L2 Learners in Classroom, Sindh Pakistan

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Abstract- This quantitative research gathered data in form of questionnaire on listening comprehension difficulties frequently experienced by English Language students at English Language Development Center (ELDC), Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET) Jamshoro, Sindh. The sample for this study was taken 140 undergraduate students and answered the questionnaire. The results of the investigation showed that students frequently faced difficulties in listening to aurally-presented text due to insufficient vocabulary, speed of speech delivery, different accents, unfamiliar topics, long listening text, complex grammatical sentences, colloquial words, and physical setting that is noisy and listening equipment that have problem with volume or the quality of sound. The use of learning strategies can remediate the difficulties of more or less skilled learners' during listening activities in classroom. The recommendations for further research suggested.

Keywords: L2 listening, listening comprehension, listening difficulties

I. INTRODUCTION

Listening is a complex process that needs the capability to understand the linguistic knowledge (bottom-up), linguistic experience (top-down), cultural values, social standards, gestures, emotional expressions, religious beliefs, festivals and mythological background of the target language. Listening consumes more time in our daily life than other forms of linguistic features like speaking, reading and writing. Furthermore, Mendelsohn (1994) states that the average time we spend on daily communication process is 35% for speaking, 9% for writing, 16% for reading, and 40% for listening. In fact, Rost (2002) states its importance that there is no language without listening. Furthermore, It is a challenging skill for both the learners to acquire and teachers to instruct (Vandergrift, 2004; Field, 2008). Previous studies found that the listening is a multistep process consisted of pre-listening (planning), while listening (self-monitoring) and post-listening (evaluating) procedures that can be successful with the conscious use of the appropriate listening strategies and skills. Flowerdew and Miller (2005) state that five types of knowledge are needed to comprehend the spoken message, (1) phonological: the sound system (2) syntactic: how words are put together (3) semantic: word and propositional knowledge (4) pragmatic: contextual knowledge (5) kinesic knowledge: nonverbal communication (facial expressions, body movement and eye contact). Furthermore, Field (1998) states that generally, teachers focus on the outcomes of listening (product), rather than focusing on teaching 'how to listen' (process). Therefore, learners often feel overwhelmed and frustrated with linguistic difficulties. Usually, our universities pay more attention to English grammar, essay writing, report writing, reading and vocabulary. Hamouda (2013) states that speaking and listening skills are mostly undervalued in curricula, text books and lesson plan because most of the teachers believe that listening skill develops naturally within the language learning process. Furthermore, Jiang (2009) states that the listening comprehension classes usually follow a traditional format as it is mentioned below:

- Teaching new vocabulary;
- Extensive listening (questions for general understanding of the context);
- Intensive listening (questions for some details);
- Doing the comprehension exercises;
- Checking answers (vocabulary or grammar);

- Explaining some difficultpoints.

Previous researches on listening skills state that L2 teachers give little thought to what is listening, how to teach it, how it can be developed in learners or how to make them autonomous learners. However, teachers still apply the traditional teaching methods (teacher-centered classroom) particularly, in province Sindh.

Listening and Hearing

Hearing is a physiological phenomenon whereas; listening is a psychological act (Barthes, 1985). Moreover, listening comprehension is an ability to comprehend the spoken message of the native speaker (Mendelsohn, 1994). Rost (2002) states that hearing involves sound perception while listening is an intentional process. In the same vein, Underwood (1989) states that listening is an activity of paying attention and trying to find the meaning from something what we hear. Furthermore, Rost (2005) states that listening is a cognitive and psychologically complex process; consisted of receptive, constructive and interpretive aspects of cognition that enables the listener to understand the spoken message.

Listening

Listening is an ability of sound perception and pattern recognition of utterances of the target language. Rost (2002) states four orientations of listening skill (1) receptive: listening means getting speaker's idea, content, decode the message, receiving the images, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, impressions and emotions from the spoken message (2) constructive: listening means reframing, constructing, finding, understanding, and interpreting the message in terms of the past experiences and future expectancies. (3) collaborative: coordinating the context, responding, and signaling to the speaker which ideas are clear and acceptable to the listener. (4) transformative: listening is the process of altering the cognitive environment of both the speaker and listener.

Listening comprehension

Listening comprehension has been characterized as a complex process that allows us to understand the spoken language (Rost,2001).

Background of the Study

English plays a prominent role as lingua franca in Pakistan. This study focused on the listening problems of non- native English language learners in context of Sindh. This study was conducted at ELDC in Mehran UET, Jamshoro. This professional university has four major faculties, namely (1) Faculty of Engineering (2) Faculty of Science Technology and Humanities (3) Faculty of Electrical Electronic and Computer System Engineering and (4) Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Arts and Design. Mehran University offers English as a compulsory subject to all departments in the first year of undergraduate studies. All English language classes are managed by ELDC faculty. Besides compulsory course, ELDC also offers special courses to the engineering students titled as communication skills, presentation skills and technical report writing for academic studies (Pathan, 2012). Furthermore, English teachers take listening sessions from the very first class of the academic session (Pathan, 2012). ELDC teaching faculty has autonomy in developing course outline, selecting materials for teaching, and assessment procedures (ibid, 2012). The one reason to choose professional university for the present research is that I am doing my MS in applied linguistics from ELDC. I am hopeful that the outcomes of the present research would help both teachers and students in their teaching and learning practices.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Availing listening competency in second language acquisition (SLA) is usually observed a complex and challenging task for non-native learners. Moreover, it was observed that students were unable to get the intended meaning of the spoken message even though they had understood the literal meaning of the words. All this is related to the learner's ability to make useful elaborated inferences or get the intended meaning of the message. To this end, they need to carry out sufficient listening practices inside and beyond the classroom. Moreover, its teacher's responsibility to offer all the facilitating devices and strategies at her disposal to put the students in the most advantageous position to learn what is said by people, with the intentions to communicate in the second language (Anderson and Lynch, 1988). In the same vein, Shireen (1987) states that effective listening needs activity-based teaching with positive feedback, reflections, errors, and remedial actions. In the whole process of listening Students need to operate certain mental steps to solve their listening difficulties. Byrnes (1984) states that listening is a process of

matching speech with what listener already know about the topic. Therefore, teachers need to activate the background knowledge to help students mentally organized and enable them to make predictions in order to prepare themselves for the listening lesson. Consequently, it would reduce the burden of comprehension upon listeners. Most of the English language courses focus on improving reading and writing skills in Pakistani educational scenario. Moreover, researches have demonstrated that adults spend 40-50% of communication time using listening skills (Gilman & Moody 1984). However, we rarely taught our listeners how to listen (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). In most of the listening comprehension lessons tapes are played then learners attempted question papers and finally, feedback is given in form of right answers (Shireen, 1987). Vandergrift (1997) mentioned that listening activities in most of language classrooms tend to test the learners listening abilities through listening test procedures where they not only have to understand the listening text but must also respond in an appropriate way. Therefore, it increases their stress and anxiety levels because they are assessed in language classroom, how well they can listen or what they have not understood (ibid, 1997). In such situations, they feel demotivated. Furthermore, learners also face difficulties in listening input due to not knowing how to listen; this creates unknown problems for both the teachers and learners in classroom.

Teaching listening comprehension is a complex process where professionally trained teachers can plan appropriate pedagogical methods and use authentic materials in teaching listening lessons. Moreover, course designers need to plan the systematic designed course to fix the problems that could improve the perceptual levels of both the teachers and learners at university level. Furthermore, teachers need to use advance teaching resources such as strategies-based devices and updated equipment that can promote self-directed learning habits in learners. Unfortunately, in many language classrooms, teachers do not have much knowledge related to teaching listening skills and strategies so that, they do not teach language learning strategies in classroom (Rost, 1990). In addition, Vandergrift (1997) states that learners did not get sufficient support in learning how to process and manage the listening input they received. For Rubin (1975), strategies are techniques or devices that a learner may use to acquire knowledge. Basically strategies-based instruction makes listening process more sophisticated, smooth, faster, and turns it to time saving mode. In addition, the "individual differences" (IDs) really matters in language acquisition process, refers to personal baggage that a learner brings to the classroom. These individual differences are some factors including motivation, personality, interest, gender, age, beliefs and attitude (Cohen, 2010).

Significance of Listening Comprehension

Chastain (1971) defines listening comprehension is an ability to understand native speaker's message at a normal speed in the real-life situations. The term listening comprehension is matched with the psycholinguistic research by such expressions for example; "speech recognition", "speech perception", "speech understanding" and "spoken language understanding". Some researchers like as, Goh (2002), O' Malley and Chamot (1989) focused on mental process of listeners (perception, parsing and utilization). According to them proficient listeners interacted with both top-down (TD) and bottom-up (BU) processes simultaneously. However, the less-proficient learners use bottom-up process and cognitive strategies. Furthermore, Goh (2002) states that more-proficient learners' use both cognitive and metacognitive strategies to achieve meaningful text interpretation. A better balance of both TD and BU activities can make the comprehension process easier and faster. The present study aims to explore L2 learners' problems in listening comprehension and to provide some useful suggestions to remediate the listening problems.

Learners Problems in Listening Comprehension

Listening has a vital role in daily communication. It is a memory, cognitive, and active mental process where listening problems may effect comprehension abilities in listening activities. These difficulties in listening comprehension are classified into fourteen obstacles

- 1) Making prediction
- 2) Guessing unknown words while listening
- 3) Unfamiliar topics
- 4) Lacking of background knowledge
- 5) Speed of speech
- 6) Recognizing main points
- 7) Authentic materials
- 8) Different accents

- 9) Long listening text
- 10) Noises
- 11) Poor tape quality
- 12) The poor equipment
- 13) Ungrammatical sentences
- 14) Colloquial words

Making prediction

Making prediction is a positive attitude of efficient learners. They naturally do what may come next in while listening stage. Prediction strategy is the basic listening strategy where learners use their prior knowledge of the world (experience) and the linguistic knowledge to comprehend the spoken text. Furthermore, Goh (2000) states that students could be able to predict correctly when they underline or circle words or phrases (relate them to L1 equivalents) in while listening stage. In addition, Mendelsohn (1995) states that some strategies are transferable from first language to second language use.

Guessing unknown words

Unfamiliar words may cause difficulties in understanding the spoken text. Previous research works showed that most of the students lose their concentration when they hear unfamiliar words. They try to focus on the meaning of the words in while listening stage. Therefore, they lose concentration on the context of the speech. Furthermore, Anderson and Lynch (2003) states that sometimes learners hear the whole text adequately, but they are unable to interpret the spoken message correctly due to the inability to understand the syntactic, semantic or pragmatic meanings of the listening text. However, less-proficient learners easily distracted during listening process due to their limited background knowledge and linguistic experience of the target language.

Unfamiliar topics

Listening texts consist of unlimited range of topics related to various fields of knowledge. These materials cause difficulties for non-native learners when they apply their background knowledge and linguistic experience to comprehend the text, but remained unsuccessful. It happens when terminologies, lexis or phrases used in that passage are totally strange to them. In this way they feel stressed and demotivated. In such situations, teachers can lower the anxiety level by enhancing their interest in the subject. In this way, they could be able to share the guesses to make useful inferences related to the topic before listening.

Lacking Background Knowledge

Background knowledge upgrades listening comprehension of non-native language learners. Generally, learners use linguistic knowledge (vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation), non-linguistic knowledge (contextual information) and experience (cultural knowledge, general knowledge and real-life situation) to comprehend the listening text correctly. Furthermore, when less-proficient learners listen to the spoken message they do not know what they are listening to. They found themselves that their perceptual concepts are limited due to insufficient background knowledge. In due course, their abilities reduced to interpret the intended message of the speaker correctly.

Speed of speech

Most of the language learners' complaining about the listening material that they are not able to cope with the speed of speech delivery or the spoken text was not familiar to them. Generally, this problem arises due to their limited vocabulary, unfamiliarity with the native speakers' accents and inability to grasp the speed of speech. Underwood (1989) states that the learners cannot control the speed rate of speech delivery in while listening stage. It is commonly observed that a non-native speaker spends more time than a native speaker does in comprehending the spoken message. Most of them keep trying to focus over the literal meaning of the words rather than concentrating on the pragmatic meaning of the text. As a matter of fact, their limited vocabulary, failing to follow the speech signals and insufficiency of pragmatic knowledge are the main causes of their inability to understand the text well.

Recognizing Main Points

Less-skilled learners pay more concentration on word-by-word meanings rather than to skim the context. Consequently, they fail to catch the next part of the conversation. Berman (2003) suggested that clues are useful to identify the main points such clues are, discourse markers (then, secondly, thirdly, because, consequently etc.) and signal words (furthermore, in spite of, in addition, moreover, but etc.). These clues and signal words help the listeners skim the text easily.

Authentic Materials

Teaching materials can have profound effect on teaching (Richards, 1993). Listening materials are classified into two categories;

- i) Authentic materials
- ii) Text book listening materials

Vandergrift (1997) states that strategies-based learning can make authentic materials more usable. Generally, authentic materials are 'unscripted' listening materials. Typically, such materials are spoken and recorded by the native speakers of English language. These materials are obtained from radio, T.V programs or internet sources in form of selected sections of movies, talk shows, news updates etc. These conversations are more natural and closer to the real-life situations when people are not speaking in an organized, grammatical or structural way.

Text-book materials are 'scripted' listening materials. These materials are written down before the speaker speaks it. Hamouda (2013) states that listening materials may relate to any area of life. Consequently, they feel hard to understand the unfamiliar terminologies, words, phrases, proverbs, idioms or the text that have different socio-cultural information.

Unfamiliar Accents

Unfamiliar accents can create serious problems in understanding the correct meaning of the listening text for both the native and non-native speakers of English language for example; native speakers of English language study British or American accents. On contrary, if they listen to the Indian or Pakistani accents, they will face critical difficulties in listening task. In the same vein, when non-native speakers may have difficulties in comprehending American accents or British accents. It shows that L2 learners need to learn different accents in order to build up their abilities in language learning process. They need to practice both the British and American accents. In the same vein, they need to practice with a variety of sources such as, BBC news, CNN news, TED talks, talk shows, Cricket match commentaries etc. to learn a variety of accents.

Long Listening Text

Long spoken text may cause fatigue in while-listening stage. It is commonly observed that L2 learners' face problems due to a variety of unfamiliar topics with unknown terminologies, lexis, syntax, lengthy text materials, small listening experience or short-term memory reasons in long text. Most of them try to understand the meaning of each word and sentence. Eventually, they fail to notice the next part of the recorded conversation due to the lapse in concentration or short-term memory reasons. At this point, their anxiety level increases due to the apprehension to get lower grades in listening test.

Noises

Noise includes both the background noise and the environmental noise. Noises distract attention or cause breaks in learners' concentration may impair comprehension. As a result, they might feel demotivated of being a part of listening activities. Yangang (1994) explored the four sources for listening comprehension problems; 1) the message 2) the speaker 3) the listener and 4) physical environment. In order to deal with L2 aural message, learners need to accustom with sounds, lexis, and stress patterns that maybe different in their L1 aural speech (Siegel, 2013). Teachers need to boost learners' confidence by teaching them appropriate usage of listening techniques according to the needs of comprehension well. On the one hand, teachers need to cut down all the noises inside and outside of the classroom for example: listening classes should not be conducted at lunchtime or any other disturbances present outside the class. On the other hand, teachers need to enable learners to cope with background noise if it cannot be

controlled. When they start to get used to such listening practices then give them to accept the challenge by using a recording with background noises, for example; a football match commentary, can be a listening activity in the classroom.

Poor Tape Quality

The poor tape or disks quality impedes learners' comprehension level because if the sound of the speaker is not clear then concentration will be distracted. As a result, it may cause difficulties for them in comprehending the listening text well.

Poor Equipment

Students encounter problems in listening text if the equipment is of poor quality in the listening activities. They try to grasp the meaning of the text but if sounds are not clear in recordings due to the poor equipment. Consequently, they might fail to understand the overall meanings of the listening text. Such situations may create panic in while-listening stage.

Complex Grammatical Sentences

The complex grammatical structures may cause problems for learners' in comprehending the listening passage. This problem may arise when learners' have insufficient knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. They face difficulties in comprehending the complex sentences in the stream of speech. They need to practice grammar and use common sense to unpack the complex sentences.

Colloquial Words

Slang words, idioms, linking words and cultural knowledge in the listening materials are the main problems in comprehending the listening passage for non-native speakers. They feel difficult to understand everyday conversation having colloquial words. This problem arises when non-nativespeakers only practice formal language or they were only exposed to bookish materials.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative data shows statistical relation among variables in the numerical data. In quantitative research, data analysis conducted by different statistical soft wares, for examples Minitab, Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences(SPSS). Furthermore, the numerical data measured and analyzed by using various statistical formulae; mean, standarddeviation, percentage, frequency, graphs etc. Then data is converted into a form of the final report describing the related statistical information in form of findings, discussions, remedies andrecommendations.The present study used SPSS-25 as a tool for statistical analysis.

In this study, questionnaire is adapted from Hien (2015)research work'Difficulties and Strategies in Listening Comprehension' at Lac Hong University, Viet Naam. Questionnaire was given nearly at the end of the semester so that, they could mention their difficulties, needs, achievements and failures related to listening activities. The scale was ranging from never to always.

Questionnaire items were divided into four sub divisions that effect on learners listening performance.

- ② Learners' performance using different strategies to enhance their listening skills.
- ② Listening problems related to the listenersperformance.
- ② Listening problems related to the listeningmaterials.
- ② Listening Problems related to physical environment and supporting equipment.

All questions are related to general list of problems that may arise during learning process.

The present research needs a group of participants as the target population of the study. The population of the present study was ESL students' of ELDC, academic year 2018-2019. 140 undergraduate students were taken randomly as a sample of research.

The present research followed the following data collecting steps.

- Each item in the questionnaire paper was explained to the students to avoid misunderstanding.
- Students were asked to fill out the questionnaire columns.
- Finally, when they completed the questionnaire, the researcher had collected the students' questionnaire papers.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The next step after data collection was data analysis stage. The data was presented and analyzed as follows;

- 1- Reading and classified according to the rating scales of the questionnaire that had been answered.
- 2- Composing table to classify students' problems.
- 3- The researcher entered data into SPSS-25 version, software.
- 4- Calculating the results based on students' responses.
- 5- Drawing conclusions, findings, remedies and recommendations based on data analysis.

V. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study was designed to investigate the problems related to listening comprehension at the undergraduate level of Mehran UET. The data was gathered by means of questionnaire. It was adapted in context of Sindh from Hien (2015) work, who conducted the research at Lac Hong University, Vietnam, related to learners' difficulties in L2 listening texts. 140 students participated randomly from various engineering department to answer questionnaire items. SPSS-25 version was used as research tool to answer RQ.1. The university students may have different backgrounds in terms of their education setups that they have had. For example; they belong to the rural or urban areas of Sindh. Such factors are likely to effect on their language learning behaviors. L2 listening skill is a complex and challenging task for non-native speakers. Jermy Harmer (2000) cited in Hamouda (2013), states that some of his students lose interest in listening lessons and some even give it up. The problem can be sorted out by teachers. They can maintain learners' interest and focus on their weaknesses to work on it. They can write lesson planner according to the needs of learners. Field (1998) emphasizes that teachers must focus on both the product and process of the listening activity. This research is conducted to investigate the difficulties of L2 learners in listening comprehension at the university level to answer RQ1 and to explore some remedial measures to improve listening skills of L2 learners to answer RQ2. For more clarity research questions are mentioned below

RQ.1: What are the listening difficulties faced by L2 learners in listening comprehension lessons at ELDC?

RQ.2: What are the remedial measures to improve L2 learners' English listening skills?

This questionnaire items were divided into four categories to make it more focused on learners' difficulties and to remediate listening problems in learning process.

- 4.1 Learners' performance and using different strategies to enhance their listening skills.
- 4.2 Listening problems related to the listeners performance.
- 4.3 Listening problems related to the listening materials.
- 4.4 Listening Problems related to supporting equipment.

Table.1 Learners' Performance and Using Different Strategies to Enhance their Listening skills.

S.NO.	Learners' Performance and Using Different Strategies to Enhance their Listening skills.
1.	Have you ever failed your listening test?
2.	How often do you self-study L2 listening at home?
3.	How do you self-study at home?

4.	What do you do before listening?
5.	What do you do while you are listening L2 lesson for the first time?
6.	What do you do if you cannot understand words or phrases while listening?

Table 2:Q1. Students who failed in listening test

Never	Once	Twice	Three times	More than three times
5.7%	28.6%	11.4%	20%	34.3%

Table 4.2 shows that 94.3% students failed in their listening test. This shows that listening skill is a challenging skill for them to learn. They need to practice listening skills inside and outside of the class to develop listening competency. Basically, listening comprehension is a complex and an active speech perception process. The listener receives the sender's encoded message through communication channel in form of clues, signals and discourse markers to decode it. The finding shows that learners need to practice more listening materials at home to improve listening skills.

Table 3: Q2. Students who self-study L2 listening exercises at home

Never	Sometimes	Rarely	Always
10%	45.7%	20.7%	23.6%

When learners were questioned about their self-study L2 listening practices at home. Table 4.3 shows that (sometimes 45.7% and rarely 20.7% which is 66.4%). This result shows that students seem to spend very limited time in practicing L2 exercises at home whereas, 23.6% students always practice listening materials at home. However, teachers' have limited time in class, but the learners need to practice more on listening strategies like as clues or speech signals in daily communication to improve listening skills.

Table 4: Q3. Students use different sources to practice L2 listening

English Songs	Tapes of the Syllabus	English News	Others
34.3	16.4	23.6	25.7

Table 4.4 shows that students use different sources to self-practice listening at home to enhance their capability of listening and spoken English. They listen to songs (34.3%), tapes of syllabus in university (16.4%), news in English (23.6%) and 25.7% use other sources, for example: newspapers' TED talks, documentaries, cricket commentaries etc. to polish their skills, but Practicing listening text would not give good results without using appropriate strategies.

Table 5: Q4. They try to do before listening activities

Predict the topic	Nothing	Guess the content	Read instructions
37.9%	22.1%	26.4%	13.6%

Table 4.5 shows that 77.9% students use memory strategies prior to starting the listening activity. 22.1% students indicated that they do nothing before it starts. Memory strategies help learners guess about the content and new vocabulary which is supposed to be the main obstacle in comprehension of the listening text.

Table.6:Q5. Students try to do while listening first time

Listen to word by word	Listen to detailed information	Focus on new words
53.6%	20.7%	25.7%

Table 4.6 shows that 53.6% students' listen to word by word, 20.7% students' focus on detailed information and 25.7% students try to guess the meaning of new words in the stream of speech. When they listen for detail and try to understanding each word, they would definitely miss the next part of the listening text because they cannot control the speed of speech. In other words, they try to scan the text. They need to skim the text to extract the contextual meaning of the text with the help of clues, key words and speech signals rather than to concentrate each word.

Table. 4.7: Q6. If they do not understand words or phrases while listening

Ignore it	Try to guess the meaning	Feel depressed
21.4%	64.3%	14.3%

Table. 4.7 shows that 21.4% students ignore words or phrases they do not understand, 64.3% students' try to guess the meaning of those words or phrases they do not have in their background knowledge and experience. It is better for them to ignore those unfamiliar words in while-listening stage. They need to concentrate on cues, key words, and speech signals. They can use kinesic knowledge, if the speaker is physically present in the classroom. His body language, hands movements, eye contact help learners understand the listening text well. 14.3% students feel depressed due to their limited vocabulary knowledge. When they concentrate on unknown words or phrases, they miss the next part of the listening speech because they could not control the speed of speech or it is not in their hands to repeat the text again. In such situations they feel depressed and demotivated.

Table 4.8: Listening Problems Related to Listeners' Performance

S#	Problems	Never	Some Times	Often	Always
1.	I find it difficult to predict what would come next in while listening.	7.1%	46.4%	24.3%	22.2%
2.	I lose my concentration in while listening when I try to guess the meaning unknown words.	15.0%	31.4%	29.3%	24.3%
4.	I find it difficult in listening activity that I do not have background knowledge about the topic.	10.7%	61.4%	22.2%	5.7%
6.	I find it difficult in recognizing the main points in stream of speech.	13.6%	26.4%	30.7%	29.3%

Making Prediction

Table (4.8) shows that many students (46.4% sometimes, 24.3% often and 22.2% always which is 92.8%) find difficult to predict the topic and the content of the listening text. To this end, the teacher needs to bring some extra materials for the listening activities in the classroom to activate and develop their habit of questioning about the listening text they are going to listen. This method would enable them to predict the topic and guess the content.

Guessing Unknown Words

Table (4.8) shows that most of the students responded that they (31.4% sometimes, 29.3% often and 24.3% always which is 85%) try to guess unknown words or phrases in the while listening stage. The percentage of the results indicates that unknown words cause difficulty in comprehending the listening text successfully when learners' try to guess the meanings of the unfamiliar words in the stream of speech. Consequently, their concentration distracted and ignores the next part of the ongoing conversation. So that, they fail to listen to the next part of the text, such problems may arise due to their limited vocabulary knowledge. Teachers need to adapt advanced pedagogical methods according to the needs of the learners. Moreover, Grammar translation method (GTM) has been commonly used in English language teaching

(ELT) in rural Sindh. Most of them try to guess the literal meaning of the words rather than to ponder over the main idea or the general meaning of the conversation. In addition, learners need to use cognitive strategies and top-down approaches in case of limited vocabulary knowledge.

Lacking Background Knowledge.

Table (4.8) indicates that (61.4% sometimes, 22.2% often, and 5.7% always which is 89.2%). Learners' find difficult to understand the listening materials in the stream of speech without having background knowledge and linguistic experience. Background knowledge involves linguistic knowledge (B.U), non-linguistic knowledge (T.D), and linguistic experience. Lacking background knowledge and experience reduce learners' ability to comprehend the spoken text correctly.

Recognizing the Main Points

Table (4.8) shows that many students responded that they find (26.4% sometimes, 30.7% often and 29.3% always which is 86.4%) difficult to recognize the main points in the while listening stage and feel depressed because their concentration distracted in searching the meaning of unknown words. In due course, they miss the next part of the text. Therefore, they need to use listening strategies to recognize the main points, such strategies are skimming, discourse markers, rhetorical questions and repeated words.

Table 4.9: Listening Problems Related to the Listening Materials

S.no	Problems	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
3	I find it difficult to comprehend the listening text when the topic is unfamiliar.	5.0%	60.0%	28.6%	6.4%
5	I find it difficult when the speaker speaks too fast.	5.0%	40.7%	38.6%	15.7%
7	I find difficult to understand the authentic material.	12.8%	47.9%	22.9%	16.4%
8	I find it difficult to infer the meaning of the text with variety of accents.	10.7%	35.7%	29.3%	24.3%
9	I lose my concentration due to long listening text in listening activity.	7.1%	38.6%	27.9%	26.4%
13	I find difficult to understand well the complex grammatical sentences in the listening lesson.	17.1%	34.3%	25.0%	23.6%
14	I find difficult to infer the meaning of the listening text when it contains colloquial words.	21.5%	36.4%	21.4%	20.7%

Unfamiliar Topics

The percentage shows that many students (60.0% sometimes, 28.6% often, and 6.4% always which is 95%) find unfamiliar topics in speech stream. Buck (2001) explored that learners may have difficulties in listening activities due to unfamiliar topic, vocabulary, speed of speech, and accents. However, background knowledge, linguistic experience and familiarity with the listening context help learners interpret the message correctly. Listening comprehension texts consisted of unlimited a wide range of topics related to various fields of knowledge. These materials may be taken from science and technology, painting and sculpture, business and trade etc. having the unfamiliar terminologies or lexis that may cause difficulties in understanding the spoken text correctly.

Speed of Speech

Table (4.9) shows that the learners' (40.7% sometimes, 38.6% often, and 15.7% always which is 95%) find difficult to comprehend the meaning of the listening text due to the fast speed of speech delivery. Unfortunately, listeners cannot control the speed of speech in the while-listening stage or get it repeated more than once. In such situations, they need to use listening strategies such as, note taking strategy where learners do not need to write down each word. They need to write small, simple sentences neatly on the paper or use shorthand symbols to facilitate their listening process successfully.

Authentic Material

The statistics of the result shows that students' (47.9% sometimes, 22.9% often, and 16.4% always which is 87.2%) find it difficult to understand the authentic materials in the listening activities. Native speakers of English language are the material writers and recorded material provider. Learners need to practice the listening materials in British or American accents. Furthermore, the reason to produce authentic material is to bridge the gap between classroom and the real-life situations. According to Vandergrift (1997), the strategies-based learning makes the authentic material more usable in learning process.

Unfamiliar Accents

The statistics of table (4.9) shows that students (35.7% sometimes, 29.3% often, and 24.3% always which is 89.3%) have difficulties related to unfamiliar accents. The non-native speakers do not have much exposure to variety of accents According to Goh (1999), 66% learners mentioned that the speaker's accent as one of the most significant factors that effects learners' comprehension.

Long Listening Text

Table (4.9) shows that students (38.6% sometimes, 27.9% often, and 26.4% always, which is 92.9%) find difficult to understand the spoken message due to the long listening text. Long listening text may cause fatigue and stress that they might forget the main points due to the speed of speech and long text. Teacher must use some techniques to facilitate learners in case of long sentences or text, for example; Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) state that if listening exercise is too long it would be better to break it up into small segments by pausing or change of speakers.

Complex Grammatical Sentences

Complex grammatical sentences are great obstacle for L2 learners' in understanding the listening text. The statistics of the data shows that the majority of students (34.3% sometimes, 25.0% often, and 23.6% always, which is 82.9%) face problems in understanding the listening text due to complex sentences.

Colloquial Words

Table (4.9) shows that students (36.4% sometimes, 21.4% often, and 20.7% always which is 78.5%) face problems due to the colloquial words in understanding the text.

Table 4.10: problems related to supporting equipment

S.no	Problems	Never	Some Times	Often	Always
10.	It is difficult for me to concentrate with problems pertaining to noises around	1.4%	42.1%	22.9%	33.6%
11.	Problems pertaining to poor quality tape or disks interfere my understanding the text well.	8.6%	10.7%	25.7%	55%

12.	Problems pertaining to the poor equipment resulting unclear sounds may hamper the listening comprehension.	15%	12.9%	14.2%	57.9%
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Noise

Table (4.10) shows that almost all students (42.1% sometimes, 22.9% often and 33.6% always which is 98.6%) find it difficult to understand the listening text if the noise is around. Noises inside or outside the class might have negative impact on learners' performance.

Poor Tape Quality

Table (4.10) shows that majority of students (10.7% sometimes, 25.7% often and 55% always which is 91.4%) find it difficult to understand the recorded conversations when cassettes or CDs are used for such a long time, due to that the tape quality worn-out. Teachers can replace the worn-out supporting materials with new.

The Poor Equipment

As Table (4.10) shows that the students (12.9% sometimes, 14.2% often and 57.9% always which is 85.1%) find it difficult when sounds are unclear in recordings. The unclear recorded sounds are the result of poor-quality equipment. Such problems may cause difficulties in comprehending the listening text for learners.

Remedial measures to improve English listening skills

Students at MUET had encountered various problems in listening activities due to unfamiliar topics, speed of speech delivery, long listening text, authentic materials, variety of accents, noises or poor-quality equipment. Research findings allowed us to arrive at the following remedies.

1. The statistics of the study shows that teachers need to improve the current situation by modifying their pedagogical practices according to the needs of learners'.
2. Teacher educators can plan training sessions, seminars, workshops to equip teachers with smart teaching skills.
3. This study is done with a hope that it might help course designers and material writers to equally integrate the course into four language skills, grammar and vocabulary.
4. Teachers can develop and enhance learners' skills in order to enable them to solve the problems in listening task. Furthermore, they can alleviate listening problems by evaluating students' teachers' practicum performance by focusing difference between the kinds of instructional decisions that students make during learning process.
5. There are many websites out there which are excellent and free. Try out the following to help learners develop general listening skills:

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Availing listening competency in SLA is not an easy task. Listening skill still has been neglected in research and teaching in context of Sindh. All students had deficiencies in listening activities due to the lack of practice and without knowing the proper use of language learning strategies. They usually, encountered various difficulties in aurally-presented text classroom. Findings of the study suggested that they need to use appropriate strategies in listening activities. The present study is done with a hope of finding some recommendations and remedies to solve listening comprehension problems. Results of the study showed that listening strategies in listening activities always improve listening performance and facilitates listening process smoothly.

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