



Sudan University of science and Technology

College of Graduate studies

College of Languages



Investigating Difficulties of Listening Skill Encountered by EFL Learners at University Level

**تقصي صعوبات مهارات الإستماع التي يواجهها دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة اجنبية
في المستوى الجامعي**

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment to the Requirements of M.A
Degree in English Language (Applied Linguistics)

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my parents, whose love and guidance are with me in whatever I pursue. They are the ultimate role models.

Acknowledgements

First of all , thanks for Allah the Almighty who enabled me to finish this study.

Special thanks for my supervisor Dr. Abbass Mukhtar for his aspiring guidance, invaluable contribution and friendly advice during my research.

Also , I'd like to express my warm thanks and gratitude for Dr. Hillary Marino, Dr. Areig Osman for verifying the tools used for data collection.

Abstract

The study aims to diagnose the areas that cause difficulties in listening skill which face students at university level and find suitable solutions for these difficulties taking into consideration the importance of listening skill for “ EFL” learners in acquiring English Language.

The researcher used descriptive, analytical approach. The data was collected by using two tools, a test for fifty students of second year college of Languages, Sudan, University of Science and Technology and a questionnaire for twenty teachers from different Sudanese universities.

The study revealed that university students find difficulties in listening skill, factors such as accent, style of speech, pronunciation and colloquial expression cause difficulties for students

Also the study revealed that students face difficulties in differentiating between vowel sounds.

The researcher recommends that each university should have a language lab in order to help students participate effectively in listening activities.

Students should know the rules of pronunciation as well as to be familiar with different accents of native speakers.

Besides , more efforts should be exert in teaching vowel sounds.

المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة لتشخيص الصعوبات التي تواجه الطلاب في المستوى الجامعي فيما يتعلق بمهارات الاستماع وإيجاد حلول مناسبة لهذه الصعوبات أخذاً بالاعتبار أهمية مهارات الاستماع لدارسي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة اجنبية في إكتساب اللغة الإنجليزية. استخدم الباحث المنهج الوصفي التحليلي وتم جمع البيانات باستخدام اداتين اختبار واستبيان، إختبار لخمسين من طلاب السنة الثانية كلية اللغات – جامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا واستبيان لعشرين من الاساتذة من مختلف الجامعات السودانية. اظهرت الدراسة بأن الطلاب الجامعيين يجدون صعوبات في مهارات الاستماع، عوامل مثل اللهجة، واسلوب الكلام، والنطق، والتعابير العامية تشكل صعوبات للطلاب الجامعيين أيضاً اظهرت الدراسة أن الطلاب الجامعيين يواجهون صعوبات في التمييز بين الاصوات اللينة (العله). أوصى الباحث بأنه يجب أن يكون هنالك معمل لغة في أي جامعة من أجل مساعدة الطلاب بأن يشاركوا بفعالية في أنشطة الاستماع. والطلاب الجامعيين ينبغي أن يكونوا على دراية مع قواعد النطق، وكذلك معرفة مختلف اللهجات للمتحدثين الأجانب إلى جانب بذل المزيد من الجهد في تدريس الأصوات اللينة.

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Chapter one

Overview

1.0 Overview:

No one can deny the importance of listening skill in foreign language learning because it is a key to acquire language to receive language input, and through listening we can pick up words, utterances, sentences and phrases in order to develop our abilities and competences.

Language acquisition is achieved mainly through receiving understandable input and listening ability is critical components in achieving understandable input, Therefore, listening is a fundamental language skill and as such it merits an important priority among the four skills for students.

What one observe is that both in primary and secondary schools listening skill is ignored or in other words not taught at schools, as result when students enter university they face problems in listening skill and this leads to disability in comprehending the spoken words as well as hinder the process of communication among them.

So, this study is going to concentrate and investigate these problems and difficulties so as to find out methods and techniques to overcome these problems.

1.1 Statements of the Research:

It's obviously that students at university level face problems and difficulties in listening skill during their first years at university and this lead to the difficulties in comprehending the spoken words.

Furthermore, impede the process of communication. This study endeavors to diagnose problems in listening skill, and focus on the areas of weaknesses in addition to the factors which effect on students mastering listening skill for those who learn English as a foreign language at university level.

1.2 Objectives of the Research:

The aim of this study is to achieve the following aims:

- 1.To provide methods and techniques to help students overcome these problems.
- 2 .To investigate the area on which students lack the ability in comprehending the spoken language.
- 3 . To discover the reasons behind problems in listening.

1.3 Research questions:

1. To what extent do EFL learners have difficulties in differentiating between vowel sounds?
2. To what extent do EFL learners difficulties in listening can affect their comprehension?
- 3 . To what extent are accent, style of speech, pronunciation and colloquial expressions the major obstacles in the development of listening skill among EFL learners?

1.4 Hypothesis

1. EFL learners face difficulties in differentiating between vowel sounds.
2. EFL learners have difficulties in listening can affect their comprehension.
3. A accent, style of speech, pronunciation, and colloquial expressions are the major obstacles in the development of listening skill among EFL learners.

1.5 Significance of the Research:

This study is very important specially for those who want to develop their listening skill, and to go further in the field of learning English as a foreign language.

As well as for teachers and syllabus designers.

1.6 Methodology:

This study collecting data through questionnaire that will answer by the teachers at university and then analyze it , in order to find out results.

As well as a test for students so as to test their abilities in comprehending the spoken language.

Since ,it deals with listening as an obstacle face students at university level.

1.7 Scope of the Research:

This study is essential specially in the field of English language learning, and targeted the students who study at Sudan University of Science and Technology.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND PREVIOUS STUDIES

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the definition of listening and types of listening as well as real life listening, learner difficulties in listening, obstacles of effective listening . In addition to the factors affect listening comprehension and finally the previous studies.

2.1 Definition of Listening

Listening is an active, complex process that includes being mindful, physically receiving messages, selecting and organizing information, interpreting communication, responding and remembering Wood (2009.75).

Listening is one of four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Like reading, listening is receptive skill, as involves responding to language rather than producing it. Listening involves making sense of meaningful (having meaning) sounds of language.(Williar et al., 2005.30)

Underwood (1989.1) stated; the definition of listening as “ the activity of paying attention to and trying to get meaning from something we hear”.

Mendelsohn (1994.9) listening is now regarded as much more important in both EFL classrooms and SLA research.

Listening involves an active process of deciphering and constructing meaning from both verbal and non-verbal messages.

Listening is a psychological phenomenon, which takes place on a cognitive level inside people's heads, and social phenomenon which develops interactively between people and the environment surrounding them. It considers listening as a complex process, which needs to be understood in order to teach it, and subsequently, evaluate it before integrating it with phonological aspects and with the skill of speaking Bueno, Madrid and McLaren, 2006.282.

2.2 Types of listening

According to Andrew Wolvin and Carolyn, there are 5 types of listening that are used for a variety of speaking purpose and situations. That does not always exist singly. Sometimes one speaking situations may require the listener to use more than one type of listening. They include discriminative, comprehensive, appreciative, empathetic and critical.

1. Discriminative listening

When the listener distinguishes between the verbal and the nonverbal message. For instance, your friend may tell you that they are feeling good, but the frown on their face and their sluggish posture may tell you otherwise.

This type of listening can be used for all types of public speeches.

2. Comprehensive Listening

Listening to understand in many situations require us to listen for knowledge. For instance, if your boss at work tells you how to complete a specific task you would need to utilize this type of listening if you will be able to understand and complete the task as he instructed. Most of the public speeches will require a listener to utilize this type of listening and it is mostly used when listening to an informative speech.

3. Appreciative Listening

The process of listening to appreciate what the speaker is talking about.

This type is often when listening to people who we enjoy spending time with. It is also widely used when listening to many forms of entertainment, music, television, stage shows. Thus, listener will always use appreciative listening when listening to entertainment speeches. This type is also used when listening to informative speeches and persuasive speeches, especially when the topic is something that the listener is highly interested in.

4. Empathetic Listening

Is an ability to listen to others and feel for another person. This requires an ability to feel empathetic for another person's feelings and needs, requiring a sense of compassion. When a loved one tells you their feelings about the death of a family member you will probably be able to listen empathetically.

5. Critical Listening

Is the process of listening to understand in order to make evaluations and judgments about the content of the message. Because this is the most complicated form and requires a high degree of skill to develop.

2.3 Characteristics of real life listening situations

Ur (2006.106-107) identified five characteristics of real life listening situations:

2.3.1 Informal spoken discourse

Most of the spoken language we listen to is informal spontaneous: the speaker is making it up as he or she goes along rather than reading aloud or reciting from memory. (you might to refer to the transcription of sample of such language). Though this lacks, of course, illustrations of purely auditory characteristics.

Informal speech has various interesting features;

1. Brevity of ‘chunks’

It usually broken into short chunks. In conversation, for example people take turns to speak, usually in short turns of few seconds each.

2. Pronunciation

The pronunciation of words often slurred, and noticeably different from the phonological representation given in a dictionary. There are obvious examples such as can't, in English for cannot, which have made their way even into the written language. Less obvious.

Examples include such changes as ‘orright’ for all right ‘sh’ we go? For shall we go?

3 . Vocabulary

The vocabulary is often colloquial; in English you might for example use guy where in writing you would use man , or kid for child.

4 . grammar

Informal speech tends to be somewhat un grammatical: utterance do not usually divide neatly into sentences; grammatical structure ay change in mid-utterances; un finished clauses are common.

5. Noise

There will be a certain amount of ‘noise’: bits of discourse that are un intelligible to hear, and therefore as far as he or she is concerned are meaningless ‘noise’; this may be because words are not said clearly, or not known to the hearer because the hearer is not attending-any number of reasons. We usually comprehend somewhat less than 100 percent of what is said to us, making up for the deficit by guessing the missing items or simply ignoring them and gathering what we can from the rest.

6 . Redundancy

The speaker normally says a good deal more than is strictly necessary for the convening of the message. Redundancy includes such things as repetition, paraphrase, glossing with utterances in parenthesis, self-correction , the use of ‘fillers’ such as I mean , well this to some extent compensate for the gabs created by ‘noise’.

7 . Non-repetition

The discourse will not be repeated verbatim; normally it is heard only once, though this may be compensated for by the redundancy of discourse, and by the possibility of requesting of repetition or explanation.

2.3.2 Listener expectation

The listener almost always knows in advance something about what is going to be said: Who is speaking for example, or the basic topic. Linked to this is his or her purpose we normally have some objectives in listening beyond understanding for its own sake – to find out something for example. And we expect to hear something relevant to our purpose.

2.3.3 Looking as well as listening

Only a very small proportion of listening is done , ‘ blind ‘ – to the radio or telephone for example. Normally , we have something to look at that is linked to what is being said usually the speaker him – or herself, but often other visually stimuli as well for example a map, scene or object, or environment in general.

2.3.4 Ongoing purposeful listener response

The listener is usually responding at intervals as discourse is going on it is relatively rare for us to listen to extended speech and respond only at the end.

The response , moreover, are normally directly related to the listening purpose, and are only occasionally, as simple demonstration of comprehension.

2.3.5 Speaker attention

The speaker usually directs his or her speech at the listener, takes the listener’s character, intonation etc. into account when speaking and often response directly to his or her reactions, whether or non – verbal by changing or adapting the discourse.

2..3.6 Learner problems

According to Ur,(1996.111 – 112) he identified the problems which face learners in listening skill.

1. Trouble with sounds

Since most listeners rely mostly on the context for comprehension, they are often themselves un aware of in accurate sound perception.

2. Have to understand every word

This is very common problem, often unconsciously fostered by teachers and or listening comprehension materials which encourage the learners to believe that every that said bears (equally) important information. The effort to understand everything often result in effective comprehension, as well as feelings of fatigue and failure.

3. Can't understand fast natural native speech

Learners will often ask you to slow down and speak clearly, by which they mean pronounce each word the way it would sound in isolation; and temptation is to do as they ask. But if you do, you are not helping them to learn to cope with everyday informal speech. They should be exposed to as much spontaneous informal talk as they can successfully.

4. Need to hear things more than once

There may be very good pedagogical reasons for exposing learners to texts more than once but the fact remains that in real life they are often going to have to cope with 'one off' listening and we can certainly make useful contribution to their learning if we can improve their ability to do so.

5. Find it difficult to keep up

Again, the learner feels overloaded with incoming information. The solution is to not (so much) to slow down the discourse but rather to encourage them to relax, stop trying to understand everything, learn to pick out what is essential and allow themselves to ignore the rest.

6. Get tired

This is one reason for not making comprehension passages too long overall, and for breaking them up in short “ chunks “ through pause listener response or change of speaker.

2.3 .7 Obstacles to effective listening

Wood (2009.78) classified two broad types of obstacles to good listening: those external to us and those inside us.

1. External obstacles

There are many hindrances to effective listening in communication situation.

Although we can't always control external obstacles, knowing what situational factors hinder listening can help us guard against them or compensate for the interference they create.

2. Message overload

The sheer amount of communication in our lives makes it impossible to listen fully to all of it. When we're not talking face – to – face with someone, we're likely to be texting, talking on a cell, listening to podcasts, or watching You Tube videos. We simply aren't able to listen mindfully all of the time.

Instead , we have to screen all of the communication directed at us to decide when to listen mindfully.

Message overload often occurs in academic settings. If you are taking four or five classes, you confront mountain of information. Message overload may also occur when communication takes place simultaneously in two channels.

For instance, you might experience information overload if a professor presents information verbally while also clicking through power point slides with complex statistical data. It's difficult to know whether to focus your listening energy on the visual message or the verbal one.

3. Message complexity

The more detailed and complicated ideas are , the harder it is to follow and retain them. Many jobs today are highly specialized; hence much on – the – job communication is complex and increasingly rapid (Cooper, 1997; Hacker, Goss, and Townely,19980).

We need to guard against the tendency to tune out people who use technical vocabularies, provide lots of detail, and use complex sentences.

4. Environmental distraction

Distractions in the environment can interfere with listening (Keizer,2010). Perhaps you've been part of a crowd at rally or a game. If so ,you probably had trouble hearing the person next to you.

Although most sounds aren't as overwhelming as the roar of crowds there is always some noise in communication situations. Music , television in the

background, side conversation in a class , or rings of smart phones can hinder communication.

Good listeners try to reduce environmental distraction it's considerate to turn off television, phones and laptops if someone want to talk with you.

Even if we can't always eliminate distractions, we can usually reduce them or change location to one more conducive to good communication.

Cognitive psychologists have found that email alerts, IMs, and notification of text message distracts people and undermine their ability to listen or focus mindfully (Begley, 2009).

Interruption fragment concentration so we have trouble resituating ourselves in whatever we were doing before the interruption.

Attending to social media may have even more substantial costs: since 2004, there has been a 200% increase in the number of pedestrians killed or injured while wearing headphones that prevented them from hearing traffic (News beast, 2012).

Internal obstacles

In addition to external interference, listening may be hindered by four psychological obstacles.

1. Preoccupation

When we are pre occupied with our own thoughts and concerns, we can't focus on what someone else is saying. If you are pre occupied with a report you need to prepare, you may not listen effectively to what a colleague says.

2. Prejudgment

Another obstacle to effective listening is pre judgment of others ideas.

Sometimes we decide in a advance that others have nothing to offer us , so we tune them out. If a coworker's ideas have not impressed you in the past you might assume he or she will contribute nothing of value to a present conversation. The risk is that you might miss a good ideas simply because you prejudged the other person. Research shows that : on a average, doctors interrupts patients 23 seconds after patients have started explaining their medical situation or need (Levine, 2004). When doctors stop listening, they risk not getting information that could help them diagnose and treat patients. It's also important to keep up an open mind when listening to communication regarding issues about which you are already have opinions. You might miss important new information and perspective if you don't put your prejudgments aside long enough to listen mindfully.

Another kind of prejudgment occurs when we assume we know what another feels, thinks , and is going to say: and we then assimilate his or her message into our pre conceptions. This is a form of mind reading that can lead us to misunderstand what the person means because we haven't really listened on his or her own terms.

3. Lack of effort

Because active listening takes so much effort, we're not always able or willing to do it well.

Sometimes we make a decision not listen fully, perhaps because the person or topic is not important to us. There are also times when we really want to listen but have trouble marshaling the necessary energy.

If you can't summon the effort to listen well, you might suggest postponing interaction until a time when you will be able to invest effort in listening.

If you explain to the other that you want to defer communication because you really are interested and want to be able to listen well, he or she is likely to appreciate your honesty and commitment to listening.

Failure to accommodate diverse listening styles. A final internal obstacle to effective listening is not recognizing and adjusting to different listening styles that reflect diverse communities and cultures.

The more we understand about different people's rules for listening, the more effectively we can signal our attention in the ways they appreciate.

For example, in the United States it is considered polite to make frequent but not continuous eye contact in conversation. Yet in some cultures, continuous eye contact is normative: and in other almost any eye contact considered intrusive.

Even within The United States: there are differences in listening rules based on membership in racial, gender, and other social communities for example, men generally provide fewer verbal and non-verbal clues than women to indicate they are interested in what another person is saying. They may also respond primarily to the content level of meaning and less to the relationship level of meaning. If you understand these general differences, you can adapt your listening style to particular people with whom you communicate. In addition, understanding diverse listening styles will improve your accuracy in interpreting what others mean by the ways they listen and signal interest.

We have seen that there are many obstacles to effective listening. Obstacles inherent in messages and situations include message overload, message complexity, and environmental distractions.

In addition, there are four potential interferences inside us: pre occupation , pre judgment , lack of effort, and failure to recognize and adapt to diverse expectations of listening.

2.4 Factors affecting listening comprehension

There are Numerous factors influencing the ease or difficulty of listening, these factors include:

1. Understanding intonation and stresses

“The English systems or stress intonation and rhythm, though perhaps less obviously difficult than problem of the actual sound can interfere with foreign learner proper understanding of spoken English. It is therefore, worth drawing our students attention to the existence of certain general patterns, primary among these is the division utterance into tone – groups strings of syllable ran together to form single sequence and generally characterized one heavily stressed “ tone “

The rhythm or speech is based on the these tones and lesser extend another minor stresses, and intervening lightened syllables may be pronounced very fast so as not to break this rhythm. Ur (1984.13)

2. Understanding different accents

Students need to be given a chance to get familiar with British and American standard varieties to open their eyes to the possibility of other accents and to give them practice in copying with these varieties .

Learners who have some experience in listening and understanding a number of different accents are more likely to be able to cope with successively with further ones than those who have only heard one or two. Ur (1984.20)

3. Unfamiliar vocabulary

According to Azmi Bingol, Yidliz, and Tugrul Mart (2014) when listening texts contain known words it would be very easy for students to them. If students know the meaning of words this can arouse their interest and motivation and can have a positive impact on the student's listening comprehension ability. A lot of words have more than one meaning and if they are not used appropriately in their appropriate contexts will get confused.

4. Speech rate

In recent years there has been a growing body of the research on the effect of speech rates on listening comprehension. Among all of this speech signal, speech rate has long been proposed as an important factor affecting communication between native speaker and nonnative speaker of language (Derwing and Munro,2001; Griffiths,1990, 1992).

It has been a common belief among language learners and teachers that lower speech rate would facilitate nonnative speaker's listening comprehension (Flaherty, 1997;Griffiths,1990,1992; King and Behnke, 1989; Zhao, 1997).Blall, 1990). Concluded thatslowing down the input rate is one of the effective methods that facilitates comprehension for nonnative speakers, on the contrary , listening performance decline significantly as passage are delivered at speech rates. Other experts (Blan, 1990; Derwing and Munro, 2001) proposed that once language, listeners have reached high proficiency levels, there might be no need to further to slow the input they receive. They added that at the effect of slow rates positive to

the listener at the lowest levels of proficiency whereas the effect of slow rates negative to the listener at the higher proficiency level. Flahrer (1979) insisted that too slow listening passage would impede the listener's comprehension by allowing too much time for the short time memory to fade.

However , some scholars are devoted to carrying out the research into effects of certain speech rate on the listener. Rubin (1994) pointed out that speech rate includes “ normal rate “ one at which developed the idea a little further that normal speech rates of 165 to 180 words per minute was acceptable for language learner while the speech rates more than 200 words per minute would begin to impair comprehension. It could be well concluded that slowing down the speech rate helps students to improve listening comprehension.

5. Pause

Another speaker factor is use of pauses a modification to speakers output to help nonnative speakers significantly in the comprehension (Blau,1990). Blau added that using pauses at constituent boundaries would reduce the speaker rapid pace of delivery and clarify a string of connected meaning words. Employing pauses helps achieve the accuracy and effectiveness of listening comprehension Chaing and Dunkley (1992) added that listening the inclusion of pause in the output enhances the listeners comprehension with speakers pause, the listener may decide the message smoothly (Guss, 1982).

2.5 Previous studies

2.5.1 Study (1) Awad Allah Ibrahim, (2012) conducted a research entitled “ Listening Difficulties Encountering Sudanese University Students “

Aimed to investigate the problems of listening skill and find suitable solutions for these difficulties, also of the importance of the listening for (E.F.L) learners in acquiring English language, it does not find enough care at University level. The researcher adopted descriptive , analytical approach. The data was collected by using two tools, a test for fifty (50) student of third year and a questionnaire for twenty (20) teachers at s Sudan University of Science and Technology Faculty of Education, Language Department – English section.

The result of this study showed that University students find some difficulties in listening to English language comprehensively, also there are no effective techniques of teaching listening to improve listening skill.

In addition to ,teachers do not use proper equipment or tools for teaching listening because they are not available.

2.5.2 Study (2)

Sufian Altaib l(2011) conducted a research on the Difficulties of Teaching Listening Skill in Large Classes. He stated that teachers find it difficult to teach listening in large classes and also the researcher noticed the listening problems that face large classes students. He added that listening skill is ignored by our Sudanese universities compared with other skills beside the fact that we have large classes that makes teaching listening very difficult.

The researcher used the descriptive analytic method; the case study in (SUST)

And Canadian Sudanese Colleges as a sample. The tools of the research were a questionnaire for teachers and a test for the students.

The sample consisted of thirty teachers from (SUST) and Canadian Sudanese Colleges. The students group consisted of fifty students from (SUST) first year.

The outcome of this research approved that curriculum has negative impact on teaching listening as depicted in the result of the teacher's questionnaire and student's test, that is to say the poor quality of the curriculum affects negatively on student's listening abilities. It also approved that large classes in Sudanese Universities have negative impact on teaching listening as shown by the results of teacher's questionnaire and student's test.

This means large classes are not a suitable place for teaching listening and teaching listening needs a quiet and small number of students to ensure a good quality of teaching listening. In addition it approved that teachers strategies of teaching listening in large classes are not effective.

He concluded that large classes need specific strategies to have effective teaching of listening in large classes, and universities have to minimize classes especially language classes to reach quality teaching and listening.

2.5.3 Study (3)

Enas Abdullwahb (2013) conducted PhD theses entitled “ Investigating EFL Student's Listening Skills In Sudanese Universities “.

The research was carried out in the Department of English, Faculty of language (SUST) in the first semester of the academic year 2012 / 2013. The researcher used descriptive analytic method, the tools of the research were two questionnaire for teachers and a test for students. The number of subjects involved in the study were 90 , 60 undergraduate Sudanese EFL learners selected randomly and 30 university lecturers who teach listening skills at university level.

The research findings showed that students are not competent in listening skills.

Although , the students try to be active listeners by employing strategies to facilitate , monitor, and evaluate their listening skill. The research findings revealed that teachers try to encourage their students to be active listeners but they do not use authentic materials when they teach listening.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.0 Introduction:

This chapter presents the methods of data collection and analysis. It consists of the population of the study, the sample, the research instrument and procedure of the study. It describes the procedure of eliciting data by using questionnaire and test.

3.1 Methods:

This research follows the descriptive analytical approach in order to conduct this study. The researcher chooses two tools to collect the data, questionnaire and test so as to get realistic results.

3.2 The population of the Study:

The population of this study includes university teachers and students i.e. students at Sudan University of Science and Technology second year College of Languages who study English as a foreign language.

3.1 The sample of the Study:

The sample of this study included 20 teachers from different Sudanese universities. And 50 students at Sudan University of science and Technology (EFL learners) both males and females second year students college of languages participated in this study .

In this study two tools have been used for data collection and analysis teachers questionnaire and diagnostics listening test for EFL learners.

3.2 Research Instrument:

Questionnaire was designed, with 10 statements focusing on the problems and difficulties encountered by EFL learners in listening skill at university level.

A test was designed for EFL learners consists of two questions focusing on the difficulties which face EFL learners in differentiating between vowel sounds.

3.3 Validity and Reliability:

The questionnaire was validated by expert university teachers who omitted, added and corrected notes and suggestions were taken into consideration and the researcher made the necessary modifications before it has been distributed.

The test was judged valid because it was clear and the students understood the questions and responded accurately. The test has been showed to the experts university teachers who confirmed it its content.

For the reliability the researcher used statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) to conduct this study.

3.4 Procedure of the study:

A questionnaire and test were designed in order to conduct this study, since they give quick and realistic results. The questionnaire was distributed to twenty teachers from different Sudanese universities. The test was distributed to 50 students at (SUST) who study English as a foreign language.

The data were collected and presented in the form of tables and graphs which further illustrated in the form of percentages and results were drawn.

3.5 Summary:

This chapter provides full description of the methods, the population, sample, instrument, validity and reliability of the tools and the procedure of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.0 Introduction:

In this chapter the researcher presents the results of data that have been collected to conduct this study, the result of questionnaire and test will be reviewed and the statistical method is used to be shown in forms of figures and tables, in light of these figures and tables the researcher discussed the results achieved.

4.1 Data analysis:

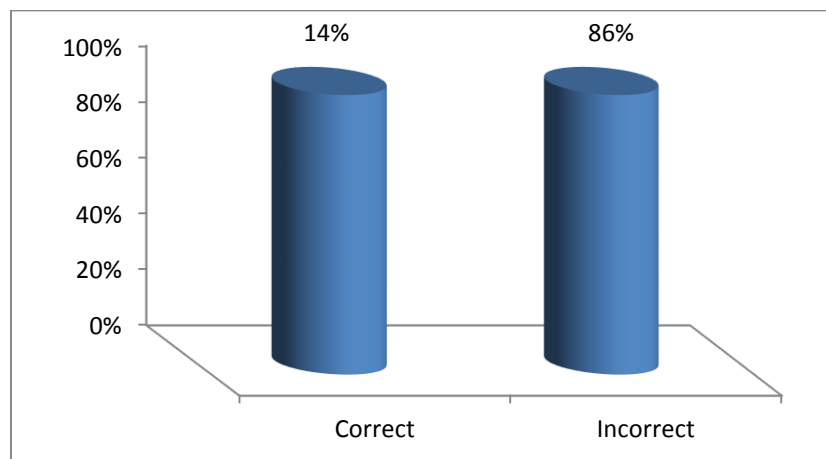
4.1.1 Section (one): Investigate the hypotheses one

Students test:

Q1 : Listen to these groups of words then cross out the odd ones:

Table; (4-1) hear - means read three ()

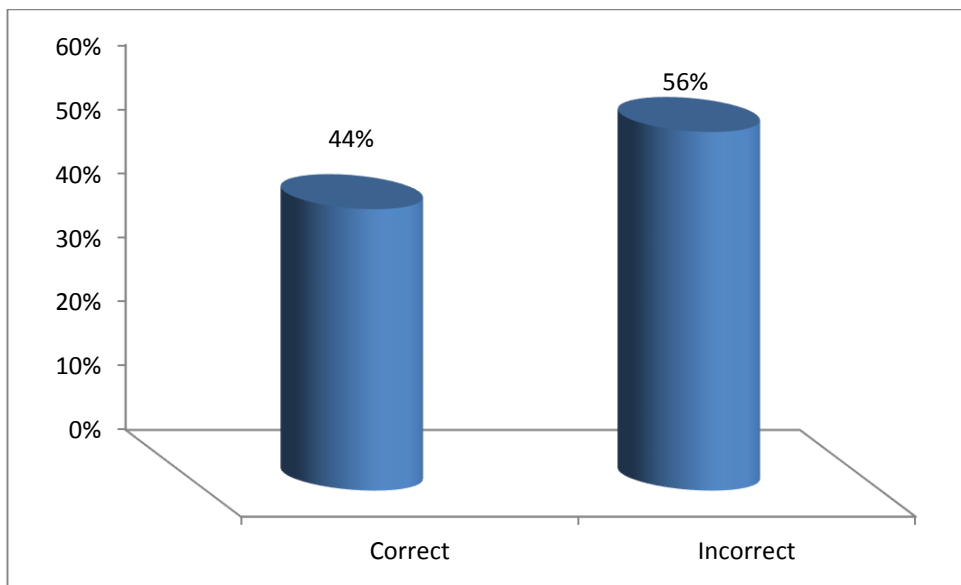
	frequency	Percentage
Correct	7	14%
Incorrect	43	86%
Total	50	100%



The data in table and figure (4-1) show that the majority 86 % of the study subject have fallen to choose the correct answer. And 14 % of them have chosen the correct answer.

Table; (4-2) last - start - are - what ()

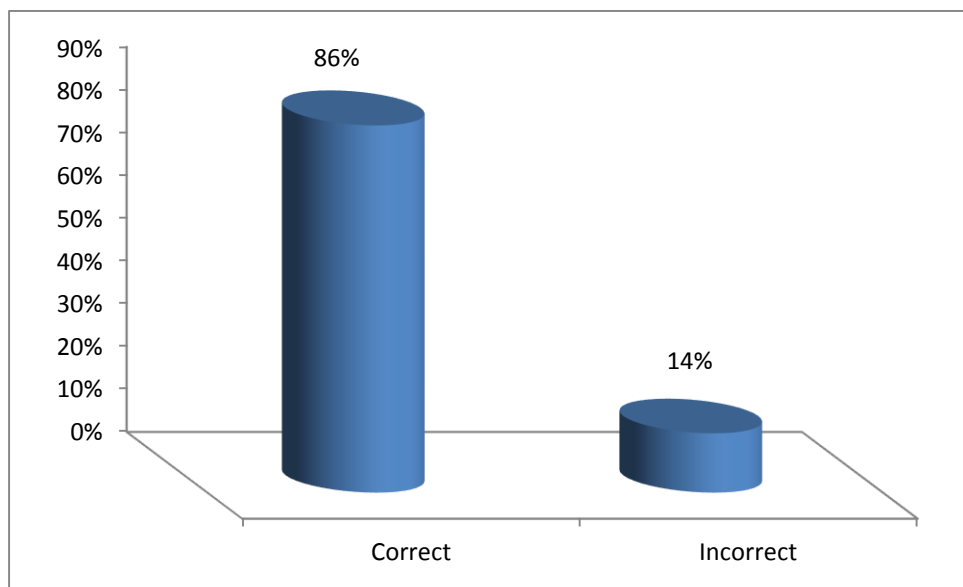
	frequency	Percentage
Correct	22	44%
incorrect	28	56%
Total	50	100%



The data in table and figure (4-2) show that the more than half 54 % of the study subject have fallen to choose the correct answer. And 44 % of them have chosen the correct answer.

Table; (4-3) third - term - your - learn ()

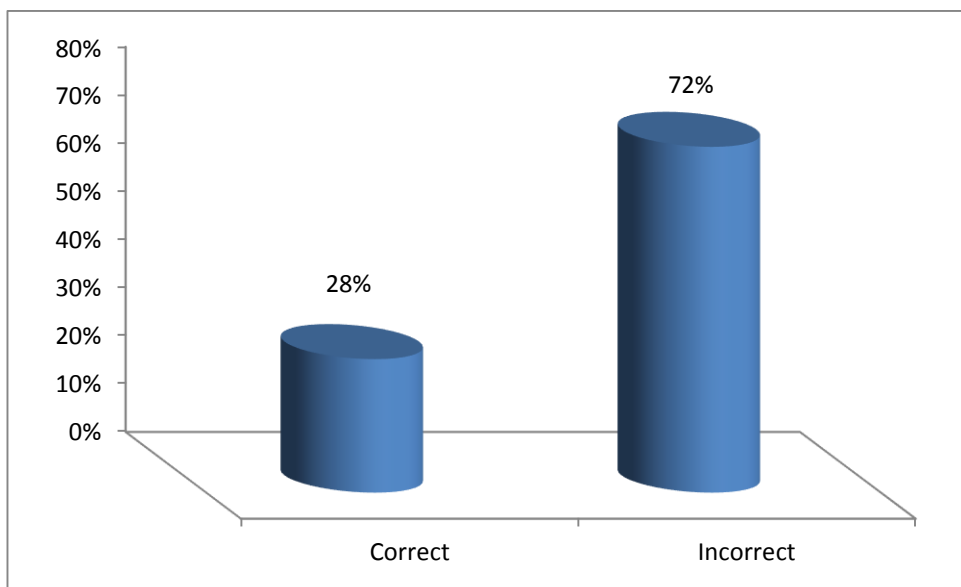
	frequency	Percentage
Correct	43	86%
incorrect	7	14%
Total	50	100%



The data in table and figure (4-3) show that the majority 86 % of the study subject have chosen the correct answer. While only 14% of them have fallen to choose the correct answer.

Table; (4-4) short - not - fourth - small ()

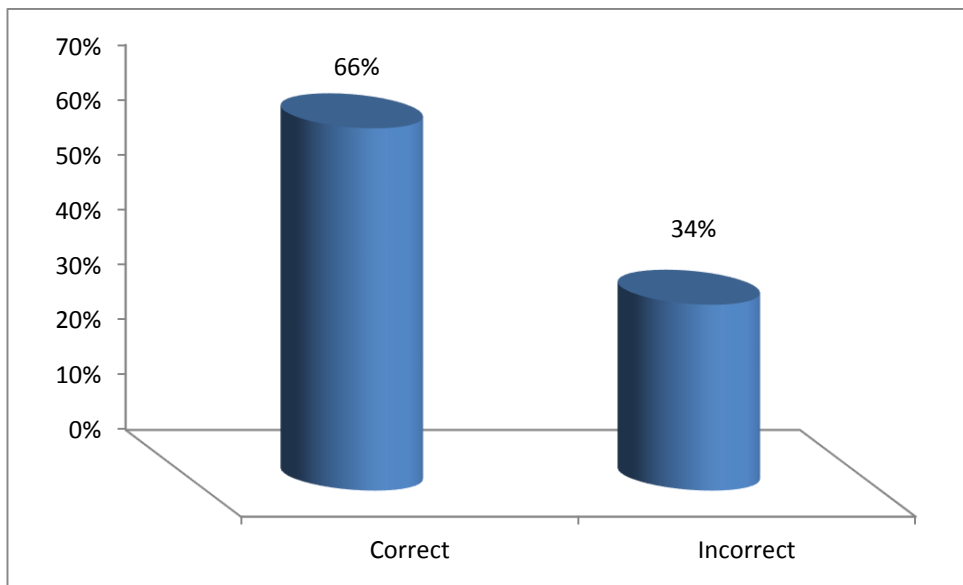
	frequency	Percentage
Correct	14	28%
incorrect	36	72%
Total	50	100%



The data in table and figure (4-4) show that most 72 % of the study subject have fallen to choose the correct answer. And 28 % of them have chosen the correct answer.

Table; (4-5) few - do - use - does ()

	frequency	Percentage
Correct	33	66%
incorrect	17	34%
Total	50	100%

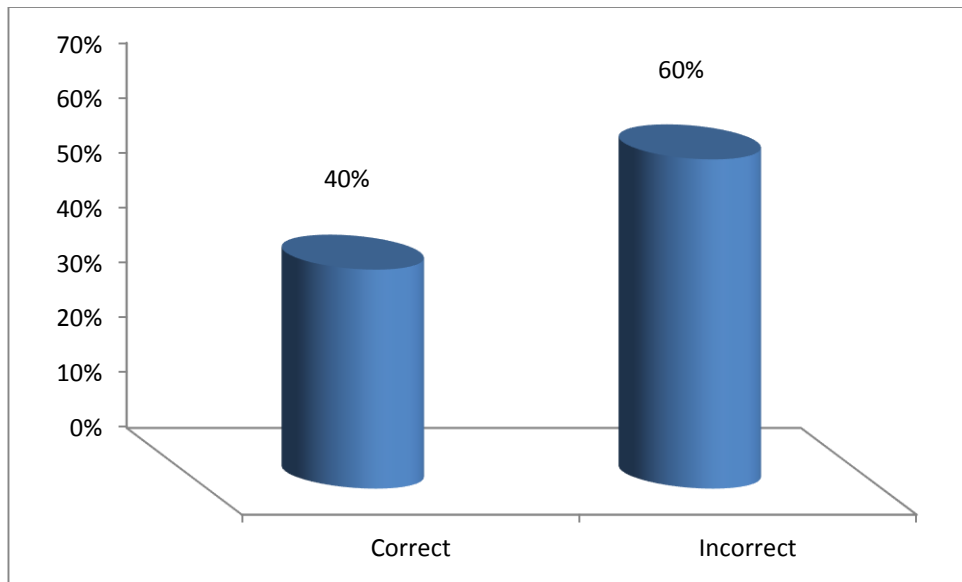


The data in table and figure (4-5) show that more than half 55 % of the study subject have chosen the correct answer. And 42.5 % of them have fallen to choose the correct.

Question 2:listen what is the common sounds in each groups then put these phonetics symbols between brackets with correct groups of words (ai - ei - əʊ - iə - aʊ)

Table; (4-6) way - strange - space - main ()

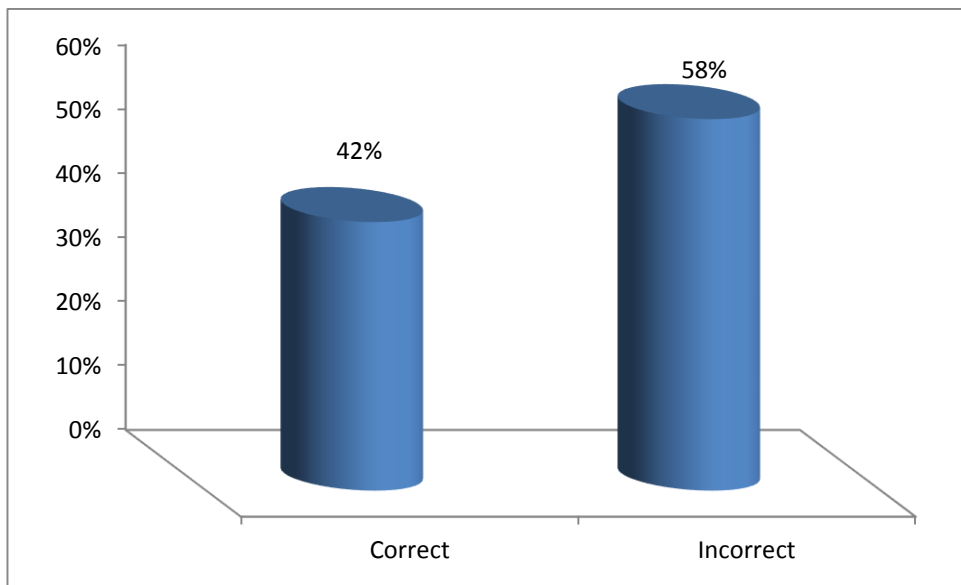
	frequency	Percentage
Correct	20	40%
incorrect	30	60%
Total	50	100%



The data in table and figure (4-6) show that more than half 60% of the study subject have fallen to choose the correct answer. And 40 % of them have chosen the correct answer.

Table; (4-7) time - eye - fine - drive ()

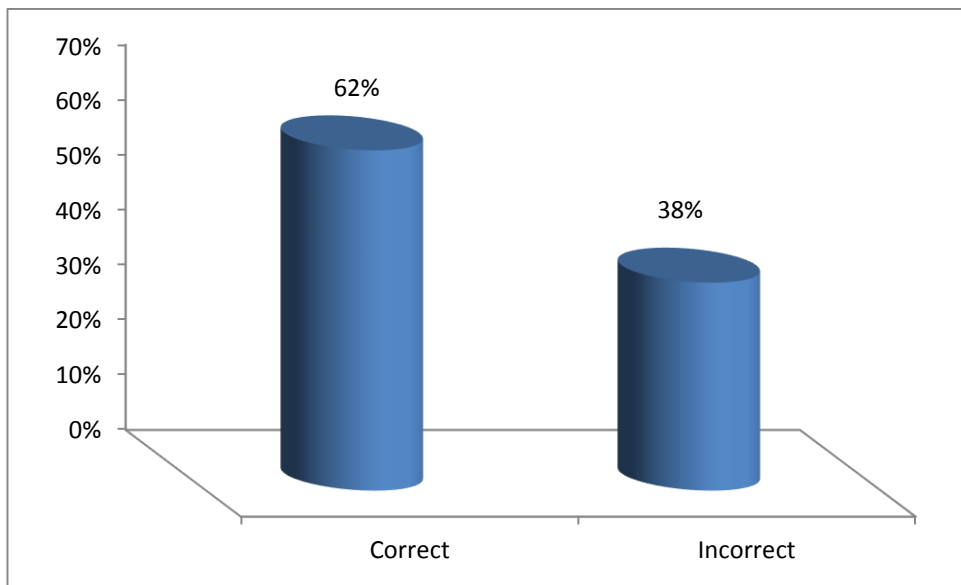
	frequency	Percentage
Correct	21	42%
incorrect	29	58%
Total	50	100%



The data in table and figure (4-7) show that more than half 58% of the study subject have fallen to choose the correct answer. And 42% of them have chosen the correct answer.

Table; (4-8) hear - idea - year - here ()

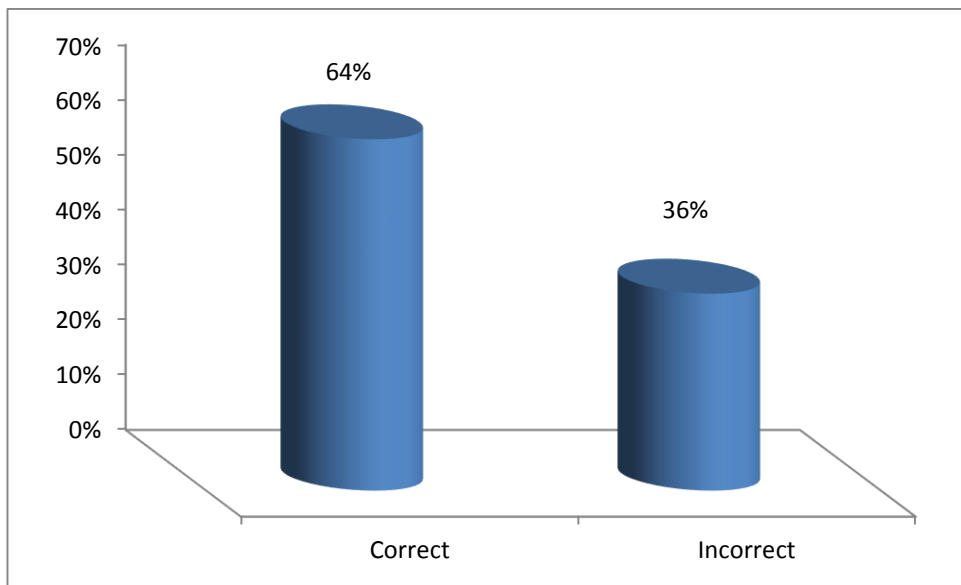
	frequency	Percentage
Correct	19	38%
incorrect	31	62%
Total	50	100%



The data in table and figure (4-8) show that more than 64 % of the study subject have fallen to choose the correct answer. And 36 % of them have chosen the correct answer.

Table; (4-9) now - down - out - sound ()

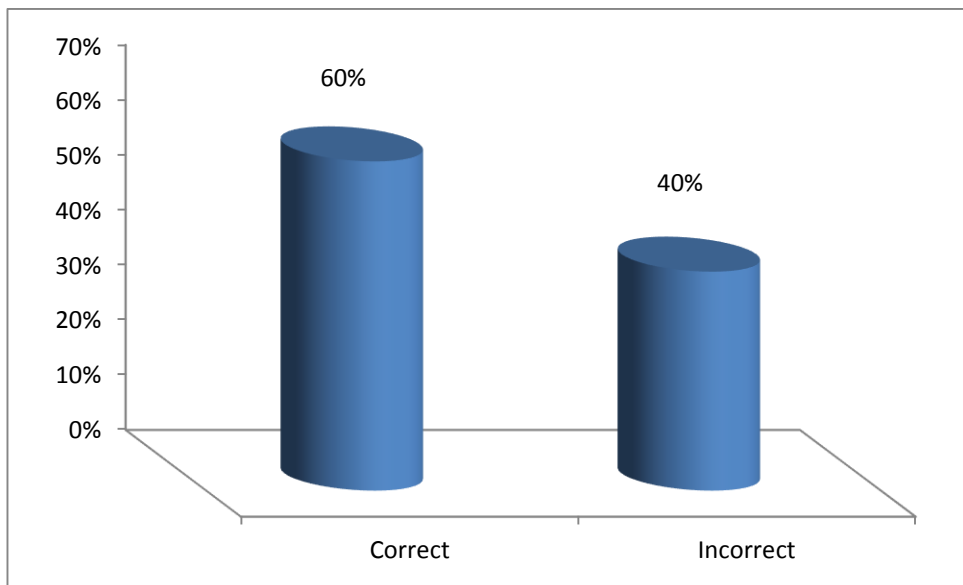
	frequency	Percentage
Correct	32	64%
incorrect	18	36%
Total	50	100%



The data in table and figure (4-9) show that more than half 64 % of the study subject have chosen the correct answer. And 36 % of them have fallen to choose the correct answer.

Table; (4-10) home - no - saw - goes ()

	frequency	Percentage
Correct	30	60%
incorrect	20	40%
Total	50	100%



The data in table and figure (4-10) show that more than half 60% of the study subject have chosen the correct answer. And 40 % of them have fallen to choose the correct answer.

4.1.2 Verification :

Table; (4-11) Verification of First hypothesis.

	Frequency	Percentage
Correct	241	48.2%
incorrect	259	51.8%
Total	500	100%

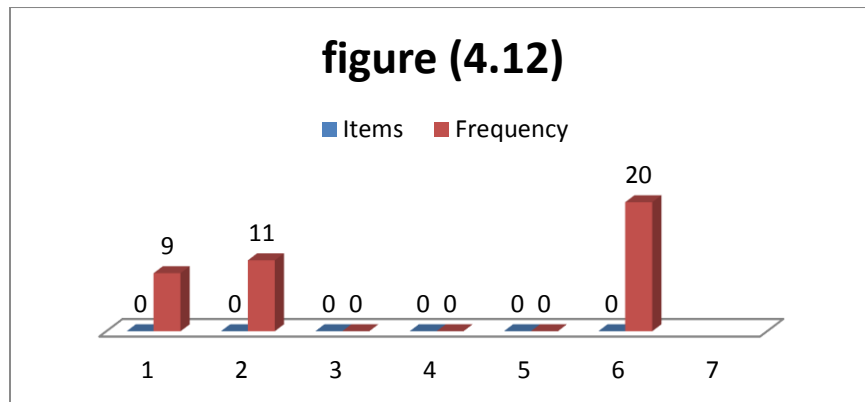
The data in table (4-11) show that the percent of the correct answers in (q1+q2) which investigates the hypothesis of the study 48.2% , while the percent of the incorrect answers 51.8%. This result show that students face difficulties in differentiating between vowel sounds.

Section Two: Investigate hypotheses two and three

Statement (1) EFL learners have difficulties in listening comprehension.

Table (4.12)

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	9	45%
Agree	11	55%
Neutral	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	20	100

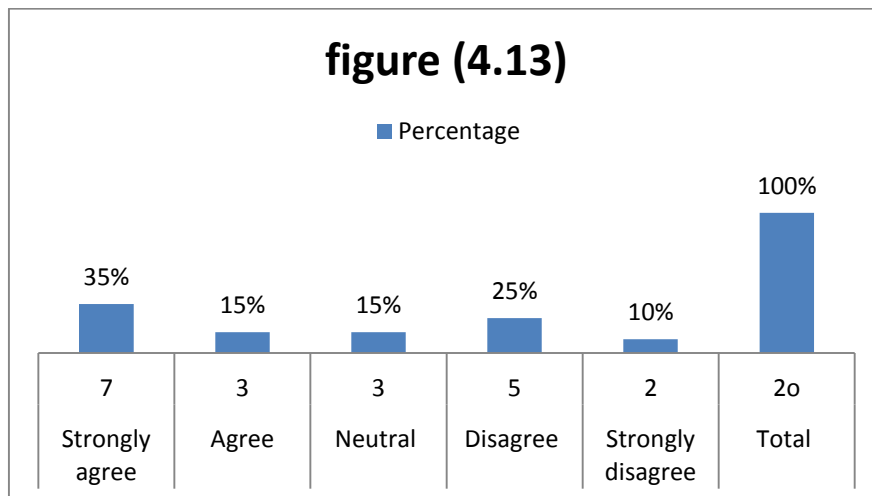


The table (4.12) and figure (4.12) show that the teachers who participated, 45% are strongly agree, 55% agree that the university EFL learners have difficulties in listening comprehension, and none of them are neutral, disagree and strongly disagree with this statement, so the teachers opinion for this statement agree that university EFL learners have difficulties in listening comprehension, so this supported the researcher hypothesis.

Statement (2) EFL learners tend to understand every single word of incoming Speech.

Table (4.13)

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	7	35%
Agree	3	15%
Neutral	3	15%
Disagree	5	25%
Strongly disagree	2	10%
Total	20	100%

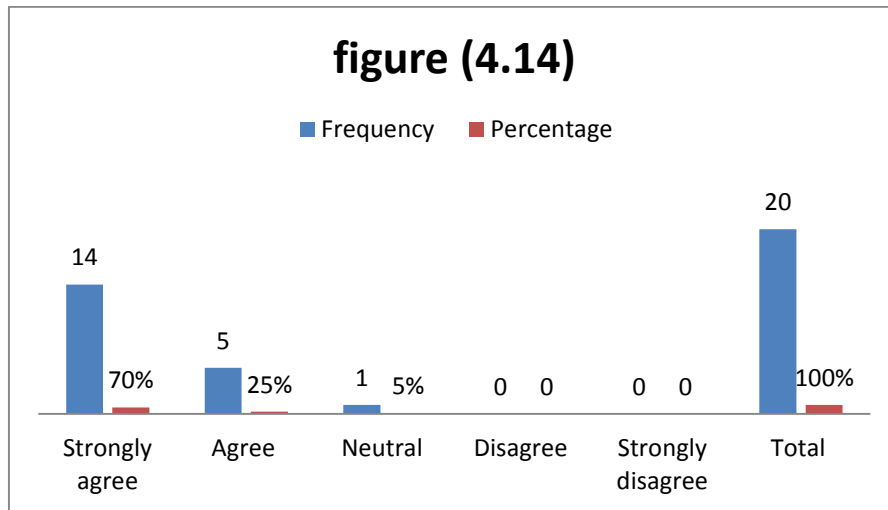


In the table (4.13) and figure (4.13) above show that about 35% are strongly agree, and about 15 % of the teachers supported researches statement, this means that EFL learners awareness can help in explaining the meaning of every single word, while 15% of them are neutral in their attitudes, and 25% of them are disagree according to their attitudes, and about 10% are strongly disagree with the researcher statement, the result indicates that university EFL learners tend to understand every single word for incoming speech, this is also approved the researcher hypotheses.

Statement (3) Rich vocabulary enhances EFL learners listening comprehension

Table (4.14)

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	14	70%
Agree	5	25%
Neutral	1	5%
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	20	100%

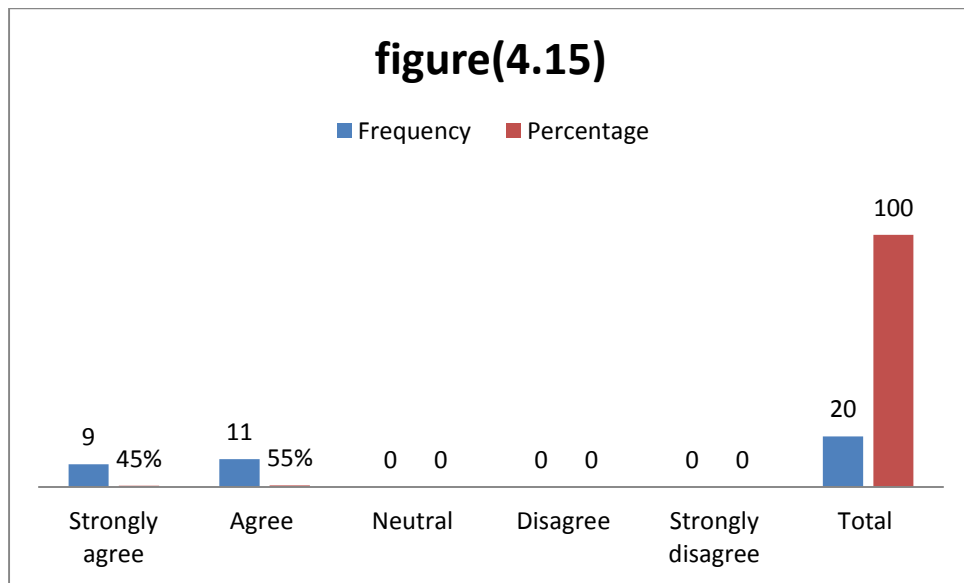


Regarding to the above statement in the table(4.14)and figure(4.14) show about 70% of the teachers strongly agree that a good rich vocabulary can enhances the university EFL learners in understanding listening skills and about 25% are agree with the researcher statement according to their experience in the field of teaching ,while 5% are neutral, but none of them are disagree and strongly disagree, the result above suggests that rich vocabulary enhances university EFL learners listening comprehension, this is a good evidence that teachers agree and supported the researcher hypotheses.

Statement (4) Understanding intonation and stress help in comprehending the spoken language.

Table (4.15)

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	9	45%
Agree	11	55%
Neutral	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	20	100

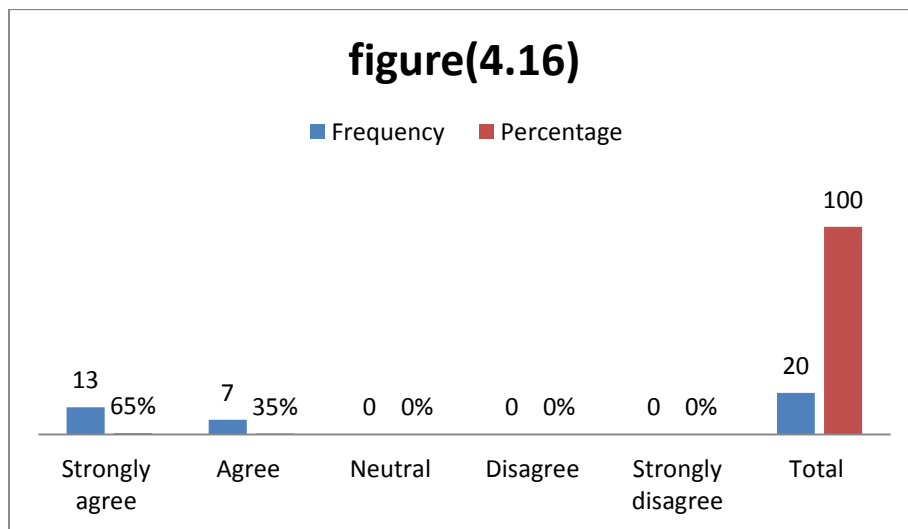


In this table (4.15) and figure (4.15) the reaction of participants teachers are very strongly, the percentage are high, about 45. % strongly agree, 55. % agree with the researcher topic, and none of them are neutral, disagree and strongly disagree about this statement, this means that understanding intonation and stress help in comprehending the spoken language, so the teachers participants agree with the researcher hypotheses.

Statement (5) Listening to the conversation and topics recorded help EFL learners to master listening skill.

Table (4.16)

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	13	65%
Agree	7	35%
Neutral	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	20	100

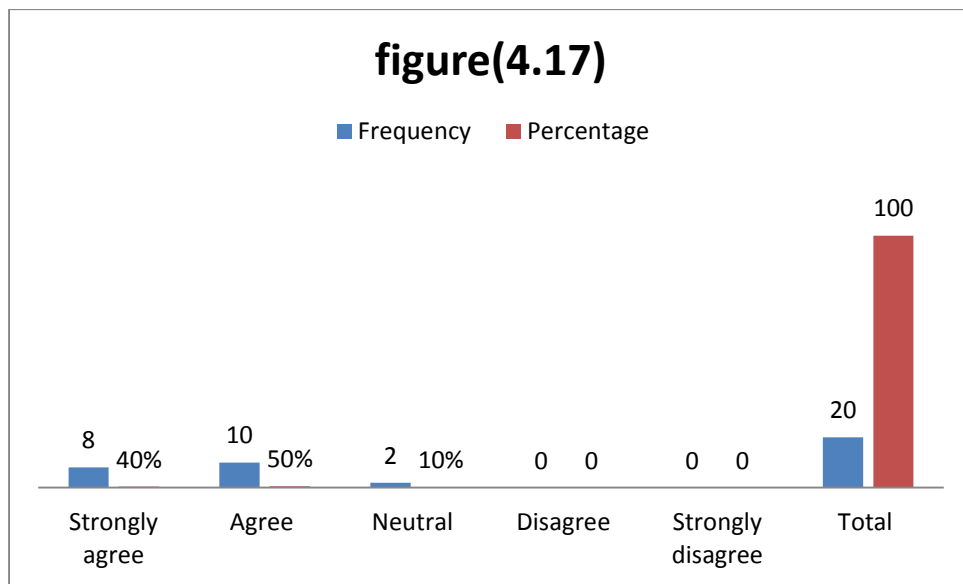


In the table (4.16) and figure (4.16) above it is notice that about 65% strongly agree, and 35% agree, teachers believe that listening to the conversation can develop university EFL learners master in listening skills, and this is also very high percentage, and none of them are neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree of this statement. This result indicates that listening to the conversation and topics recorded help university EFL learners to master listening skills.

Statement (6) EFL learners have difficulties in understanding different accents.

Table (4.17)

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	40%
Agree	10	50%
Neutral	2	10%
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	20	100

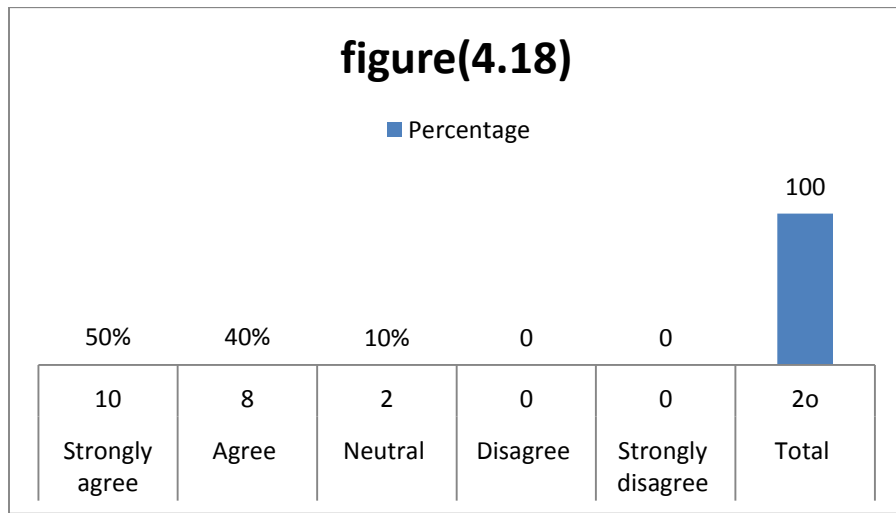


The table (4.17) and figure (4.17) show that the teachers who participated, 40% are strongly agree, 50% agree that understanding different accents are so difficult for university EFL learners, while 10% neutral, and none of them are disagree and strongly disagree with this statement, so the teachers opinion for this statement agree that university EFL learners have difficulties in understanding different accents.

Statement (7) EFL learners find it difficult to keep up with fast natural native speech.

Table (4.18)

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	10	50%
Agree	8	40%
Neutral	2	10%
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	20	100

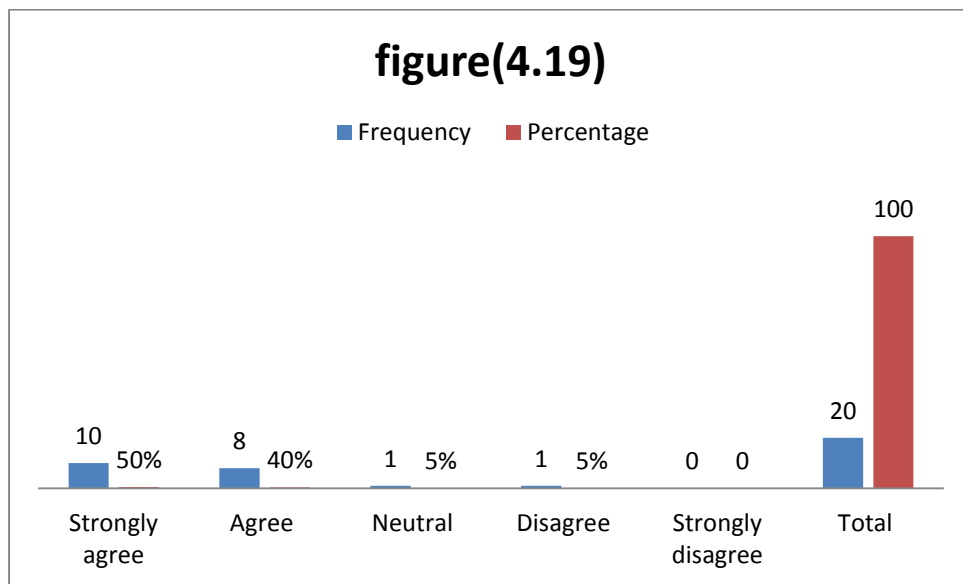


The table (4.18) and figure (4.18) show that teachers who participate in this study, they are professionals in teaching English language, at university level . about 50% strongly agree, 40% agree, 10% neutral, and none of them are disagree, and strongly disagree. This result suggests that university EFL learners find it difficult to keep out with fast natural native speech, and this is the positive to the researcher hypotheses.

Statement (8) Using pauses help in understanding speech clearly.

Table (4.19)

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	10	50%
Agree	8	40%
Neutral	1	5%
Disagree	1	5%
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	20	100

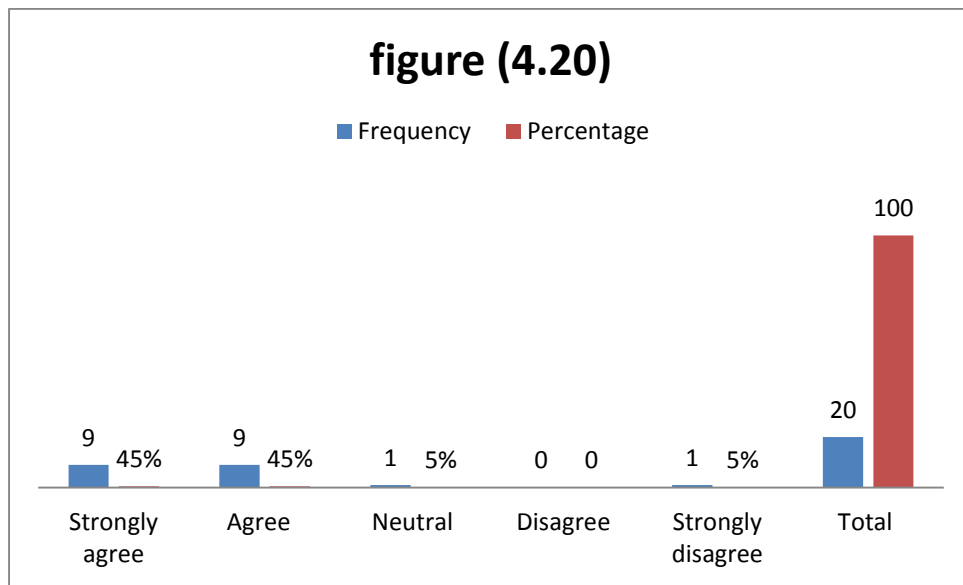


In this table (4.19) and figure (4.19) the reaction of participants teachers are very strongly, the percentage are high, about 50% were strongly agree, and 40% agree with the researcher topic, 5% neutral, and 5% disagree, and none of them is strongly disagree about this statement, this means that using pauses help in understanding speech clearly, so the teachers participants agree and approved with the researcher hypotheses.

Statement (9) Pronunciation plays a great role in fostering listening skill.

Table (4.20)

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	9	45%
Agree	9	45%
Neutral	1	5%
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	1	5%
Total	20	100

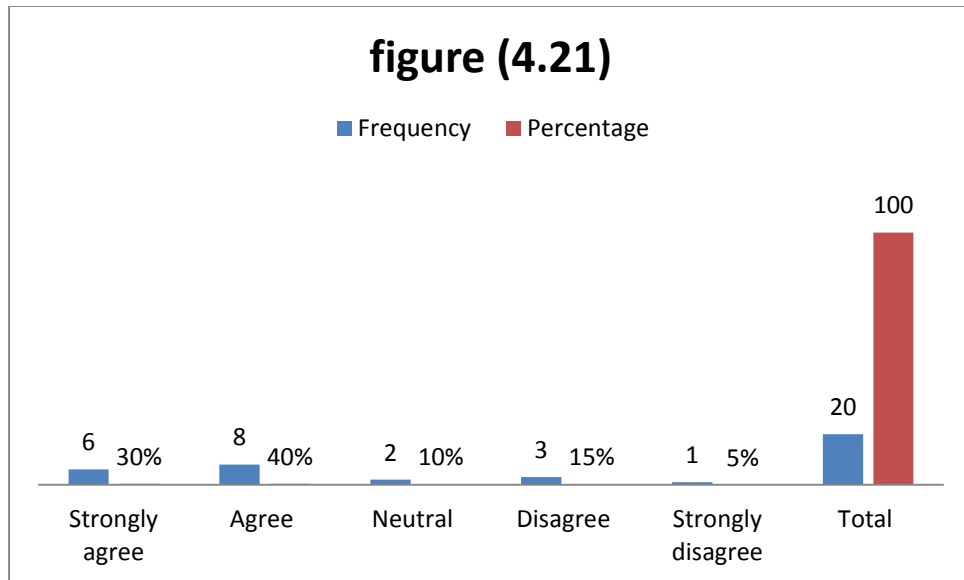


In the table (4.20) and figure (4.20) above it is notice that about 45% strongly agree, and 45% agree, teachers believe that pronunciation plays a great role in fostering listening skills, and this is also very high percentage, and about 5 neutral, and none of them is disagree, and about 5% strongly disagree of this statement. This result indicates that good pronunciation plays a great role in fostering listening skills; Teachers can use different methods for teaching English listening skills.

Statement (10) Exposing EFL learners to varieties of slangs enhances their listening skill.

Table (4.21)

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	6	30%
Agree	8	40%
Neutral	2	10%
Disagree	3	15%
Strongly disagree	1	5%
Total	20	100

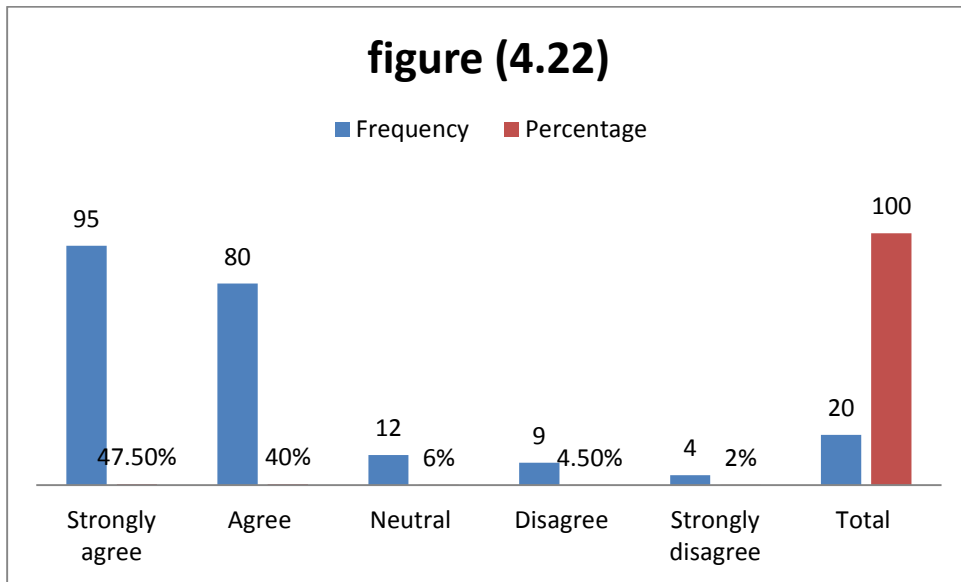


The table (4.21) and figure (4.21) show that 30% of the teachers are strongly agree, and 40% of the teachers are agree with the researcher statement, and about 10% of the teachers are neutral in their attitude, while 15% are disagree with the researcher, and 5% are strongly disagree. This result shows exposing university EFL learners to varieties of slangs enhances their listening skills.

Statement (11) The total results for hypotheses one and two.

Table (4.22)

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	95	47.5%
Agree	80	40%
Neutral	12	6%
Disagree	9	4.5%
Strongly disagree	4	2%
Total	200	100



The table (4.22) and figure (4.22) show that most of the teacher's opinions positive with the research hypotheses ,about 47.5% strongly agree,40% were agree with the researcher hypotheses, While 6% of them neutral and 4.5% disagree, and about 2% strongly disagree. This result shows that the majority of University teachers have positive with the research hypotheses.

4.2 Summary

It's pretty obvious from data analysis of the questionnaire that the majority of university teachers have common believe that EFL learners have difficulties in listening skill that can affect their comprehension, and they are aware of these difficulties since they have experience in the field of teaching.

These difficulties are due to the factors such as: the tendency towards understanding every single word, lack of vocabulary, the difficulties of understanding intonation and stresses.

Also university teachers believe that accent, style of speech and pronunciation and colloquial expressions are the source of difficulties for EFL learners which hinder the development of listening skill among them.

The results of the test revealed that the majority of EFL learners face difficulties in differentiating between vowel sounds i.e. (short and long vowels) as well as diphthongs.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

5.0 Introduction:

In this chapter the researcher summarized what he has found out through this study, the study aims to find out the impact of listening skill on EFL learners at university level.

5.1 Summary:

This study aimed to investigate the difficulties of listening skill encountered by EFL learners at university level , so as to find ways and techniques to overcome these difficulties, since listening is very important in learning English language. Therefore , this study focused on these difficulties in order to find out solutions for these difficulties.

The researcher used descriptive analytical approach to conduct these study, to collect the required data the researcher used two tools questionnaire for teachers and a test for EFL learners at (SUST).

The validity of the research tools were verified consisting of two experts university teachers for the reliability the researcher used (SPSS) to analyze data.

The outcome of data analysis showed that EFL learners face difficulties in listening skill.

5.2 Findings :

1 . EFL learners have difficulties in listening skill that can affect their comprehension

2 . Most teachers believe that accent, pronunciation style of speech and colloquial expressions are the major obstacles in developing listening skill among EFL learners at university level.

3 . Students have difficulties in differentiating between vowel sounds.

4. Also, the study has shown that EFL learners have difficulties in comprehending the spoken language.

5.3 Recommendations :

1 . Teachers should use audio visual aids for developing listening skill

2 .Universities should have audio labs for practicing listening skill.

3 . Teachers should familiarize their students with the rules of pronunciation in order to help them hear different forms of rapid natural speech.

4 . Teachers should help their students to be familiar with the accents of different native speakers.

5 . Teachers should design listening tasks that arouse students interest and help them learn listening skills and strategies.

6 . Teachers should exert more efforts in teaching vowel sounds.

5.4 Suggestions for further studies:

1 . The importance of using audio labs in teaching for developing listening skill.

2 . Investigating the role of listening skill in enhancing student's communicative competence.

3 . The effect of listening skill on comprehending the spoken language.

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Sudan University of Science and Technology

College of Graduate Studies

College of Languages

Listening Diagnostic Test

Q (1) Listen to these groups of words then cross out the odd ones.

- | | | | |
|-----------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1 . hear | means | read | three |
| 2 . last | start | are | what |
| 3 . third | term | your | learn |
| 4 . short | not | fourth | small |
| 5 . few | do | use | does |

Q (2) Listen what is the common sounds in each groups of words, then put these phonetics symbols between brackets with correct groups of words(ai – ei - i? - a?)

- | | | | |
|----------|---------|-------|-----------|
| 1 . way | strange | space | main () |
| 2 . time | eye | fine | drive () |
| 3 . hear | idea | year | here () |
| 4 . now | down | out | sound () |
| 5 . home | no | saw | goes () |

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College of Languages

Questionnaire:

This questionnaire is designed in order to be answered by teachers at university I will be very grateful if you read and respond to the following statements.

1 . EFL learners have difficulties in listening that can affect their comprehension.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1 . EFL learners have difficulties in listening comprehension.					
2 . EFL learners tend to understand every single word of incoming speech.					
3 . Rich vocabulary enhance EFL learner's listening comprehension.					
4 . Understanding intonation and stress help in comprehending the spoken language.					
5 . Listening to the conversation and topics recorded help EFL learners to master listening skill.					

2 . Accent, style of speech, pronunciation and colloquial expressions are the major obstacles in the development of listening skill among EFL learners.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6 . EFL learners have difficulties in understanding different accents.					
7 . EFL learners find it difficult to keep up with fast natural native speech.					
8 . Using pauses help in understanding the speech clearly.					
9 . Pronunciation plays a great role in fostering listening comprehension.					
10 . Exposing EFL learners to varieties of slangs enhances their listening skill.					