

Investigating EFL Students' Listening Skills: A Case Study of Second Year Students in Sudan University of Science and Technology

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ABSTRACT:

Listening is considered to be a very important learning tool for all content areas; in the sense that any subject depends mainly on the students' ability to listen. There is no doubt that listening sub-skills are essential for any kind of listening in the school or in the university. Due to the argument over the importance of teaching listening in English language classroom, the present study is attempt to investigate EFL students' listening skills. The research was carried out in the department of English, Faculty of Languages, Sudan University of Science and Technology in the first semester of the academic year 2012/2013. The descriptive analytic method of data collection and analysis was used. A listening test was conducted to 50 first year undergraduate Sudanese EFL learners who were selected randomly. The research findings showed that the 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. In the light of the results of the study some recommendations were suggested to teach listening skills in a more modern and effective way.

Keywords: *receptive skills, learning strategies, strategic listening.*

المستخلص:

تعد مهارات الاستماع من أهم المهارات لاكتساب المعرفة في كل المجالات العلمية والأدبية. ومما لا شك فيه أن مهارات الطالب الاستماعية تعد أمراً مهماً وأساسياً في العملية التعليمية سواءً أكان ذلك في المستوى المدرسي أو الجامعي. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من مستوى مهارات الطلبة الاستماعية. أجريت الدراسة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية اللغات في جامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا في الفصل الدراسي الأول للعام الجامعي 2012/2013. استخدم المنهج الوصفي التحليلي في جمع وتحليل المعلومات، واستخدم الاختبار كأداة للبحث. وتكونت عينة الدراسة من خمسين طالباً من طلبة المستوى الثاني بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية، تم اختيارهم بصورة عشوائية. أظهرت النتائج ضعف مستوى تحصيل الطلبة في المهارات الاستماعية على الرغم من أنهم يحاولون أن يكونوا مستمعين إيجابيين من خلال توظيف استراتيجيات لتسهيل ورصد وتقييم مهاراتهم الاستماعية. على ضوء هذه النتائج قدمت مقترحات وتوصيات لتدريس مهارات الاستماع بصورة حديثة وفعالة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: *مهارات التلقي، استراتيجيات التعلم، الاستماع الاستراتيجي*

INTRODUCTION:

Listening has historically been the most forgotten, neglected and misrepresented skill in language classrooms and hence the least well taught. In EFL course books, listening is practiced as a skill, but it is often used as a means of

exposing students to new language or of practicing language which has already been introduced (White, 2006, and Yang, 2006). Listeners' thereby may be provided with practice in listening but fail to learn the skill. Besides, their

listening skills may not be improved. Mendelsohn (1994) affirmed that much of what is traditionally misnamed teaching listening should be called testing listening. That is because teaching means showing the learner how to do anything, but testing simply implies having students do something, and then evaluating how well they did it. Most of listening classes took the form of having the learners listen and answer questions, without teaching them how to go about it, i.e. testing their listening rather than teaching them to listen. Listening skills are one of the important parts of communication processes but students find that, despite having studied English for quite a while, their listening skills do not serve them very well in everyday situations.

Mohammed (2005) investigated the impact of listening comprehension on second language teaching with particular reference to Sudan experience. His research findings showed that the listening skill has been neglected in Sudanese schools for decades. Nonetheless, the findings indicated strong motivations, great desire and positive attitudes of the Sudanese students towards listening skills and learning English. The findings, unfortunately, showed that most of the students who are not exposed to enough listening were usually confused when speaking English or being spoken to. Abu Bakre (2007) adds that listening is deteriorating among the students of the Sudanese secondary schools due to the weakness of students' ability in listening skill as well as teachers' competence and the techniques they use in teaching listening comprehension. Al-Fadil (2010) states that teachers do not use the effective listening strategies because

they do not teach listening lessons. The only one strategy they use is a general strategy which could be used for all skills. This result also justified the poor standard of the students' oral communication, since listening is an essential part of it. Al-Fadil (2010) added that Sudanese secondary school students do not use listening strategies because they do not learn listening. Listening is neglected from sides, teachers and students, this negatively affect the whole process of oral communication.

At university level, Abdellah (2011) conducted a study entitled "Sudanese EFL Learners' Oral Communication Problems (A case Study of Fourth Year Students, English language Departments in Khartoum and Juba Universities)". His research findings have shown that Sudanese EFL learners' weakness of listening skill is one of the main problems that face the learners in oral communication. Ahmed (2011) said that at university level large classes are not suitable places for teaching listening because teaching listening needs a quiet place and small number of the students to ensure good quality of teaching listening skill.

Due to the argument over the importance of teaching listening in English language classroom, the present study attempted to investigate EFL students' listening skills at university level. To reach up to this aim, an analytic descriptive research was carried out in the Department of English, Faculty of Languages, addressing the following question:

- To what extent are EFL Sudanese students competent in listening skills when they:

a) Listen to obtain the gist of spoken text?

b) Listen for specific information?

c) Listen for detailed information?

Methods and Materials

The methodology of this study is involves both quantitative and qualitative means of data collection and analysis.

Participants

The subjects of this study were 50 first year university EFL students. The students were drawn from second year students, Faculty of Languages, Sudan University of Science and Technology.

Tool of the Study

The researchers used an EFL listening comprehension test.

Procedures

Descriptive Statistics:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the EFL Listening Comprehension test

Skill	No. of participants	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
1- Listening to obtain the gist of spoken text	50	0	32	12.44	6.82
2- Listening for detailed information	50	0	30	13.48	6.78
3- Listening for specific information	50	0	26	12.72	5.77

Key: Min=Minimum Max=Maximum SD = Standard Deviation

The listening skills that have been chosen in this study were three (Listening for gist, listening for specific information and listening for detailed information). Results in table (1) show that the participants' scores on the listening comprehension test ranged from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 32 with a mean of 12.44 and a standard deviation of 6.822, in the first skill, a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 30 with a mean of 13.44 and a standard deviation

To investigate EFL Students' Listening Skills, the following procedures were followed:

1- Reviewing relevant literature.

2- Designing and validating a listening test.

3- Administering the previous tool to sample of second year university students.

4- Treating the data statistically by using SPSS software.

5- Interpreting the findings of the study.

6- Introducing the suggestions and recommendations of the study.

Results and Discussion

To analyze the data, certain statistical procedures were carried out in this study. Descriptive statistics including minimum and maximum scores, means and standard deviations.

of 6.76, in the second skill, and a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 26 with a mean of 12.72 and a standard deviation of 5.77, in the third skill. The mean is less than 15 in each skill which means that the students are not competent in these skills.

Conclusion and Recommendations

1) students are not competent in listening skills when they:

a) Listen to obtain the gist of spoken text.

- b) Listen for specific information.
 c) Listen for detailed information.
 2) Developing students' listening skill may depend on developing their strategic listening through providing listening strategy instruction.

A number of recommendations are made based on the findings of this study:

1. Authentic materials (Radio, TV, etc.) should be used for teaching listening skills.
2. University teachers should divide the students to groups when they come to teach listening to large class.
3. The study recommended that listening courses should be provided with language laboratories and smart class. This will encourage and create a variety of listening activities.
4. A high quality listening syllabus should be designed and it should include a huge number of exercises on developing listening skills.
5. Listening syllabus should be graded from easy to difficult to build confidence that will help the students much be good at listening.
6. Teachers should encourage their students to adopt autonomous learning.

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