

**Major English Listening Comprehension
(ELC) Problems facing EFL Student-Teachers
during Practicum, (Egyptian Context) .**

**By
Tariq Mohammed Al-Ghonaimy
PH.D (U.K)**

**مجلة الدراسات التربوية والانسانية - كلية التربية - جامعة دمنهور
المجلد الخامس العدد (3) لسنة 2013**

Major English Listening Comprehension (ELC) Problems facing EFL Student-Teachers during Practicum, (Egyptian Context) .

Tariq Mohammed Al-Ghonaimy

Introduction:

English Listening Comprehension(ELC)means making sense of spoken language, normally accompanied by other sound and visual input, with the help of relevant prior knowledge and the context in which we are listening. It is actually a bundle of related processes-recognition of sound uttered by the speaker, perception of intonation patterns showing information focus, interpretation of the relevance of what is said to the current topic and so on.

The reason why exposure to language listening is always placed at the top of the four language skills is no wonder significant. Social communication is unsurprisingly based on mutual effective listening. Truly, Listening is probably the least explicit of the language skills, making it the most difficult one to learn. Listening comprehension is viewed as an active process in which persons concentrate on aspects of aural input, construct meaning, and function stored background knowledge to existing knowledge. But what actually happens inside human brains concerning this process is still as miraculous as other happenings.

One of the main causes of ineffective listening comprehension in L2 classroom is the old belief that listening was only regarded as a receptive skill in language learning, as Johnson,(2008) indicated: "students... listen to repeat and develop a better pronunciation.

Even though listening is now recognized as an active mental process, it is still "difficult to describe". Vandergrift, (2011).But what makes listeners communicative is their success in using effective language learning strategies while listening without which ELC becomes challenging, problematic and ineffective. Mendelson,(2006).

Actually, there are two aspects of listening comprehension problems;1) linguistic factors: including the knowledge of English pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar.2) Nonlinguistic factors: including psychological factors, listening skills and strategies,and background knowledge, Jamashidnejad,(2011).

Plainly, listeners use their pre-existing stored knowledge to generate information and interpretation that could serve them make the spoken message semantically meaningful. As non-native listeners have limited memory capacity for the target language learned, they resort to use different listening comprehension strategies, which are steps taken by learners to help them acquire, store, retrieve and/or use information;(O'Malley & Küpper, 1989; Vandergift, 1992).In this context, strategies are specific actions, behaviors, steps or techniques students use – often consciously –to improve their progress in apprehending, internalizing, and using the L2(Oxford,1990,as cited in Oxford 1994). Stern and Todesco (1978), further concluded that good learning strategies were related to effective listening acquisition skills.

Listening as a process requires the listener's conscious use of strategies and should involve the parallel interaction between 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' processing. This interactive processing requires the learner to use background knowledge(top-down)to interpret meaning and linguistic knowledge(bottom-up)in order to discriminate between familiar sounds. Thus, the goal is for language listener to use parallel processing in order to perceive, interpret and respond to the information being heard (Lynck & Mendelson, 2009).

Again English listening comprehension (ECL) problems are numerous. The poor speaking environment which lacks understandable sender (speaker) will lead to the lack of ELC. This is why our teaching institutions dealing with ELT are required to focus on a good quality of English listening exposure to the receivers. But generally ELC in Egypt receive significantly less attention from the teaching bodies. What

actually worsens the situation is the English educational examination system which is void of the oral – listening aspect at all levels of the educational stages. Foreign language schools inside the country are exempted from that defect.

It is a fact that English learners suffer tremendously especially when being exposed to a listening – speaking experience with a native or non – native of English. In this respect, this study attempts to explore the (ELC) problems encountered by EFL learners with the aim of improving their listening skill in general.

O'Mally, et al., 1988 demonstrated three mental processes phases which take place during ELC as follows:

1. Perceptual processing.
2. Parsing processing.
3. Utilization processing.

In his research findings, three listening strategies were suggested as follows:

1. Self-monitoring.
2. Elaboration.
3. Inference.

Obviously, if EFL learners use correct ELC strategies, correct communication will prevail and lessen ELC difficulties.

Other ELC obstacles exist together with speaking skills since listening and speaking English are the key feature of English class.

Reasons for the lack of understanding the spoken language may not be only due to the listener's deviances causes but also to the native speaker in general as stated by Brown and Yale(1983):

- Most English native speakers usually produce utterances syntactically simpler than written language;
- Most utterances are connected by simple coordinate connectors such as but, and, then, so, when, because;

- Native speakers frequently use pausing and rhythm in their speech, and their speech is full of ungrammatical and incomplete sentences, general and non-specific phrases("fillers") such as sort of, that's right, some who, ...' and 'interactive expressions like well, oh, uhuh'.
- Verderber & Verdeber,(2003)demonstrated that context could be a significant factor affecting ELC context could include the following factors:
 - Physical (environmental factors such as place, time and other physical conditions; distance between communications, seating arrangement),
 - Social (different class groups, different genders, different racial or ethnic groups, different social roles and norms, dominance, status and powers),
 - Cultural (the beliefs, values, attitudes meanings, social hierarchies, religion, notions of time, and the roles of the group of people),
 - Psychological (the moods and feelings each participant brings to communications, intimacy, affiliated need, willingness to make commitments),
 - Historical and Relationship (the background of the previous communication between communicators, the nature of the relationship existing between participants, the participants' view towards relationship, the way and the purpose of their relationship).

Components of listening could constitute problematic features in ELC, these components might include:

- **Layers of sound**: Different volumes and speed speech often with frequent interruptions may represent a difficulty to the listener.
- **Accent: Unlike** written English, there are a number of accents in spoken English which can make it even more difficult for the learner to follow a conversation.
- **Intonation**: the way in which a sentence is sounded is called intonation we normally don't speak in monotone but raise or lower the pitch of an utterance as we speak.

The most common example is when we make a simple question:

Your name is Ali ↓

But with a rising intonation it becomes a question:

Your name is Ali ↑

- Stress: refers to a prominence of an utterance to certain syllables or words which leads to a change of the whole meaning. For example a reading of the following sentences with the bold word stressed shift the meaning:

- **He** speaks Arabic.
- He **speaks** Arabic.
- He speaks **Arabic**.

Additionally, there are numerous features which might constitute difficulties to ELC as elision (linking sounds), assimilation (mixing sounds), elision (losing sounds), ellipsis (losing syllable) and intrusion (adding new sounds to help link words) and so on.

Brown (1986, 1995b) and Rubin (1994) indentified five characteristics that affect ELC as follows:

- Text characteristics.
- Interlocutor characteristics.
- Task characteristics.
- Listener characteristics.
- Process characteristics.

In Brown's view a listening text will be easier when:

- There are few speakers and objects.
- The speakers and objects are distinct and different from one another.
- Special relations are clear (for example, when describing a motor accident).
- The order of telling the events matches the order in which the event occurred.

- The inferences called for are those that one would have predicted.
- The content of the test fits with what the listener already knows (exploiting an existing schema).

ELC could be brought about due to the English native speakers who, as Brown & Yuke (1983: 4) demonstrated, are characterized by the following features:

- Most English native speakers usually produce utterances syntactically simpler than written language;
- Most utterance are connected by simple coordinate connectors such as but, and, then, so, when, because;
- Native speakers frequently use pausing and rhythm in their speech, and their speech is full of 'ungrammatical and incomplete sentences', 'general and non-specific phrases ("fillers") such as sort of, that's right, somehow, ...', and interactive expressions like well, oh, uhuh'.

Clearly, eleven causes of ELC problems could take place because of the listeners who:

- Are trying to understand every word;
- Are left behind trying to work out what a previous word meant;
- Don't know the most important words;
- Don't recognize the words they know;
- Have problems with different accents;
- Lack listening stamina/get tired;
- Have a mental block;
- Are distracted by background noise;
- Can't cope with conceptualization.
- Have hearing problems.
- Can't tell differences between the different voices.

Success in oral communication is an evidence of success in the process of both sender (speaker) and receiver (listener) can develop their oral communication effectively once there exist mutual level of understanding. But what minimizes the processes of ELC is sometimes related to vocabulary, one of

whose aspects is the phrasal verbs which have different meanings and different syntactic patterns. In addition, there are differences between American and British English. Word derivation in English vocabulary can also result in incorrect ELC. For example, an adjective can be negated by using the prefix un – (e.g. unable), in – (e.g. important), dis – (e.g. dishonest), or a – (e.g. amoral) and so on.

Thus, good command of English vocabulary, syntax and grammar can help lead to sound ELC.

Similarly, grammar can be a source of the lack of ELC. English tenses can refer to different meanings as the simple past, the present perfect, progressive and perfect progressive and passive voice. Additionally, functions of auxiliaries, modals, idiomatic usage and articles can constitute problematic features in ELC.

Flowerdew&Miller(1996) conducted a study to examine EFL learners' difficulties in ELC to academic lectures. It was found that the top five ELC difficulties were identified as speed of delivery, new terminology and concepts, difficulties in concentrating and problems related to physical environment. Hassan (2002) found that 'unfamiliar words', 'difficult grammatical structures', and 'the length of the spoken text' were the most important message factors for ELC problems to 81 intermediate EFL learners in Syria. Goh (2000) investigated real-time ELC faced by a group of ESL learners within the three-phase model of language comprehension proposed by Anderson(1995). It was found that these were 10 problems which occurred during the cognitive processing phase of perception, parsing and utilization. Five problems were related to failure in word recognition and ineffective attention in perceptual processing and others were related to inefficient passing and failure to utilize the mental representation of parsed input. A comparison of two groups of learners with different abilities showed some similarities in the difficulties experienced, but

low ability listeners had more low level processing problems. Sun's study (2002) examined listening problems of 40 EFL college students in the study.

Yen (1987) conducted a study to investigate the listening comprehension problems of 24 English majors. The results revealed that most of the participants encountered ELC difficulties in sound discrimination, sound stream division, stress and intonation, vocabulary, phrase and syntax. Teng (2002) investigated 95 technology institute students' ELC through a questionnaire with 43 liker-scale items and 8 open – ended questions. Among 43 listening factors, listeners' EFL proficiency had the highest frequency, followed by speakers' clarity and listeners' concentration.

According to his observation and ELT experieces for more than thirty five years, the researcher has noticed that ELC deficiencies of EFL learners at Kafrel-Sheikh and Alexaandria Universities have serious deplorable communicative drawbacks. This is especially observable when the EFL students are taught listening courses at different levels and asked to participate in simple conversation aton a small scale. Many of them, especially at the beginning stages of the university, performed poorly in these course. They actually display lamentable conditions when trying to respond to natural spoken English delivered at normal speed. Lack of concentration and maintaining concentration for a long time seem to be prevailing.

What the present research is trying to do is to demonstrate, identify the ELC major obstacles as perceived by EFL Egyptian learners when listening to oral texts, and additionally, explore the strategies they use in coping with these problems. It is also hoped that this research will raise EFL teachers' awareness of these problematic aspects so that appropriate treatment measures can be taken. Additionally, findings of this research will provide insights for the teaching and learning of ELC skills.

Three main factors constituting ELC obstacles were detracted from receivers' L2 comprehension: Listener factors, speakers factors and text factors. As for the first one (listener factors) research by (Boyle, French and Kasper, Sheils, Rost and Goh) identified various factors as salient influences on ELC. These include: Linguistic ability, ability to guess the meaning of unfamiliar terms, ability to use verbal and non-verbal strategies to compensate for gaps in linguistic ability, ability to infer meaning, ability to take notes, failure to understand the main points and logical argument.

Research on the effect of speech speed on listing comprehension provided clear evidence as sources of the lack of ELC. Underwood (1989) stated, "The greatest difficulty with listening comprehension..... is that the listener cannot control how quickly a speaker speaks". According to Rubin (1994), the conflicting findings about the effect of speed of delivery on comprehension could be attributed to the differences in background knowledge, texts and measurement techniques.

Research on the impact of repetition and paraphrase on ELC provided conflicting results. Whereas Derwing (1989) and Lynch (1992) reported that redundancy and paraphrasing add to the listening load as they provide extra language to process. Chiang and Dunkel (1992), Chaudron (1983) and Pica, et al., (1987) working with high-and-low intermediate EFL learners found that redundancy facilitated students understanding of input. Hasan, (2000) attributed ELC problems of EFL learners to pronunciation, hesitation, pauses and varied accents.

Research Questions:

1. How do EFL learners assess the importance of studying English Listening Comprehension (ELC)?
2. What are the major ELC problems facing EFL students to spoken English?
3. How can EFL teachers help their EFL learners overcome these ELC problems?

1.Participants:

A total number of 80 EFL students participated in this study.They were drawn from English departments with nearly a homogenous background in terms of age, culture and education in Kafrel-Sheikh and Damanhour University. Normally, the placement exam of these participants in the English department is completely free from ELC skills, nor do the various college English exam include them.

Materials:

- (1) A five-point Likert scale questionnaire ranging from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree' was used.
- (2) A semi structures interview with the participants. The details of the two research instrument are described as follows:

The questionnaire used in this study targeted to get information about the difficulties encountered by the EFL students in ELC while taking their English causes at the English dept. It consisted of 33 items, having been reviewed via different previous questionnaires of the literature (Boyle, 1984; Yagang, 1994; Hassan, 2010; Underwood, 1989; Rubbin, 1994; Dunkel, 1991),about factors that influence listening comprehension. Wording of the questionnaire, its clarity, length, order of the questions and validity were exposed to specialists in the field (in addition to the researcher's experience in TEFL and TESL teaching.

As for the follow-up interview, it was, beside the questionnaire, the second data gathering information instruments employed. The interview targeted to triangulate the information obtained through the questionnaire; to obtain data on how the English Listening Comprehension (ELC) difficulties identified through the questionnaire affected the learners' ELC; to collect data about the reasons behind the learners' ELC; and to find out if there could be any other ELC problems that might affect comprehension through their personal experience of ELC receivers as well as their insights.

Data Collection and Results Statistical Analysis:

The data collection process took place in two different Egyptian governorates as mentioned earlier: Kafrel-Sheikh and Alexandria (Damanhour Branch). Five days were devoted in order to administer the questionnaire as well as the interviews with EFL participants.

Data collections were organized and analyzed. As the data obtained from the quantitatively were analyzed quantitatively and quantitatively, the data from the interview were analyzed qualitatively.

Results and Discussion:

To answer the research questions, this section is devoted to do so firstly through the EFL students' results of both the questionnaires and interviews:

A. Results pertaining to the first question:

How do EFL learners assess the importance of studying English listening comprehension (ELC)?

Table(1) displays the general self-rating of the EFL students to listening proficiency skills.

Statement	Excellent %	Good %	Average %	Poor %
How do you assess your English listening comprehension (ELC) ability in general?	--	14.4	18.5	62.1

More than three quarters of the EFL respondents rated themselves as 'average, poor' in listening proficiency skills, whereas 14.4% of the EFL respondents think that their listening skills are 'good'.

Their evaluation reflects a very low degree of perception which might be attributed to their lack of training in ELC.

Participants' perception of the importance of ELC skills:

As illustrated in table (2), percentages are presented for the EFL students' perception of the importance of ELC skills.

Table (2): students responses to the importance of ELC skill.

No	Statement	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Undecided %	Strongly Disagree	Disagree %
1	English Listening Comprehension (ELC) is essential in English learning.	49.4	19.4	12	8.7	10.7
2	I face a difficulty in ELC.	38.2	36.7	10	8.3	6.7
3	I receive sufficient training in ELC.	5.4	2.6	-	11.7	80.34
4	I never heard about listening strategy.	52.8	33.8	4	1.6	4.4
5	ELC is exciting.	30.4	12.3	9.1	33.3	17.8
6	ELC is boring.	70.3	21.6	-	4.8	3.3

While nearly 68,8% of the EFL learners were aware of the importance of English listening comprehension (ELC),12% did not highly assess the role of ELC.

Concerning encountering ELC problems, 74.9% of the EFL learners remark that ELC is difficult. This is consistent with item No. 6 that 91.9% of EFL learners find that ELC is boring and not interesting. This might be the reason why they suffered so much from the absence of (ELC) training (92%), and never heard about listening strategy (86.6%).

English Listening Comprehension (ELC) problems:

The second research question: What are the major English Listening Comprehension(ELC)problems facing EFL learners to spoken English?

Different reasons causing ELC problems to EFL learners are categorized into various factors relating to the listening text, tasks and activities and teachers' methodology as discussed below:

ELC Problems Relating to the Listening Materials:

Unfamiliar words, complex grammatical structures, long spoken text, unfamiliar topics and difficult listening passages are examples of the sources which constitute ELC difficulties

to EFL learners. The following table (3) illustrates these major ELC problems facing EFL learners.

Table (3) ELC problems pertaining to listening text:

Statement	S.A	A.	U.	S.D.	D.
• Unfamiliar words are major sources of ELC problems.	49.4	27.9	2	9	10.7
• Long sentences and grammar are difficult to comprehend the meaning of the spoken English.	32.2	21.7	12.2	14.6	19.3
• English morphology (word building) are syntax (sentence - building) problematic in ELC.	31.3	52	4	5	7.7
• Speedy speech and different accent are clear examples of ELC problems.	42.4	33.7	5.9	7.9	10
• Listening passages are difficult to understand when the topic is unfamiliar.	39.6	35	3	12	8.1
• I can't grasp the meaning of ELC when I try to comprehend every word of incoming speech.	48.3	35	-	9	7.7
• I used my schema to understand the spoken text.	40.3	32.7	6	10	9
• I feel fatigue and frustrated when I don't understand a spoken text.	47.6	38.2	-	8	5

The problem of unfamiliar words:

From the participants' responses, it was identified that the vocabulary was problematic in ELC(77.3%). This is in line with Underwood (1989)who indicated that lack of vocabulary is a big obstacle to most students in listening comprehension. Actually EFL learners can overcome this obstacle by much practice.

The second question was raised to find out whether long sentences and complex grammatical structures minimize the opportunity of ELC as stated by nearly 53.9% of the EFL respondents.

In the interview of a young lady, she(S.43-1-2) believed that the first priority to improve ELC was to increase her vocabulary and effective grammar instead of using strategies such as getting the main idea of the text or lecturer. She thought that once she increased her vocabulary, listening strategies (getting the main idea) would take place: "I believe

that if I intend to improve my ELC, first I have to enjoy a good satisfactory vocabulary and grammar". This is nearly expressed by(S-39-1-3):"vocabulary and long sentences are the key issue to poor ELC".

Problems of English Morphology and Syntax:

In addition to the insufficiency of vocabulary and the obstacle of grammatical structures,English morphology (word-building)and English syntax (sentence building) constituted a problem to (83.3%) of EFL respondents in ELC as revealed in table (3).

As for 3 interviewees' responses concerning this issue, learner(S.20-1-2)claimed the failure of ELC that resulted from his poor background of the prefixes and suffixes of the listening text: "It confuses me so much to differentiate between the meaning of enable and unable, decrease and increase, purity and purification, readable and readability". Another interviewee reported that: "tag questions and exclamation phrases are confusing... actually I can't grasp ELC due to these difficulties". A third interviewee (5-29-1-3) said that: "sentences are sometimes difficult to understand due to convicting article as and, moreover, as, since, namely and so on".

One of the most crucial factors affecting listening comprehension adversely is the speedy speech of the speaker in addition to the different accents accompanied. More than 76.1%of the participants were sure that the speedier the speakers of English, the lower of ELC level becomes. Different pronunciation due to different accents constituted a problem to participants during listening.

Unfamiliar topics listened to by EFL participants impede ELC. Table (3) indicates that many EFL participants 74.6% find it difficult to comprehend the listening text when the topic is vague. Obviously, familiarity with the topic of the lecture augments comprehension. In fact a learner of English should share certain assumptions about the subject they listen to as they "construct their understanding on the basis of their

experience; problem arises when there is a mismatch between the subject and the previous experience of the learners". (Nuttle, 1996).

This is why EFL participants (nearly 83.3%) find it difficult to understand every single word in the spoken text.

Using the stored background knowledge (schema) including (bottom – up), and (top – down) strategy is helpful in ELC, and that concept was agreed upon by 73% of the participants. This is in accordance with general common assumption of the positive role of prior knowledge (schema) upon listening comprehension. In collaboration with this issue, interviewee (7) reported that: I have found it difficult to activate my stored knowledge... When I listen to an EFL lecture, some meanings of some words escape from my mind suddenly when I try to relate them to previous stored knowledge. Another EFL learner (3) responded that:"prior topical and linguistic knowledge do not help me enough to master / control the meaning of the listening text".

When concentrating to grasp the meaning of the spoken text is accompanied by poor ELC, frustration and fatigue could be the natural outcome of the listeners. That was voiced by 87% of the participants. Clearly, boredom and frustration do affect the extent to which attention is paid to listening. This occurs as a result of poor stimulation caused by disinterest in the topic, lack of motivation, failure on the part of the lecturer to present meaningful material in a stimulating manner, or presenting the lecture in a monotone instigating sleep.

Many interviewees (1, 2, 3) realized that their attention was diverted from the input and consequently they missed interest and fell victims of frustration.

--"Because of deplorable ELC, I did not concentrate much and missed some points and was sleepy during the lecture".

--"May be listening to English songs or comedies is O.k. but not the assignments or lectures".

Problems Relating to Linguistics and Conceptual Factors:

Problems of ELC related to linguistic and conceptual factors such as colloquial vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and complexity of sentences :

Table (4): ELC Problems relating to linguistics.

Item	S.A %	A %	U %	S.D %	D %
• Colloquial vocabulary in an ELC barrier to me.	• 41.3	35.7	10	• 5.8	• 8.2
• Variety of accents makes it different for me in ELC.	46.3	42.7	5	• 1.8	• 4.2
• Redundancy and long talk in spoken text makes it different for me in ELC.	48.4	41.6	5.3	• 2.2	• 2.4
• Unclear pronunciation makes it difficult for me to ELC.	43.2	50.8	-	• 2.3	• 3.7
• I always use listening strategies such as self-monitoring, guessing, translation... while listening.	7.2	3.8	1	• 56.8	• 31.2

The Problem of Colloquial Vocabulary in ELC:

From the participants' responses, it was identified that colloquial vocabulary is a language barrier to ELC of participants. It is claimed by 77% of the participants to be one of the most drawbacks in ELC. 14% answered that they encountered the problem with colloquial vocabulary and 10% of them were undecided. In collaboration with this result, Llr's (1990) noted that when colloquial vocabulary occurred in fast stream of listening, even if listening learners had learned that word yet but not been familiar with it, it was still difficult to be recognized.

Interviewee (9) remarked that: "During our pre university stage, school teachers used to teach us English but we always listen to American English on TV. Vocabulary is different as well as pronunciation and intonation".

The problem of different accent:

Moreover, the variety of accents also makes it difficult for the participants to listen to since they don't have adequate experience and exposure to different accents. For example, if learners listen to French people speaking English, they will

feel hard to comprehend him or her since these speakers often speak English in a native French intonation. Table (4) demonstrated that 89% of the participants experienced this kind of problem whereas only 6% of participants reported that different accents were not an ELC problem. This is in line with Llr (1990) who pointed out that many foreign language learners who are used to being the accent of their own teacher are surprised and dismayed when they find they have difficulty understanding someone else.

Learner (10) mentioned in an interview that unfamiliar accent sometimes "caused difficulty in using my listening strategy to apply... and the pronunciation of some EFL lectures is not standard... some use British, others use American and third use Egyptian English which I hate".

The problem of redundancy:

From table (4), it is obvious that the EFL participants agree that redundancy was a hindrance for them during ELC. Clearly, redundancy includes repetition, paraphrases, self-correction, and the use of words such as "I mean", "well". An EFL learner is often unable to profit from redundancy by becoming aware that not every new sentence or phrase contains new information and that there is extra time available for comprehending. Instead, they will feel interfered and distracted. This was supported by the responses of the EFL participants nearly 90% reported that they encountered problem with coping with redundancy. Whereas just 4% answered redundancy was not a problem during listening. This seems to be in congruent with Llr's finding (1990). She demonstrated that a lot of foreign language learners had problem with redundancy when listening to English because they thought it was compulsory to comprehend everything, even absolutely unessential words and then they were thrown off balance of meeting any unknown words.

Interviewee no. (4) was concerned mainly about linking words in the listening text... "I can't listen to linking words

clearly". As linking words might influence the perceptual processing in sensory register, interviewee (3) considered it "...a problem in practicing elaboration".

The problem of pronunciation:

Unnatural pronunciations of some words or sentences were perceived by the respondents (over 90%) as ambiguous and problematic to their ELC while 7% of them did not see that as a problem in ELC. Table (4) shows that EFL learners may resort to guessing as a self-strategy if mispronunciation leads to poor ELC, EFL listeners could be unhelpful too due to the lack of good effective listening background practice which, in turn would lead to unharmonious effective communication.

In Egypt, English tests generally lack oral-aural components. This makes it unnecessary to teach pronunciation, for language teachers' own success is determined by the success of their students on language tests, Bekleyen, (2007). In their turn, EFL students do not try to improve their pronunciation as they think it is unnecessary. As suggested by Field (2003), sometimes learners recognize words while reading, but not while listening to the spoken language. This produces comprehension problems in listening.

Responses of interviewees do support the perceptions of the EFL learners concerning pronunciation as a factor which can affect ELC. Interviewee (12) voiced her dissatisfaction of her poor ELC due to pronunciation factor: **"lectures' pronunciation in our English department is familiar to me but I always forget what the word mean"**. Another interviewee claimed that: **"unclear pronunciation was problematic and vexing... I thought of certain words but it turned out that they were the other words instead"**.

"...EFL lectures need to expose their EFL learners (us) to easy, slow, clear pronunciations of native speakers".

"...I wish I could speak and listen to English as native speakers do. I personally can comprehend English listening from a native far much better than from a non-native speakers".

"...EFL university lectures teach their learners how to produce accurate pronunciation, listen effectively...".

"to me... the EFL lecture use long, difficult complex English which results in unclear pronunciation and boredom...".

Problems related to the lack of the use of listening strategies while listening:

EFL learners sometimes forget to apply listening strategies while listening. Inferencing, self-monitoring, translation and guessing strategies may lead to better ELC if will employed in an internalized automatic manner during listening.

In table (4), about 88% of the EFL participants reported that they always forgot to apply such listening strategies as they lack practice in that area.

Additionally, some EFL interviewees were in line with this attitude attributing that dilemma to the fact that *"they were neither taught to apply these listening strategies nor were they able to apply them"*.

Different views were voiced by EFL interviewees which are in line with the above dissatisfaction and severe criticism of the participants' ELC on account of the lack of employing listening strategies as follows:

- S (1): *"I am incapable of remembering it (inferencing strategy) and can't employ it"*.
- *"Sometimes I forget to remind myself to use listening strategies..."*.
- *"I wish I could employ English listening strategies as automatically as the case in Arabic"*.
- *"When I focus on a strategy of a sentence this becomes at the expense of the next one"*.
- *"Strategies are too complicated to apply... e.g. when I focus my attention on one sentence to comprehend fully; I still can't get much out of it"*.

- *S (2): "I actually used contextualization, S (4) elaboration, S (1) prediction.*
- *"I don't know what the speaker meant to say although I used the imagery strategy, but was left puzzled and confused".*

The above listening strategies could be unsuccessful either because they were applied after language skills were acquired during listening, S (4) indicated that *"I first believed that some English skills as vocabulary or grammar development were more important"*, or :

"In case I improve myself to remember more vocabularies, maybe I can use that strategy (getting the main idea) more smoothly".

Conclusion, Pedagogical Implication and recommendation:

English listening comprehension (ELC) is undoubtedly essential in (EFL) communication without which human oral contact would be impossible. The fact remains that ELC has remarkably been neglected in both research and practice until quite recently. Even now, we can't say that ELC research abounds in the literature when compared to that of reading comprehension.

At the Egyptian university level, and surely before that, ELC seems clearly to be the weakest skill and unsurprisingly, EFL encounter various kinds of listening problems. This study is conducted in the hope of finding out the factors and causes ELC problems and contributing some recommendations for both EFL teachers and learners to enhance and maximize the effectiveness of teaching and learning of ELC.

The results of this study show the following conclusions:

1. EFL students encounter various problematic issues of English listening comprehension ELC as follows:
 - Insufficient ELC teaching and training.
 - Unfamiliar words, long sentences, and difficult English spoken by the EFL university teaching staff,

speed rate, lack of concentration and interest, accents, redundancy, use of ELC listening strategies, frustration and boredom.

Implication of the Study:

The findings of this study have implications within the context of lecturing in EFL departments in Egypt. The problems revealed from this study indicate that much efforts need to be exerted by both EFL teachers and learners coping with these neglected ELC problems.

Implications for EFL Teachers:

EFL instructors have a crucial role in assisting EFL students surmounting their problems in ELC lectures. This help can take the form of developing the EFL students' ELC strategies as follows:

- EFL instructors can prepare their students for ELC lectures by impressing upon them the importance of oral communication skills via teaching them to ask, confer, discuss English topic in mutual ways, or sometimes, when appropriate, by training them to interrupt the flow of or let the EFL lecturer know if they do not understand something. This could be done in the form of role-play.
- Develop metastrategic awareness in order to help EFL learners how to become autonomous learners, Mendelson (1995).
- Finding out new strategies, select, the model practice,the appropriate one(s), and encourage students to practice their strategies on a variety of tasks on continuous basis (Chamot,1995).
- Train students to listen selectively to help them overcome feeling overloaded with the flow of incoming information. They can be trained in selecting important information and ignoring other pieces of information that do not affect understanding the main topic.

- Adapt and improve listening materials, encourage and train EFL students to use and activate their schematic listening comprehension through providing extensive listening exercises. Ridgeway(2000) suggests that by providing extensive listening practice through graded comprehensible input "sub skills will take care of themselves as they become automatized.
- EFL students should exploit the existence of the internet services related to ELC purposes to enhance their listening skill.

Implications for subject matter lectures:

The effect of the choice of sound content subject matter of ELC is of paramount results. EFL lectures could participate in facilitating EFL students' ELC lectures in several ways. Obviously, boredom is a psychological state which has its passive role on ELC. That state could be coped with successfully by EFL lectures through motivating and encouraging EFL students to be involved in various activities: asking questions, nominating individual students to participate in mutual discussion followed by short reports, requesting oral presentation on current events of topic interests.

EFL learners need to participate in negotiating of input in English between speaker and listener by (comprehension checks, clarification checks, repetition) which facilitate comprehension. Long, (1990).

Furthermore, listening for long periods to complex concepts affects comprehension. EFL lectures can be segmented into short chunks through longer pauses for reflections, lectures questions, use of audio-visual aids, and listener interaction asking questions, requesting clarification or group/pair activities as was demonstrated by Griffizhs (1992) that lecturers need to be advised to slow their speech rate down to a level that suits their students.

Difficult terminology and complex language are factors affecting ELC. Modifying the language to enhance ELC should be stressed by subject content lectures not for the sake of course oversimplification but rather that EFL learners would become more aware of the difficulties encountered in academic ELC and would be able to cope with their ELC problems.

References:

- (1) Anderson, J.R. (1995). **Cognitive Psychology and its Implications**. 4th ed. New York: Freeman.
- (2) Bekleyen, N. (2007). An Investigation of English Teacher Candidates Problems Related to Listening Skill. *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences*, 6 (21) 91-105. Retrieved form: <http://www.e-sosder.com/dergi/291-105.pdf>
- (3) Blau, E. (1990). The Effect of Syntax, Speed and Pauses on Listening Comprehension. *TESOL Quarterly*, 24, 746-53.
- (4) Boyle, J.P. (1984). Factors Affecting Listening Comprehension. *ELT Journal*, 38 (1), 4-38.
- (5) Brown, A.L. (1986-1995b). The Role of Metacognition in Reading and Studying. In Orasanu, J, *Reading Comprehension: from: Research to Practice*, Hillsdale, Erlbaum, N.J.
- (6) Brown, G. and Yale, G. (1983). **Teaching Spoken Language**. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- (7) Chamot, A.U. (1995). Learning Strategies and Listening Comprehension. In D. Mendelson & J. Rubin (Eds.). **A Guide for the Teaching of Second Language Listening**. San Diego, California: Dominic Press, 13-30.
- (8) Chaudrun, C. (1983). Simplification on Input: Topic Reinstatements and Their Effects on L2 Learners Recognition and Recall, **TESOL Quarterly** 17, 437-458.
- (9) Chiang, C. and Dunkel, P. (1992). The Effect of Speech Modification, Prior Knowledge, and Listening Proficiency on EFL Lecture Learning *TESOL Quarterly*, 26 (2), 345-374.

- (10) Derwing, T.M. & Rossiter, M.J. (2002). ESL Learners' Perceptions of Their Pronunciation Needs and Analysis. **Elsevier Science Direct**, 30, 155-166.
- (11) Derwing, T.M. (1989). Information Type and its Relation to Non-Native Speaker Comprehension. **Language Learning**, 39. 296-304.
- (12) Dunkel, P. (1991). Listening in the native and second / foreign language: Toward an Integration of Research and Practice. **TESOL Quarterly**, 25. (3).
- (13) English Language Learning and Teaching Wikipedia, **The Free Encyclopedia**.
- (14) Field, J. (2003). Promoting Perception: Lexical Segmentation in L2 Listening. **ELT Journal**, 57, 325-333.
- (15) Flowerdew, J. & Miller, L. (1996). Student Perceptions, Problems and Strategies in Second Language Lecture Comprehension. **RELC Journal**, 23, 60-80.
- (16) French, C. & Kasper, G. (1986). The Role of Comprehension in SLL. **Applied Linguistics**, 7, 257-74.
- (17) Goh, C. (2000). A Cognitive Perspective on Language Learners' **Listening Comprehension Problems. System**, 28, 55-75.
- (18) Goh. C.M. (2000). A Cognitive Perspective on Language Listening Comprehension Problems. **System** 28 (1), 55-75.
- (19) Griffiths, R. (1992). Speech Rate and Listening Comprehension: Further Evidence of the Relationship, **TESOL Quarterly**, Vol. 26, No. 2, Pp. 385-390.
- (20) Hassan, A.S. (2002). **Learners Perceptions of Listening Comprehension Problem, Language, Culture**, Curriculum, Vol. 13 (2).

- (21) Hassan, A.S. (2010). Learners' Perceptions of Listening Comprehension Problems. **Language, Culture and Curriculum** 13 (2), 137-153.
- (22) Jamashidnejjad, A. (2011). An Innovative Approach to Understating Oral problems in foreign language learning and communication, *J. of Academic and Applied Studies*, Vol. 1.
- (23) Johnson, Keith (2008). **An Introduction to Foreign Language Learning and Teaching** 2nd ed. Harlow, England: Pearson.
- (24) Llr, P. (1984). **Teaching Listening Comprehension**. Cambridge University Press.
- (25) Long, D.R. (1990). What You Don't Know Can't Help You: An Explanatory Study of Background Knowledge and Second Language Comprehension. **Studies in Second Language Acquisition**, 12, 65-80.
- (26) Lynch, T. & Mendelson, D. (2009). **Listening In Schmitt (Ed.) Introduction to Applied Linguistics**. London: Arnold. 181-196.
- (27) Lynch, T. (2009). **Teaching Second Language Listening**. Oxford.
- (28) Lynch, T. (2009). **Teaching Second Language Listening**. Oxford.
- (29) Lynck, T. & Mendelson, D. (2009). Listening in N. Schmitt (Ed.) **Introduction to Applied Linguistics**: Arnold. 181-196.
- (30) Mendelson, D. (1995). Apply Learning Strategies in the Second / Foreign Language Listening Comprehension Lesson. In Mendelson, D. & Robin, J. (Eds.) **A Guide for the Teaching of Second Language Listening**. San Diego: Domine Press.

- <http://www.khoanh.net/index.php>. Modules = News & Func. = Display & Sid...
- (31) Mendelson, D. (2001). Listening Comprehension: We've Come a Long Way, But... Contact (**Special Research Symposium**) 27, (2), 33-41.
- (32) Mendelson, D.J. (1994). Learning to listen : A strategy-based approach for the Second-Language Learner. San Diego: **Dominie Press**.
- (33) O'Malley, J.M. et al. (1989). Listening Comparison Strategies in Second Language Acquisition. **Applied Linguistics**, 10, (4), 418-437.
- (34) O'Mally, et al. (1989). Listening Comprehension Strategies in Second Language Acquisition. **Applied Linguistics** 10 (4), 418-437.
- (35) Oxford, R.L. (1990). Language Learning Strategies: **What Every Teacher Should Know**. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- (36) Pica, T. et al. (1987). The Impact of Interaction on Comprehension **TESOL Quarterly** (21), 737-58.
- (37) Ridgeway, T. (2000). Listening Strategies – 1 Beg Your Pardon. **ELT Journal**, 54, 179-185.
- (38) Rubin, J. (1994). A Review of Second Language Listening Comprehension Research. **Modern Language Journal**, 78, 199-221.
- (39) Rubins, J. (1996). Language Learning Strategies Instruction in Asia: Cooperative Autonomy? (**ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 409728**).
- (40) Seliger, H.W. & Shohamy, E. (1989). **Second Language Research Methods**. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- (41) Sheils, J. (1988). Communication in the Modern Language Classroom. Strasbourg, France: The Council of Europe (available from **Manhattan**

- Publishing Company**, I Corton Pt. Avenue, Box 650, Corton, NY 10520).
- (42) Tang, J. (2006). **Learners and Users of English in China**. English Today, 86, (22), 6-7.
- (43) Underwood, M. (1989). **Teaching Listening**. New York. Longman.
- (44) Vandergrift (2011). **Listening: Theory and Practice in Modern Foreign Language competence**. Retrieved December 1, 2011, from Center for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies: www.llas.ac.uk/resources/gpg/67
- (45) Vandergrift, L. (1992). **The Comprehension Strategies of Second Language (French) Learners**. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
- (46) Verderber, K.S. & Verderber, R.F. (2003). **Inter-act: Interpersonal Communication Concepts Skills and Context** (10th ed.) New York: Oxford University Press Inc.
- (47) Wu, X.J. & Mohamad, J.Z. (2013). English Listening Comparison Problems of Students from China Learning English in Malaysia, **Wu Xiao Juan et al. / Ling & Trans**. (57) 14009-14022.

