

**An-Najah National University
Faculty of Graduate Studies**

**The Difficulties Encountered by EFL
Learners in Listening Comprehension
as Perceived by ELC Students at the
Arab American University-Jenin**

**By
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**This Thesis is Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
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This thesis was defended successfully on 15/ 01/ 2015 and approved by

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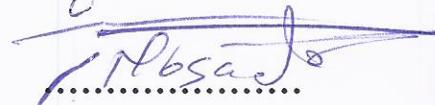
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III

Dedication

I dedicate this work:

To my Lord for being always there for me.

To Palestine, my country, for which is all my education and work.

To my family for their endless love, support and encouragement. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, Hasan and Ilham, for without their care, trust, and tenderness, none of this would happen.

To My sisters, Afkar, Irada and Majd, who have never left my side and are very special.

To my many friends, Rahma, Malak, Rimaa, Rana, Fardous and others who have always trusted and supported me in whatever I do. Special thanks for Nedaa Zohdi for helping me to finalize this work with all she could and always encouraging and standing by me.

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أنا الموقعة أدناه مقدمة الرسالة التي تحمل عنوان:

**The Difficulties Encountered by EFL
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الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلاب الذين يتعلمون اللغة
الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية في المهارات الاصغائية كما يراها طلاب
مركز اللغة الانجليزية في الجامعة العربية الامريكية في جنين

اقر بان ما اشتملت عليه هذه الرسالة إنما هي نتاج جهدي الخاص، باستثناء ما تمت
الإشارة إليه حيثما ورد، وأن هذه الرسالة ككل، أو أي جزء منها لم يقدم من قبل لنيل أي درجة
علمية أو بحث علمي أو بحثي لدى أي مؤسسة علمية أو بحثية أخرى.

Declaration

The work provided in this thesis, unless otherwise referenced, is the researcher's own work, and has not been submitted elsewhere for any other degree or qualification.

Student's Name: Ahkan Hasan Mohammed Assaf اسم الطالب:

Signature: أحمد التوقيع:

Date: 15/1/2015 التاريخ:

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the difficulties EFL students encounter in listening comprehension as perceived by ELC students at the AAUJ. The aims of the study were to identify the difficulties students face in listening comprehension and to study the relationship of the difficulties encountered by EFL students with students' academic level, academic year, gender, type of school and number of school years studying English.

In order to achieve the study objectives, the researcher developed a two different data collection instruments: A questionnaire and an interview. First, the questionnaire was developed and given to a sample of 189 EFL students studying at the English Language Center (ELC). The sample was chosen randomly. The interview then was held with 12 students chosen randomly from the sample of the study. It consisted of 4 questions. The researcher conducted this study on university-level students who take English courses at the English Language Center (ELC) at the Arab American University-Jenin (AAUJ). The sample consisted of (95) males and (94) females.

The results of the study showed that disability of word recognition, lacking background information about the topic, noises around, poor quality listening equipment and not enjoying the listening excerpt got high effect degree. In addition, speed rate of speech and gliding over words while speaking, which got a moderate effect degree in the questionnaire results, were the problems students stated in the interview.

Besides, the researcher found out that there were no significant differences in the difficulties students encountered in listening comprehension due to academic level, academic year, gender, type of school and number of school years studying English.

In the light of the findings of the study, the researcher recommended that more research should be conducted on the difficulties and importance of listening comprehension and strategies to improve listening comprehension. She also recommended that the ministry of education on the one hand and English teachers on the other hand have to pay attention to teaching listening skills at schools.

Chapter One

Introduction and Theoretical Background

1. **Introduction**
2. **Theoretical Framework**
3. **Statement of the Problem**
4. **Purpose of the Study**
5. **Questions of the Study**
6. **Significance of the Study**
7. **Limitations of the Study**
8. **Definition of Terms**
9. **Summary**

Chapter One

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

1. Introduction:

Since the following study is about the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension, it is important to have clear-cut image about what listening comprehension is. It is also needed to highlight how the process of listening comprehension works, and what strategies can be used in listening comprehension. In this section, definition of listening comprehension, the process of listening comprehension, the strategies of listening comprehension and the status of listening skills among other skills in L2 are discussed. Furthermore, this chapter includes statement of the problem, purpose of the study, questions of the study, significance of the study, originality of the study, limitations of the study and definition of terms.

2. Theoretical Framework:

What is Listening Comprehension?

Several scholars have defined what listening comprehension is. Most of these definitions have something in between. But others completely come with new concepts when defining listening comprehension. Here are a number of the definitions.

Howatt and Dankin (1974) stated that listening is the ability to identify and understand what others say. This includes the ability to understand the speaker's accent, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary and grasp his\her meaning. In fact, Chastain (1971) reported that listening comprehension is the ability to understand what the speaker says at normal speed in unstructured situations. Later, Friedman (2004) added that listening is an art, not a science. It has to do with mentally absorbing what is being spoken. It is not about hearing. It is deeper. Great listeners begin by developing their listening skills.

In addition, Mendelsohn (1994) pointed out that listening comprehension is a process where listeners are able to decipher the speakers' intention, process linguistic forms like the fast rate of speech and fillers, cope with listening in an interaction, understand the message of the text without understanding every single word, and realize different genres.

However, Anderson and Lynch (1988) stated that understanding is not merely dependent on the speaker, but the listener has a crucial role in understanding what is spoken in front of him\her. They commented that a listener needs to use his\her previous knowledge and relates it to the new knowledge so as to comprehend what is being spoken.

Similarly, Purdy (1997) defined listening comprehension as an active and dynamic process where listeners attend, perceive, interpret, remember, and respond to the utterances of the speakers. Likewise, Rost (2002) defined listening comprehension as a process of receiving what the

speaker says, constructing meaning, negotiating meaning with the speaker and responding in various ways depending on the purpose of the communication. Shen, Guizhou, Wichura, and Kiattichai (2007) added that listening comprehension involves listening for thoughts, feelings and intention, which requires active involvement, effort and practice.

In short, listening comprehension is a complex process where listeners need to be attentive in order to get the message of the talk. Knowledge of English Prosody, culture, vocabulary and structure is needed. Hence, lack of the above-mentioned knowledge could cause a break in listening comprehension, which is the subject of the current study.

What is the importance of listening skills?

Rost (1994), Nunan (2002), and Cohen and Macaro (2007) stated that more attention was directed to the importance of listening comprehension as a methodological concern in foreign language education according to the communicative and interaction-based approaches to language teaching.

Listening is the most common communicative activity in daily life. Morley (1991) stated that listening is the thing that people do most of their time. People listen more than they speak, read and write. Furthermore, Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) stated that of the total time spent on communicating, listening takes up 40-50%; speaking, 25-30%; reading, and writing, about 9%, which means that listening is crucial for

communication. Indeed, Wolvin and Coakley (1988) concluded that, both in and out of the classroom, listening consumes more of daily communication time than other forms of verbal communication.

Likewise, Gilbert (1988) noted that students in all educational stages were expected to listen 65-90 percent of the time. He (1997) added that listening is crucial to the lives of students throughout all levels of education. Ferris (1998) and Murphy (1991) assured that listening skills were the most frequently used in the classroom. Additionally, Ferris (1998) acknowledged the importance of listening comprehension for success in academic setting. Admittedly, it is clear that listening plays a crucial role in people's lives, especially students' lives since listening is their medium of learning a second language.

According to the input-based approach, listening can be a major skill helping in acquiring English language. Rost (1994) pointed out that listening provided input for learners. He stated that if students did not understand input at the right level, there would be no learning of the language. Just like the former, Krashen, Ehrman & Herzog (1984) claimed that acquisition did not occur unless students were exposed to enough language input.

In fact, Rost (1990) confirmed that listening was an input skill that should have been given more attention in classroom. He clarified that listening comprehension opened the door for EFL learners to absorb understandable input, which made it the prior skill among other skills.

Later, Coakley & Wolvin (1997) found out that listening was central for the lives of EFL students throughout all the stages of learning. More importantly, Coakley & Wolvin (1997), Ferris & Tagg (1996) and Ferris (1998) stressed the importance of listening comprehension for learners' success.

Additionally, listening skills are necessary for other language skills. Hasan (2000, P. 138) pointed out, "listening comprehension provides the right conditions for language acquisition and development of other language skills". A theory of Tomatis (1991) showed that "the quality of an individual's listening ability will affect the quality of both their spoken and written language development". He also viewed that listening to L2 sounds before seeing them in their written form helps learners integrate these sounds into their schemata. He stated that if it is easy for students to integrate the sounds of a language, it would be easy for them to understand and express language, first in speaking and then in writing.

The Process of Listening Comprehension:

Knowing the process and strategies of listening comprehension can be a rich resource for understanding why listening comprehension is difficult for EFL students. Any defect in the process of listening comprehension would lead to listening miscomprehension. Moreover, not using or misusing the strategies of listening comprehension could make the process of comprehension complex. The following is how listening comprehension works and what strategies are used while listening.

Rost (1991) stated that listening comprehension included several component skills. Those were discriminating sounds, recognizing words, identifying grammatical groupings of words, connecting linguistic cues to non-linguistic cues and paralinguistic cues, and using background knowledge.

Moreover, MacDonough & Shaw (1993) and Rost (1991) argued that any listener was a processor of the language. He\she went through three processes while listening. Listeners processed sounds by using perception skills. In addition, they processed meaning by using analysis skills. Furthermore, they processed the context of the listening text, physical setting, atmosphere, tone of speakers' speech, speakers, listeners, their roles, and their relationship to each other by using synthesis skills.

However, Underwood (1989), Brown (1994), and Vandergrift (1999) pointed out that listening comprehension process included active and complicated mental processes, interpretive and interactive. Listeners concentrate on the speech they hear in a particular language, recognize certain amount of vocabulary, grammar and structures, try to construct meaning out of the utterances, make sense of stress and intonation to have clearer meaning, and keep them in short-term memory before retrieving background knowledge and schema recorded in long-term memory to understand the whole spoken text in a particular context.

Strategies of listening comprehension:

Various literatures have highlighted the importance of explicit training to improve students' academic listening skills (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1996; Swan, 2011). Vandergrift (1999) identified strategies as techniques used to collaborate with others, verify understanding and lower anxiety. He also showed that listening strategy development is important for listening training because these strategies help the learners to guide their own learning.

O'Mally and Chamot (1990) indicated three main listening strategies: metacognitive, cognitive and social. Similarly, listening comprehension strategies were as follows (according to the strategy system summarized from Oxford (1995)). They were divided into direct ones and indirect ones. Direct strategies, directly dealing with the target language, are cognitive strategies which referred to understanding and generating new language; memory strategies which referred to keeping and recalling new input; and compensation strategies which referred to using linguistic and contextual clues. On the other hand, indirect strategies, that included metacognitive strategies, referred to planning, managing, mentoring or evaluating one's learning.

In fact, cognitive theory defines listening comprehension as information processing where the listener uses his\her schema to make sense of the given text. The listener uses linguistic and situational cues and expectations to evoke schemata. If the incoming information matches with

the evoked schemata, the listener succeeds in grasping the meaning of the text. If they do not match, either the information or the schema will be modified or discarded. According to the principle of schema, there are three modes of information processing: bottom-up processing, top-down processing and interactive processing.

More interestingly, Rubin (1994) reported that in the bottom-up process, the listener made use of his knowledge of sounds, words, syntax, and grammar to construct meaning. In fact, meaning is the last thing that is arrived at. The listener decoded phonemes and connected them to form words, connected words together to construct phrases, connected phrases together to construct utterances, and finally connected utterances to construct a meaningful, complete text. This process had its shortcomings since it mainly depended on one's linguistic knowledge. It did not take into consideration the listener's previous knowledge.

On the other hand, top-down processing refers to the use of background knowledge to comprehend the meaning of the message. Carell and Eisterhold (1983) commented that in this process, one made predictions around the meaning of the message based on background knowledge, and general schemata. Then he\she would search the input for information that would fit into these schemata. New input was considered as clues to help the listener construct meaning. If the new input was unfamiliar to the listener, it would not evoke schemata, and accordingly he\she would only depend of his\her linguistic knowledge.

The third information process is the interactive one. In the 1980s, it was known that top-down process was the one that improved L2 listening comprehension. Yet a new notion has lately been circulated that both bottom-up and top-down processes help in enhancing L2 listening comprehension. That has been called the interactive process, which combines both top-down and bottom-up processes. In other words, the interactive process includes the complex processing of background knowledge, contextual information and linguistic information, which makes comprehension and interpretation easy.

Another type of listening comprehension strategies is the metacognitive. Such strategies are self-regulated learning. An example of them is when a listener clarifies the objectives of a listening task. Metacognitive strategies can be discussed through pre-listening planning strategies, while-listening monitoring strategies, and post-listening evaluation strategies.

Not only the above mentioned strategies, but also there is the socio-affective strategies. These are non-academic in nature. They have to do with factors such as emotions and attitudes (Oxford, 1995). Vandergrift (1997) asserted that socio-affective strategies were the ones that helped listeners know how to reduce anxiety, feel confident in doing the listening tasks and promote personal motivation in improving listening competence. Moreover, O'Mally & Chamot (2001) assured that affective and social strategies affected listening comprehension immediately.

As well, Thampson & Rubin (1996) conducted a study on the effects of metacognitive and cognitive strategy instruction on the listening comprehension of American university students studying Russian. They found out that students who received strategy instruction were better in listening comprehension than students who received no instruction.

What is the Status of Listening Skills in Second Language Teaching?

Although listening is really important for foreign language learning, it has been neglected in EFL classes (Mendelsohn, 1994). A look at school textbooks and curricula, one can find that the most focused aspects of L2 are reading, vocabulary and grammar. Listening and speaking are ignored and poorly taught. Persulesy (1988) stated that the reason beyond this was that L2 teachers believed that listening was naturally and automatically acquired through the process of learning, especially when students learned to speak. Ina & Brian (2007) found that most teachers thought that listening was synonymous to breathing, i.e. it was automatic. Moreover, listening was not taken into consideration by teachers when teaching L2 because they could not tell whether or not their students were comprehending spoken English. They say that this was because incompetence in listening comprehension could be hidden by nodding or shaking heads. Furthermore, Osada (2004) reported that teachers did not pay attention to listening skills because they were not aware of its importance. Instead of teaching listening comprehension, teachers test students in listening.

Listening Comprehension in Palestine:

L2 Listening comprehension is also troubled in the Palestinian context. English language is a basic topic that is taught at schools and universities in Palestine. Teachers mostly use the traditional method in teaching English language. They focus on grammar and vocabulary. From among skills, they focus on reading. Little attention is given to writing. But speaking and listening are neglected. Students are not given the chance to speak using English language. In addition, students neither have the chance to listen to their teachers using English inside the classroom when explaining the lesson and giving instructions, nor they are given exercises to listen to native speakers speaking about different topics. Accordingly, students have a severe lack of listening, and speaking abilities.

As an English teacher, who has been teaching listening and speaking in multimedia labs in the English Language Center (ELC) at the Arab American University-Jenin (AAUJ) for five years, the researcher has noticed that students are really weak in listening comprehension. Students score the least marks in listening tests, which affects their average in English courses. Moreover, the researcher has realized that students panic when they are given a listening test and keep complaining before and after the test. In addition, they fail in maintaining concentration for a long time. The researcher has realized that listening comprehension is dilemma for EFL students.

This study intended to find out the difficulties encountered by EFL students from their own perceptive. It also intended to raise researchers', curriculum designers', Educationalists' and teachers' awareness of the problematic areas in listening comprehension, so that they can provide strategies to help students get better in listening comprehension. In short, this study is hoped to provide insights in listening comprehension for researchers, curriculum designers, educationalists, teachers and students.

3. Statement of the Problem:

The researcher has noticed that EFL students encounter difficulties in listening comprehension. They cannot recognize what is being spoken in front of them and do exercises based on it. Students score the lowest marks in listening exams. Not only that, but also students find difficulty in understanding what the teacher says in English language like the given instructions by the teacher. The researcher finds it important to explore the difficulties encountered by EFL learners in listening comprehension, so that she can find remedies to better students' listening comprehension.

4. Purpose of the Study:

This study aims to find out:

1. The difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension from the perspective of ELC students at the Arab American University-Jenin.

2. The effect of gender, academic level, academic year, school type and the number of school years studying English language on listening comprehension.

5. Questions of the Study:

1. What listening difficulties do EFL learners face when they listen to spoken English?
2. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to the Academic level?
3. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to their academic years?
4. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to their sex?
5. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to their school type?
6. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to the number of school years studying English Language?

6. Significance of the Study:

This study will open new doors for teachers in regard to L2 learning and draw the educationalists' attention to listening comprehension.

Since listening comprehension is vital for L2 learning, it is really important to highlight the difficulties and obstacles that face L2 learners in listening comprehension. In fact, knowing the reason behind a disease helps in curing it. Likewise, knowing why listening comprehension is difficult for EFL students helps teachers find the proper strategies that would improve students' listening comprehension and help them overcome the difficulties. Accordingly, listening skills, when improved, can be a major way to help students acquire L2 as shown in the introduction.

In addition, this study tries to find out what students think of the difficulties and obstacles they face while listening to English language. In fact, learners are the center of the educational process. Hence, it is crucial that students' voice is listened in regard to their own learning. Having students talk about their problems in listening comprehension would put the teaching process in the right track in regard to this issue.

Actually, teachers know nothing about what is going on in their students' minds. Blank faces can tell nothing. This is why the researcher conducts a listening difficulty questionnaire and an interview to be answered by students.

Moreover, the researcher tries to shed light upon new factors that would contribute to the difficulties encountered by EFL students. These are academic year, type of school, and number of school years students study English in.

7. Limitations of the Study:

This study has the following limitations:

1. Human limitation: This study is limited to the ELC students at the Arab American University-Jenin. The study includes students from different levels, beginning, intermediate and advanced.
2. Locative limitation: The Arab American University is the place where the study is conducted.
3. Temporal limitation: The study is conducted in the spring term in 2014.
4. Topical limitation: The study examines listening difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension as perceived by ELC students at the AAUJ.

8. Definition of Terms:

The following terms have the following meanings, wherever they come in this study:

- AAUJ: The Arab American University-Jenin-Palestine. It was established in 2000. The web page is: www.aauj.edu
- ELC: English Language Center at the Arab American University in Jenin. The center is in charge of making placement tests, according which the levels of students are determined.

- EFL: English as a Foreign Language. It is a term used in teaching English for nonnative speakers.
- Levels: The AAUJ holds a placement test for all fresh students, according which the students are classified into three levels: beginning, intermediate, advanced.
- Multimedia labs: labs of computers where students practice their listening skills through videos and recordings broadcasted to them by teachers. Based on these videos and listening texts, students do some exercises.
- Comprehension: This term is defined as the construction of meaning using both the decoded language and prior knowledge (Lunda, 1991).

9. Summary:

This chapter focused on theoretical background of listening comprehension. It explained how listening comprehension has been defined by several scholars, how it works in students' minds and what strategies students use while listening. It depicted how listening comprehension is a complex process. Moreover, this chapter highlighted the significance of listening skills and its status among other language skills. It also included statement of the problem, purpose of the study, questions of the study, significance of the study, originality of the study and limitations of the study. The chapter ended up with definitions of terms used in the study.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Factors Attributed to the Content and Linguistic Features of the Listening Text**
 - 2.1. Factors Attributed to Background Knowledge**
 - 2.2. Factors Attributed to Phonological Awareness**
 - 2.3. Factors Attributed to Word Recognition**
- 3. Factors Attributed to the Speaker**
- 4. Factors Attributed to the Listener**
- 5. Factors Attributed to the Physical Setting**
- 6. Summary**

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

1. Introduction:

For the sake of organization, systematicity, and clarity, the researcher arranged literature review topically; that is, titles and subtitles associated with listening difficulties. A lot of researchers and scholars conducted research on listening comprehension difficulties in the 20th and 21st centuries such as Conrad, 1989; Blau, 1990; Griffiths, 1992; Zhao, 1997; Rost, 2002; Goh, 2000; Chen, 2002. They tried to find out why listening comprehension was difficult for EFL students and what factors made listening comprehension a complex process.

Factors that Cause Difficulty in Listening Comprehension:

2. Factors Attributed to the Content and Linguistic Features of the Listening Text:

2.1. Factors Attributed to Background Knowledge

Underwood (1989) found out several factors beyond the difficulty faced by EFL students in listening comprehension. Underwood stated that lacking background information and contextual knowledge were a hindrance for listening comprehension. Students could understand surface meaning of what they were listening to, but they were still ignorant of the meant meaning. Graham (2006) also supported what Underwood reached

to. He revealed that unfamiliarity with the topic of the listening text was a constraining factor of listening comprehension.

In addition, Anderson and Lynch (2003) claimed that lack of background knowledge caused difficulty in listening comprehension. They stated that language was the means used by a community to express their culture beliefs, facts, ideas, rules, opinions, and lifestyle. Accordingly, if L1 learners are not aware of the different aspects of L2 culture, they would have problems in listening comprehension. Koichi (2002) gave an example on how lack of background knowledge could be a difficulty in listening comprehension. He stated that non-native speakers might not understand the cashiers in American supermarkets when they ask them about what type of bags they would like to have their purchases in. In fact, non-natives could know the meaning of bag, but it might be difficult for them to realize its meaning in this context, maybe because they have no such things in their cultures.

2.2. Factors Attributed to Phonological Awareness:

Rost (2002) argued that a source of listening problems was L2 learners' inability to identify L2 phonemes. In other words, they did not have knowledge of the prototypical phonemes of L2. So they could not recognize and process everything spoken in front of them. Flege & Eefting (1987) had explained that young learners, especially the ones aged less than seven years old, learned L2 prototypical sounds better than adults and older children. It was easy for them to create new phonetic categories though

they did not match L1 phonetic categories. But older learners created categories in terms of their L1 categories; new sounds were categorized within existing and relevant L1 categories. If they were different, it was difficult for them to recognize them. Accordingly, listeners find it difficult to comprehend what is spoken in front of them because they are not used to L2 pronunciation. In fact, they start learning the language at the age of seven.

In his research exploring listening comprehension problems faced by English majors, Yen (1987) listed the following as the most salient problems in listening comprehension: sound discrimination, sound stream division, stress and intonation, vocabulary, phrase and syntax. It is noticed that most of the problems Yen determined were related to pronunciation. Likewise, Rixon (1986) stated that the way words in English were pronounced was a problem encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension. When students were not familiar with how L2 words were pronounced, their recognition of these words was affected, and comprehension was affected accordingly.

2.3. Factors Attributed to Word Recognition:

Berendsen (1986) found out that word recognition was another reason why listening comprehension was complicated for EFL learners. Words in continuous speech were reduced and assimilated, not only within words themselves, but also across word boundaries. In fact, there are no clear boundary markers; one cannot recognize word beginnings and

endings. Furthermore, L2 listener failed to recognize a word because of form-meaning mismatch. L2 learners could know the form of a word, but they do not know its meaning. So they could not recognize spoken words. In short, lack of lexical knowledge made listening comprehension difficult for L2 learners.

Underwood (1989) argued that unfamiliar words and the inability to repeat these words were other reasons beyond the difficulty EFL learners faced in listening comprehension. Students were not free to stop the recording and repeat the words unfamiliar to them. Moreover, students knew a limited number of words. Accordingly, unfamiliar words hindered their ability to understand what was spoken in front of them. Moreover, Goh (2000) reported that there were ten clear problems in listening comprehension. Five of them referred to failure in word recognition and inability to concentrate in perceptual processing. The other five problems were related to L2 learners' weakness in parsing and using mental representation of parsed input. As well, Hasan (2000) pointed out that text factors constrained listening comprehension; for example, unfamiliar words, long, complex texts and difficult grammatical structures led to listening miscomprehension.

In addition, Chen (2002) examined 190 college students' problems in listening comprehension. He found out that the top five problems were the following. First, students focused on figuring out the meaning of part of the spoken text and missed what came next. Second, students were unable to

chunk streams of speech. Third, they did not recognize words they knew. Fourth, they were not certain about the key ideas of the text. Fifth, they were unable to form a mental representation from the words heard. Actually, the previously mentioned reasons are related to word recognition.

Besides, Yan (2007) argued that there were ten common problems that hindered listening comprehension. She stated that having too many new words, not knowing the meaning of new words, not being able to remember what the speaker had said, not being familiar with the topic of the listening text, and not being able to identify the main ideas of the listening text were the barriers students encountered in listening comprehension.

Likewise, in a study they conducted on university international students learning English listening comprehension (ELC) in University Sains Malaysian (USM) in China, Abidin & Juan (2013) found out that the most salient problem encountered by ELC students was the lack of prior knowledge in English vocabulary. Similarly, Sun (2002) stated that the problem blocking students' listening comprehension was that students forgot the meaning of some words while listening, and they could not remember what had been said.

3. Factors Attributed to the Speaker:

Listening comprehension is difficult when students listen to recordings, i.e. they listen to a spoken text without watching the speaker

speaking. Not seeing the speaker's body movement and facial expressions made listening comprehension difficult. In fact,

Brown (1994) reported that the speaker's body movement and stressed syllables were linked. Accordingly, those movements were helpful for the listener because stress was always placed on words that carry the main information of the spoken text. That helped the listener understand the message of what was spoken before him/her. Furthermore, Rixon (1981) asserted that seeing the speaker while speaking was a way through which language was redundant. Gestures and facial expressions reinforced the linguistic output of the speaker

Another difficulty encountered by EFL learners was that there were less pauses in spoken texts. In fact, the more pauses were there in a text, the better understanding was accomplished by students. However, students were not able to understand what is spoken before them when the speaker did not pause enough while speaking. Thus, Nakic (1981) stated that pauses teachers have while giving lectures aided the quantity of note-taking done by students. Larsen-Freeman and Long (1993) stated that the inclusion of pauses in speech facilitated listening more than reducing the rate of speech did. In addition, Korst (1997) concluded that including pauses to normal-speed speech facilitated greater comprehension

On the other hand, other scholars spoke about the rate of speech and its effect on listening comprehension. Literally, Rost (1990) found out that the speed rate of speech should not have been a concern when teaching

listening comprehension, except at the lowest levels of L2 proficiency. Similarly, Ellis (1994) commented that the speed of delivery was an effect of the difficulty in listening comprehension. Non-natives perceive speech as fast because they do not understand it. In fact, utterances are delivered at a natural speed rate, but non-natives do not realize this. He hinted that reducing the word rate did not increase comprehension.

However, Brown (1989) reached to an opposite conclusion. He stated that the faster rate of speech affected negatively on comprehension. Likewise, Korst (1997) conducted a study where students were allowed to control the speech rates of the input texts delivered by computers. He found out that slower speech rates led to better comprehension. Underwood (1989) pointed out that the rate of speed at which L2 speakers speak was one factor that hindered listening comprehension. Students found it difficult to construct meaning out of the information delivered quickly and could not control how quick speakers were.

Additionally, the findings of Flowerdew's and Miller's study (1996) pointed out that the top five obstacles in listening comprehension were speed of delivery, new terminology and concepts, difficulties in concentrating and problems related to the physical environment. Correspondingly, Hasan (2000) conducted a study on 81 intermediate EFL students to identify listening comprehension problems in Syria and reached to the conclusion that the clarity of the spoken language played a crucial role in listening comprehension.

Recently, Osuka (2008) found out that the impairing factors of the Japanese' listening comprehension referred to the fast rate of speech and the inability to perceive English sounds. Correspondingly, in her research conducted on EFL students at Al Yarmouk University, Ja'fr (2013) realized that English accent, colloquial expressions, pronunciation, lack of time, fast rate of speech, and limited knowledge of vocabulary and structure of sentences were the problems that hindered EFL learners in listening comprehension most.

Furthermore, just as the previously mentioned factors are related to the speaker, there are still other factors that would cause a break in listening comprehension. For example, different speakers use different accents, which is not easy for students to understand (Abidin & Juan 2013). Moreover, speakers mostly use colloquial language that is not taught at the school context.

4. Factors Attributed to the Listener:

Ur (1984) and Fearch & Kasper (1986) revealed that listening breaks down when L2 learners try to achieve a complete understanding of the utterance. L2 learners were characterized that they were anxious not to miss a meaning of a word while listening. They were not used to the English prosody. In addition, L2 learners did not realize the changes speakers made in their speaking rate and pitch to indicate important information. Accordingly, they missed an important strategy that would make listening comprehension easier. Underwood (1989) also reported that what made

listening difficult was unfamiliarity with discourse markers and the signals used by the speakers when moving from one point to another in informal contexts. Those signals and markers had to do with a change in the pitch and different intonation patterns.

Furthermore, Underwood (1989) added that students were intolerant to vagueness and incompleteness; accordingly, listening was difficult for them. Students lost interest and felt stressed when they could not understand every single word of what was being spoken in front of them. Actually, that referred to the way teachers taught. Teachers focused on making students understand every word they said by repeating what they said, speaking slowly, and pronouncing every word clearly.

Similarly, Hedge (2006) stated that what made listening difficult was that students did not realize the fact that it was not necessary to understand every single word in the listening excerpt so as to understand the whole meaning. Also Vandergrift (2011:455) explained, "...it is thus sometimes necessary for students to tolerate vagueness and incompleteness of understanding."

Additionally, Underwood (1989) agreed that another barrier of listening comprehension was the lack of visual support. EFL learners listen to recordings without seeing the facial expression and body language of the speaker, which causes a difficulty in listening comprehension. They stated that paralinguistic and language have a strong relationship. He asserted that seeing the speaker's gestures, reactions, facial expressions, body language,

physical setting, and appearance fostered EFL learners' understanding of what is being spoken in front of them.

More interestingly, Ur (2000) explained that listening comprehension was difficult for EFL learners because what they listened to in the classroom was different from real life communication situations. In the classroom, there was repetition. The teacher repeated the listening text more than one time, so that students could answer the assigned tasks. But in daily situations, when having a conversation, listening to the radio, watching a program on television etc., a listener did not have the chance to keep repeating what the speaker said. Maybe a speaker could repeat what he\she said for one more time, but not more than that. In a capsule, since EFL learners are not exposed to authentic listening situations, their listening practice is going to be in vain, and listening comprehension will be difficult.

Besides, Moran (2005) commented that EFL learners found it easy to understand the discourse of their teachers since they were used to it and had been listening to it for long. But listening to audio script was difficult for them because they had never received guidance on how to listen and what strategies to use.

As well, Khanchali (2005) argued that listening comprehension was difficult because students were not used to the nature of English language. English language is a stressed language. It spends more time on specific words, which are important. But it quickly glides over other words, which

are not important. EFL Arab students found it difficult to comprehend what was said because they thought that they had to understand every single word in the spoken text so as to have a full understanding of the text. They had no idea that understanding the message did not necessarily require understanding every spoken word. That created a difficulty for them in processing what they were listening to. Khanchali accordingly stated that both teachers and students alike needed to get acquainted with which words were stressed and which were not in English language. Not only that, but Goh (2000) also found out that the level of students interfered in their listening comprehension; low-achievers were not as good as high-achievers. Lin (2000) reached to a similar conclusion. He differentiated between high-achievers and low achievers in regard to listening comprehension. He found out that the major factors affecting listening comprehension for high-achievers were different from those of low achievers. Inability to understand slang language and being distracted were what made listening comprehension difficult for high-achievers. However, keeping up with the speaker's fast speaking pace was what made listening comprehension broke down for low achievers.

Furthermore, Teng (2002) studied 95 technology institute students' listening comprehension difficulties. He found out that the factor that had the highest frequency was students' proficiency. Then came the speaker's clarity and the listening concentration. Besides, Yang & Chen (2007) stated that the main source of difficulty encountered by junior college students was the listener him\herself. Their proficiency level controlled their

comprehension. Also Limited repertoire of vocabulary hindered students' listening comprehension. He revealed that low-level students attributed the weakness in listening comprehension to personal factors, while higher level students said that the difficulty they faced in comprehension referred to the text itself.

However, Golchi (2012) realized that older students in his study were better in listening comprehension than younger ones. He referred this to the fact that the more students were exposed to the language and to training, the better they were in listening comprehension. Age has a positive correlation with listening comprehension

Last but not least, King & Behnke (2003) stated that anxiety levels during listening activities impaired listening comprehension. Students' feelings were negatively affected while listening to the audio script, and their anxiety decreased when the listening task was about to finish. Moreover, those negative feelings led to disliking the listening task and accordingly not concentrating on what is being spoken.

5. Factors Attributed to Physical Setting:

Watson and Smeltzer (1984) and Yagang (1994) pointed out that other listening comprehension barriers were noises, whether those noises that originated from the surrounding environment or the ones that emerged from the listening equipment. Examples of these noises are phones ringing, a knock on the door, poor-quality equipment, background noises, volume

control, etc. They commented that those sounds disturbed EFL learners' comprehension and took their minds' off the content of the listening passage.

Likewise, Hasan (2000) stated that it was difficult for students to concentrate while listening if there were distractions. Of course, any break in their attention could distract them and impair their listening comprehension. He added that when listeners were not interested in the listening excerpt and when they were asked to give full and complete answers, listening comprehension turned to be a difficult task.

In a capsule, the above-mentioned studies found out that the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension included: Inability to identify phonemes, word recognition, trying to achieve complete understanding of the listening text, speed rate of speech, EFL students' level of proficiency, the listener himself\herself, inability to concentrate, new terminology, and complex texts. In other words, previous research attributed difficulties in listening comprehension to factors related to the listener, speaker, text, and linguistic features of the language. The researcher is going to ensure whether or not those obstacles hinder students' listening comprehension in the Palestinian context. More importantly, the researcher will study the effect of factors that have not been studied before on listening comprehension such as gender, academic year, type of school, and number of school years studying English.

6. Summary:

This chapter reviewed the related literature to listening comprehension problems. Studies referred the difficulties encountered by students to several factors: linguistic features of the language, the listener, the speaker, the content of the listening text and the physical setting where students listen.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Procedures

1. **Introduction**
2. **Methodology**
3. **Questions of the Study**
4. **Instrumentation**
5. **Questionnaire**
6. **Follow-up Interview**
7. **Validity of the Questionnaire**
8. **Validity of the Interview**
9. **Reliability of the Questionnaire**
10. **Techniques of Data Collection and Analysis**
11. **The Questionnaire**
12. **The Interviews**
13. **Population of the Study**
14. **Sample of the Study**
15. **Variables of the Study**
16. **Summary**

Chapter Three

Methodology and Procedures

1. Introduction:

This chapter comprises three sections. The first section describes the methodology and data gathering instruments. The second section discusses the techniques of data analysis and the complete procedures taken in the data collection. The third section introduces the target population and sample.

2. Methodology:

This research is a practical one that employs descriptive quantitative and qualitative research methods. The purpose of this research is to find out the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension as perceived by ELC students at the Arab American University. To achieve this goal, and in attempt to answer the research questions presented below, the researcher collected data through using two tools, a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview administered for EFL students taking courses at the ELC at the Arab American University-Jenin. The data collected were analyzed statistically (questionnaire data) and qualitatively (interview data).

3. Questions of the Study:

1. What listening difficulties do EFL learners face when they listen to spoken English?

2. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to the Academic level, beginning, intermediate and advanced?
3. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to their academic years, first year, second year, third year, fourth year?
4. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to their gender?
5. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to their school type (private, public)?
6. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to the number of school years studying English Language (12 years, 8 years, less than 8 years.)?

4. Instrumentation:

As aforementioned, the study was carried out with descriptive quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The instruments used in this study were a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview with the subjects. These instruments are described in details below.

5. Questionnaire:

The first instrument which was employed in this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to get information about the difficulties the students faced in EFL listening. The items of the questionnaire were mainly adapted from two questionnaires. The first one was used in a thesis titled as "Listening Comprehension Problems - Voices from the Classroom" by Arafat Hamouda. The second one was the instrument of another thesis titled as "Beliefs on English Language Listening Comprehension Problems" by Ghazal Lotfi. More items were added to the research questionnaire after a review of the literature ((Boyle, 1984; Yagang, 1994; Underwood, 1989; Rubin, 1994; Dunkel, 1991).

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section one contained 5 questions to collect personal information about the participants. Section two included 51 items grouped into seven categories: listening importance perception, linguistic aspects, lack of concentration, speaker, listener and physical setting. The answers were recorded on 5point Likert scale (Strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree).

6. Follow-up Interview:

The interview was written and held by the researcher. It consisted of (5) open-ended questions. It was conducted after reviewing related literature and considering the comments and suggestions of three experienced teachers in the field of TEFL. The interview was given

to complement the questionnaire, so students did not feel restricted in their answers. The interview, however, was given to 12 students who were chosen randomly from the chosen sample. The interview was conducted in Arabic in order to get further clarification of the items emerging from the open-ended questions. It was recorded and then transcribed. Moreover, by providing opportunities for learners to report in their own words, we might gain some insights into their understanding of and attitude towards some of those difficulties (Ritchie & Lewis 2003, p.138). In short, the learner's voice can be very valuable to our understanding of their comprehension difficulties.

7. Validity of the Questionnaire:

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, it was given to a jury in the field of TEFL from the Arab American University- Jenin and from An-Najah National University to examine the structure, logical flow of the questionnaire, the wording, clarity, length, and the order of the questions.

They accepted the items of the questionnaire in general but suggested some modifications. They suggested modifications in mechanics of writing such as the way the items are expressed (sentence structure and sentence ambiguity). They also suggested that the researcher divide the items of the questionnaire into domains to make the questionnaire clearer. They advised that more items should be added to the questionnaire. Hence, the initial draft of the questionnaire of English Listening Comprehension Problems consisted of 45 items, but the second draft contained 51 items that made

balance among the seven domains of the questionnaire. Moreover, they suggest that the researcher be consistent in the way the items are expressed. The researcher then made some modifications based on their comments.

8. Validity of the Interview:

After reviewing related literature, the researcher conducted the interview questions. She showed the questions to a jury from the Arab American University- Jenin and An Najah National University- Nablus. They assured that the content of the questions was good and it gave students the chance to express the difficulties they encountered in listening comprehension better and more freely. They recommended that all the questions were written as open-ended ones to avoid short answers. Thus the interview questions could complement the questionnaire.

9. Reliability of the Questionnaire:

The reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) was calculated as an indicator of homogeneity to the level of instrument as a whole. The value of Cronbach Alpha for all items was 90%, which is statistically acceptable.

10. Techniques of Data Collection and Analysis:

As mentioned above, data was collected using questionnaire and interview. The data collection was completed from May 15, 2014 to May 25, 2014. This section discusses the complete procedure taken in the data gathering and the techniques of data analysis.

The total population was 1\3 the students attending the Arab American University Jenin for each semester. Yet the researcher only administered the questionnaire to 189 EFL students during class time. The subjects were asked to identify their listening problems by responding to statements arranged on the basis of the five-point scale (Strongly agree, agree, neutral, strongly disagree and disagree). Oral instructions were given (in English and in Arabic) to the respondents by the researcher herself to avoid any misunderstanding. Finally, the data obtained from the questionnaire was presented and frequencies and percentages were calculated.

To analyze the students' responses to the questionnaire items, the researcher used the following: Basic statistical description through means, standard deviations, percentages, One Way ANOVA, and independent t-test. Furthermore, the interview responses were analyzed qualitatively.

The interview was conducted on May 27, 2014 after three days of administering the questionnaire. 12 students volunteered to be interviewed. Each participant was interviewed in the researcher's office at the English Language Center at the Arab American University-Jenin. The participants were allowed to respond in Arabic, so that they could speak freely. All

participants were interviewed in the same time; hence, the interview lasted for 45 minutes.

At the interview, the students responded to four open-ended questions, which the researcher had prepared, regarding the students' past experience of English listening comprehension, their learning process of English listening skills, their use of listening strategies and the listening difficulties they encountered in the EFL listening. At the time of the interview, the researcher encouraged the learners to talk about specific EFL listening experiences. The researcher asked students to describe in details the problems they faced and to think about the reasons why such difficulties emerged. The teacher kept asking questions and triggering students to respond and interact.

After the interview finished, the data was transcribed and analyzed. In the analysis, a numerical system was applied to identify each data entry. Each participant students was given a letter and a number; for example, the first students to speak and answer was assigned the code "S1".

11. Population of the Study:

The population of the study consisted of all male and female students who study English at the English Language Center (ELC) at the Arab American University-Jenin (AAUJ) for the scholastic year 2013-1014, spring semester. It included all the students from the different levels

in English language, beginning, intermediate and advanced as they were classified based on a placement test.

12. Sample of the Study:

Subjects of the study were randomly chosen, a simple random sample. The sample consisted of 189 male and female students who studied beginning, intermediate, and advanced English at the English Language Center at the Arab American University. Their ages ranged from 17-22 years old. The study took place during the spring semester of the scholastic year 20132014. The English courses offered to students included listening and speaking material given to students in multimedia labs by teaching assistants.

Before starting their university education, all of the students had to take a placement exam, which consists of multiple choice test items mainly focusing on reading, vocabulary, grammar, and listening. Based on this test, students are divided into advanced, intermediate and beginning levels, and different listening and speaking material is given to students accordingly.

The sample was distributed according to five independent variables. Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 show the distribution of the sample according to five variables: gender, academic level in English, academic year, type of school, and number of school years studying English.

A. Gender

Table (1): Sample distribution according to gender variable:

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	95	50.3
Female	94	49.7
Total	189	100.0

As seen from the above table, the study frequencies are: (95) for the male participants and (94) for the female participants, which means that the male participants composed %50.3 while female participants composed %49.7.

B. Academic Level in English:

Table (2): Sample distribution according to academic level in English variable:

Academic level in English	Frequency	Percentage
Advanced English level	67	35.4
Intermediate English level	65	34.4
Beginning English level	57	30.2
Total	189	100.0

As seen from the above table, the study frequencies are: (67) for the advanced level students, which means that the advanced level students composed %35.4; (65) for the intermediate level students, which means that the intermediate level students composed %34.3; (57) for the beginning level students, which means that the beginning level students composed %30.2. While (189) for the total, which means that the total number of students composed %100.

C. Academic year:**Table (3): Sample distribution according to academic Level variable:**

Academic year	Frequency	Percent
First year	144	76.2
Second year	38	20.1
Third year	3	1.6
Fourth year	4	2.1
Total	189	100.0

As seen from the above table, the study frequencies are: (144) for first year students, which means that first year students composed %76.2; (38) for second year students, which means that second year students composed %20.1; (3) for third year students, which means third year students composed %1.6; (4) for fourth year students, which means that four year students composed %2.1.

D. Type of school:**Table (4): Sample distribution according to type of school variable:**

Type of school	Frequency	Percentage
Public School	159	84.1
Private School	30	15.9
Total	189	100.0

As seen from the above table, the study frequencies are: (159) for public school students, which means public school students composed %84.1; (30) for private school students, which means private school students composed %15.9, while (189) for the total, which means that the total number of students composed %100.

F. Number of school years studying English:

Table (5): Sample distribution according to number of school years studying English variable:

Number of school years studying English	Frequency	Percent
12 years	136	72.0
8 years	35	18.5
less than 8 years	18	9.5
Total	189	100.0

As seen from the above table, the study frequencies are: (136) for the students studying English for 12 years, which means these students composed %72; (35) for the students studying English for 8 years, which means that they composed %18.5; (18) for the students studying English for less than 8 years, which means this last group of students composed %9.5, while (189) for the total, which means that the total number of students composed %100.

15. Variables of the Study:

This study included the following variables:

1. The independent variables:

- Gender variable which is divided into two levels: males and females.
- Academic level in English variable which is divided into three levels: Advanced, Intermediate and beginning English.
- Academic year variable which is divided into four levels:

- a. First year b. second year c. third year d. fourth year.
- Type of school variable which is divided into two levels:
 - a. Public school b. private school.
- Number of school years studying English variable which is divided into three levels:
 - a. Less than 8 years b. 8 years c. 12 years.

2. Dependent variables:

Students' perspectives

13. Summary :

Chapter three cleared how the researcher collected data about the difficulties encountered by EFL learners. Methodology, tools, variables, and sample and population of the study were explained in this chapter.

Chapter Four

Results of the Study

1. **Introduction**
2. **Results Related to the First Tool of the Study (Questionnaire):**
 - 2.1. **Results Related to the Main Question**
 - 2.2. **Results Related to Sub-Questions**
3. **Result Related to the Second Tool of the Study (Interview)**
4. **Summary**

Chapter Four

Results of the Study

1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study. The first section reports the findings of the questionnaire of listening difficulties. The second section reports the findings of the semi-structured interview held with 12 EFL students chosen from the sample of the study.

2. Results Related to the First Tool of the Study (Questionnaire):

2.1. Results Related to the Main Question:

1. What listening difficulties do EFL learners studying at the ELC at the AAUJ face when they listen to spoken English?

It is considered the main question because the main purpose of the questionnaire is to find out the difficulties encountered in listening comprehension as perceived by EFL learners studying at the ELC at the AAUJ.

This question generates the following sub questions:

2. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to the Academic level, beginning, intermediate and advanced?

3. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to their academic years, first year, second year, third year, fourth year?
4. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to their sex?
5. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to their school type (private, public)?
6. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to the number of school years studying English Language (12 years, 8 years, less than 8 years.)?

To answer the major question, the researcher used descriptive analysis (mean, standard deviation and percentages). The average for each item in all questionnaire domains and the total responses for each domain were used as table (6) below shows.

To explain the results, the Likert Scale is used:

(%80-%100) very high degree of response

(%70-%79.9) high degree of response

(%60-%69.9) moderate degree of response

(%50-%59.9) low degree of response

(Less than %50) very low degree of response

Table (6): The average and effect degree of the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension as perceived by ELC students at the Arab American University-Jenin (AAUJ) according to the domains and total.

No.	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Effect Degree
First Domain: Students' perception of the importance of listening skills.						
1.	I am aware of the perceived importance of English listening skill.	189	4.5	.87	89.5	Very high
2.	I find that listening comprehension is difficult.	189	2.9	1.4	57.3	Low
3.	I find that listening comprehension is boring.	189	2.3	1.3	45.1	Very low
4.	I find that listening comprehension is exciting.	189	3.7	1.1	73.3	High
5.	I received sufficient training in English listening comprehension at my school.	189	2.4	1.2	47.5	Very low
6.	I never heard of listening strategies.	189	3.0	1.4	60.9	Medium
	Total score of the difficulties due to their perception of the importance of listening comprehension.	189	3.1	.42	62.3	Medium
Second Domain: Listening problems related to the content of the listening text						
7.	I find it difficult to understand listening texts in which there are too many unfamiliar words.	189	3.6	1.3	71.7	High
8.	I find listening comprehension difficult when the spoken text contains jargon.	189	3.4	1.2	68.5	Moderate

9.	I find listening comprehension difficult when the spoken text contains idioms.	189	3.1	1.4	61.6	Moderate
10.	I find Listening comprehension difficult when utterances contain slang expressions.	189	2.6	1.3	51.3	Low
11.	I find listening comprehension difficult when the text contains complex grammatical structures.	189	3.5	1.2	70.3	High
12.	I find listening comprehension difficult when I listen to long spoken texts.	189	2.9	1.4	58.4	Low
13.	I feel tired when I listen to a long spoken text.	189	3.1	1.5	62.6	Moderate
14.	I feel distracted when I listen to a long spoken text.	189	3.5	1.3	69.4	Moderate
15.	I find it difficult to understand listening texts when the topic is unfamiliar.	189	3.4	1.3	68.6	Moderate
16.	I use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the spoken text.	189	3.6	1.2	71.8	High
17.	I find it difficult to understand every single word of incoming speech.	189	3.3	1.3	66.4	Moderate
18.	I find it difficult to understand the whole listening passage.	189	2.7	1.3	53.7	Low
	Total score of the difficulties due to the content of the listening text	189	3.2	.8	64.5	Moderate
Third Domain: Listening problems related to Linguistic features						
19.	I find pronunciation familiar but cannot recognize the words.	189	3.1746	1.28667	63.4	Moderate

20.	I cannot recognize words I know while listening.	189	2.8095	1.90903	54.0	Low
21.	I find it difficult to recognize the signals, which indicate that the speaker is moving from one point to another.	189	2.6667	1.29237	53.3	Low
22.	I stop listening and start thinking about the meaning of the word when encountering an unknown word	189	3.3915	2.48937	64.6	Moderate
23.	I find it difficult to infer the meaning of an unknown word while listening.	189	3.1905	1.35494	63.8	Moderate
24.	I find it difficult to follow the sequence of the spoken text when the sentences are too long and complex.	189	3.4550	1.21792	69.1	Moderate
	Listening problems related to Linguistic features	189	3.1146	.93657	62.2	Moderate
Fourth Domain: Listening problems caused by the failure to concentrate						
25.	I lose focus of the talk when I have an expected answer in my mind.	189	3.10	1.3	63.9	Moderate
26.	I am unable to concentrate because I look for the answers and listen to the dialogue at the same time.	189	3.4	1.3	67.9	Moderate
27.	I lose my concentration when the text is too long.	189	3.2	1.4	63.1	Moderate
28.	I lose my concentration if the recording is in a poor quality.	189	3.9	1.1	78.4	High
29.	I lose the flow of speech because I concentrate very hard on understanding every word or phrase I hear.	189	3.5	1.2	69.4	Moderate
	Total score of the difficulties caused due to the failure to concentrate	189	3.4	.83	68.5	Moderate

Fifth Domain: Listening problems related to listener						
30.	I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the spoken text from the first listening.	189	3.3	1.3	66.3	Moderate
31.	I find it difficult to predict what would come next at the time of listening	189	2.9	1.4	57.7	Low
32.	I stop listening when I have problems in understanding a listening text.	189	3.1	1.4	61.5	Moderate
33.	I find it difficult to recognize the words I know because of the way they are pronounced.	189	3.3	1.3	66.7	Moderate
34.	I find it difficult to tell where one word finishes and another begins. There are words that I would normally understand in writing, but when I hear them in a stream of speech	189	3.3	1.4	65.7	Moderate
35.	I feel anxious when I listen to spoken texts.	189	2.10	1.4	59.2	Low
36.	I find listening comprehension difficult when I am not interested	189	3.4	1.3	68.5	Moderate
37.	I find listening comprehension difficult when I feel tired.	189	3.4	1.3	68.1	Moderate
38.	I fear that I cannot understand what I will hear before doing listening comprehension tasks.	198	3.2	1.3	63.0	Moderate
39.	I find it difficult to answer WH questions that require giving a long answer.	198	3.1	1.4	62.9	Moderate
	Total score of difficulties caused due to the listener himself\ herself	189	3.2	.9	64.0	Moderate

Sixth Domain: Listening problems related to the speaker						
40.	I find it difficult to understand the natural speech which is full of hesitation and pause.	189	3.6	3.2	68	Moderate
41.	I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly.	189	3.7	1.1	73.7	High
42.	I find it difficult to understand the meaning of the spoken text without seeing the speaker's body language.	189	3.1	1.3	61.7	Moderate
43.	I have difficulty understanding speakers with unfamiliar accents.	189	3.6	1.2	72.1	High
44.	I find it difficult to understand when speakers speak too fast.	189	3.8	1.1	76.9	High
45.	I find it difficult to understand the recorded material if it is not repeated.	189	3.4	1.35	67.0	Moderate
46.	I find it difficult to understand the listening text when the speaker does not pause long enough.	189	3.2	2.6	60.8	Moderate
47.	I find it difficult to understand spoken texts that have unfamiliar stress and intonation patterns	189	2.10	1.4	59.3	Low
	Total score of the difficulties caused due to the speaker	189	3.4	1.0	68.4	Moderate

Seventh Domain: Listening problems related to the physical setting						
48.	I find it difficult to concentrate with noises around.	189	4.3	4.3	80.9	Very high
49.	I find it difficult to understand English when there are unclear sounds resulting from a poor quality CD-player.	189	3.8	1.2	76.2	High
50.	I find it difficult to concentrate when the room is not conditioned.	189	3.2	1.3	64.7	Moderate
51.	I find it difficult to understand English when there are unclear sounds resulting from poor acoustic conditions of the classroom.	189	3.6	1.4	71.2	High
	Total score of the difficulties caused due to the physical setting	189	3.7	1.3	74.3	High
	Total Average	189	3.3	.6	66.3	Moderate

First Domain: Students' Perception of the Importance of Listening Skills:

The first domain of the questionnaire examined the students' perception of the importance of listening skills since being aware of the importance of listening skills would hinder or facilitate their listening comprehension.

It is clear from table (6) that the effect degree is very high for the statement (1), the percentage of which is %89.5. The effect degree is high for the statement (4), the percentage of which is %73.3. The effect degree is moderate for the statement (6), the percentage of which is %60.9. The effect degree is low for the statement (2), the percentage of which is %57.3. The degree effect is very low for the statements (3, 5), the percentages of which are respectively %45.1 and %47.5. The percentage of the average of all statements is %62.3 with a moderate effect degree.

This indicates that the highest percentage of students are aware of how much listening comprehension is important. They find that listening is exciting and refuse the idea that listening is boring, which is stated in item (3) that received very low effect degree. Also %60 of students agreed that they have never heard of something called listening strategies that would help them in listening. Moreover, students' response towards receiving sufficient training in listening comprehension at their schools is very low. Yet it is surprising that students' response is low towards considering

listening comprehension difficult despite the fact that students face difficulties in listening comprehension as this study shows.

Second Domain: Listening Problems Related to the Content of the Listening Text

After examining students opinion on how much listening comprehension is important, it was essential to investigate their perspectives towards the problems related to the content of the listening excerpt that they encounter when they have a listening exercise.

It is clear from the above table that the effect degree is high for statements (7, 11, and 16). This means that unfamiliar words and complex grammatical structure in the listening text make comprehension difficult for them. However, students still try to understand the meaning of the text by using their background knowledge of the listening text topic as stated in item (16). The percentages of the above-mentioned statements are %71.7, %70.3 and %71.8.

On the other hand, the effect degree is moderate for the statements (8, 9, 13, 14,15, 17), the percentages of which range from %61.6- %69.4. This result means that $\frac{2}{3}$ of the students find it difficult to digest texts that contain jargon, and idioms, and texts of unfamiliar topics. Moreover, tiredness and distraction are other factors that hinder their listening comprehension. Furthermore, Students don't feel OK about not understanding every single word of the incoming speech.

Finally, the effect degree is low for the statements (10, 12, 18), the percentages of which are %51.3, %58.4, %53.7. This means that small percentage of students think that they are unable to understand anything from the listening passage. Additionally, few of them believe that slang language and long spoken texts are not a hindrance for listening comprehension.

The aforementioned statements are just some of the problems students face when listening to English texts. Other problems will be revealed in the following domain. The following domain is going to shed light on the problems related to linguistic features of English listening excerpts.

Third Domain: Listening Problems Related to Linguistic Features

To find out how linguistic features of English language could be a hindrance for students in listening comprehension, the researchers gathered 7 statements in one domain and the results were as follows: The effect degree is moderate for the statements (19, 22, 23 and 24). The percentages of these statements are %63.4, %64.6, % 63.8 and %69.1 respectively. The percentage of the average for all statements of this domain is %62.2 with a moderate effect.

Table (6) shows the major problems related to linguistics that students have when listening to English speech. In fact the above results indicate that unfamiliar pronunciation of familiar words is one of the main

hindrances that face students in listening comprehension. Also students find it uneasy not to understand every single word of the listening text, and they stop whenever facing a new word trying to understand it, which breaks their listening comprehension. Being unable to infer a meaning of a word from the context and follow the sequence of the long spoken text are other factors that make listening comprehension a difficult task for students.

However, only two items got a low effect degree, which means that these problems are not of weight for students. They may cause a difficulty in listening comprehension, but students think that they can recognize the words that they know while listening as long as they are pronounced the way they are used to it, and they do not have a big problem with signals of speech such as pitch, stress and intonation.

Fourth Domain: Listening Problems Caused by Failure to Concentrate

Among the problems included in this section, only one got a high effect degree, statement (28) with a percentage of %78.4. This shows that the highest percentage of students agree that poor quality recordings lead to losing concentration while listening and having difficulty in listening comprehension accordingly.

Actually, the rest of the statements got a moderate effect degree. The percentages of these statements range from %63.9-%69.4. This indicates that more than half of the students agree that they lose concentration while listening to an English spoken text because of the following reasons. For

instance, having and expecting answers in their minds do not allow them to focus on what is being spoken. This is because they are searching for the ideas already stuck in their minds. So they do not listen and understand; instead, they are waiting to hear what they expect. Moreover, looking for answers for the assigned questions is another reason why students lose their focus and understanding. In addition, listening breaks down when having to listen to long texts and trying to understand every single word in a spoken text.

Fifth Domain: Listening Problems Related to the Listener

All the items (30, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38 and 39) included in this domain got a moderate effect degree with percentages that range from %61.5-%68.5. Only two items (31 and 35) got a low effect degree with percentages of %57.5 and %59.2 respectively.

Students agree that they can be a major factor to inhibit listening comprehension since they need to repeat the listening text more than one time, which is not authentic and realistic. Moreover, they feel perplexed and stop listening when facing something unclear in the spoken text, and feel not interested in listening and tired. Furthermore, students admit the fact that they are used to the written form of words but have true problem when hearing them in listening texts.

Sixth Domain: Listening Problems Related to the Speaker

While three items (41, 43 and 44) of the questionnaire in this section got high effect degree with percentages that range from %72.1-%76.9, and four items (40, 42, 45 and 46) got a moderate effect degree with percentages that range from %60.8-%68. Only one item (47) got a low effect degree with a percentage of %59.3.

Students find that speaking unclearly and gliding over some words, speaking using unfamiliar accents and speaking fast are examples of notable problems they face in listening comprehension. Moreover, they think that natural speech full of hesitation and pauses, not seeing the speaker's body language, not repeating what is being said more than one time and not pausing long enough are considered real problems of listening comprehension. Nevertheless, few students think that unfamiliar stress and intonation patterns interfere their listening comprehension.

Seventh Domain: Problems Related to the Physical Setting

A very positive response can be seen towards the items in this section. Item (48) got a very high effect degree, and items (49 and 51) scored a high effect degree. Also, item (50) got a moderate effect degree, which shows that students fully agree that the place where they listen, the quality of the listening equipment and the quality of the recording play a crucial role in listening comprehension.

Last but not least, six domains (3, 1, 5, 2, 6 and 4) out of seven got a moderate effect degree, which means that students agree that these domains can cause serious problems in listening comprehension. The percentages of these domains range from %62.2-%68.5. The seventh domain, which is the last one, got a high effect degree with a percentage of %74.3. The physical place can be a very effective factor in listening comprehension.

2.2. Results Related to Sub-questions:

Results Related to the First Sub-questions:

The hypothesis of the first sub-question is stated in the following way: There are no significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension due to their academic level, beginning, intermediate, and advanced.

To answer the first sub-question, the researcher used the (One Way ANOVA test) to find out the differences in the degree of evaluation of the listening difficulties due to academic level.

Table (7): Results of One-Way ANOVA Test For the Differences in the Degree of Evaluation according to academic level

Domains		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Students' perception of the importance of listening skills	Between Groups	.117	2	.058	.323	.724
	Within Groups	33.556	186	.180		
	Total	33.672	188			
Listening problems related to the content of the listening text	Between Groups	2.107	2	1.053	1.774	.172
	Within Groups	110.420	186	.594		
	Total	112.526	188			
Listening problems related to linguistic features	Between Groups	1.809	2	.905	1.032	.358
	Within Groups	163.096	186	.877		
	Total	164.905	188			
Listening problems related to concentration	Between Groups	.101	2	.050	.072	.930
	Within Groups	129.625	186	.697		
	Total	129.726	188			
Listening problems related to the listener	Between Groups	2.687	2	1.343	1.755	.176
	Within Groups	142.373	186	.765		
	Total	145.060	188			
Listening problems related to the speaker	Between Groups	5.476	2	2.738	2.813	.063
	Within Groups	181.056	186	.973		
	Total	186.532	188			

Listening problems related to the physical setting	Between Groups	.901	2	.451	.280	.756
	Within Groups	299.783	186	1.612		
	Total	300.685	188			
Total	Between Groups	1.039	2	.519	1.275	.282
	Within Groups	75.767	186	.407		
	Total	76.806	188			

The results of table (7) shows that the significance for the total is (0.282), which is higher than (0.05). This means that there are no significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) on total due to academic level variable. Accordingly, academic level of the students does not have any effect on the difficulties students face in listening comprehension.

Results Related to the Second Sub-question

The hypothesis of the first sub-question is stated in the following way: There are no significant differences at ($\alpha= 0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension due to their academic years, first year, second year, third year, fourth year.

To answer the second sub-question of the study, "Are there significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to their academic years?" the researcher used One-Way ANOVA and table (8) shows the results.

Table (8): Results of One-Way ANOVA Test for the Difference in the Degree of Evaluation due to Academic Year

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Students' perception of the importance of listening skills	Between Groups	.210	3	.070	.387	.762
	Within Groups	33.462	185	.181		
	Total	33.672	188			
Listening problems related to the content of the listening text	Between Groups	.855	3	.285	.472	.702
	Within Groups	111.671	185	.604		
	Total	112.526	188			
Listening problems related to linguistic features	Between Groups	1.427	3	.476	.538	.657
	Within Groups	163.478	185	.884		
	Total	164.905	188			
Listening problems related to the speaker	Between Groups	.327	3	.109	.156	.926
	Within Groups	129.399	185	.699		
	Total	129.726	188			
Listening problems related to the listener	Between Groups	1.220	3	.407	.523	.667
	Within Groups	143.840	185	.778		
	Total	145.060	188			
Listening problems related to the speaker	Between Groups	1.736	3	.579	.579	.629
	Within Groups	184.796	185	.999		
	Total	186.532	188			

Listening problems related to the physical setting	Between Groups	3.168	3	1.056	.657	.580
	Within Groups	297.517	185	1.608		
	Total	300.685	188			
Total	Between Groups	.377	3	.126	.304	.822
	Within Groups	76.429	185	.413		
	Total	76.806	188			

Table (8) shows that the significance was (0.822) which is higher than (0.05) and this indicates that there were no significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL in listening comprehension due to academic year. Hence, it seems that there is no effect of the students' academic year on the difficulties they encounter in listening comprehension.

Results of the Third Sub-Question

The hypothesis of the third sub-question is stated in the following way: There are no significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension due to their gender.

To answer the third question of the study, "Are there significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to their gender?" the researcher used t-test to analyze the data from the questionnaire. Table (9) shows the results.

Table (9): Results of the Independent T-Test for the Differences in the Difficulties Encountered by EFL Students As Perceived By ELC Students at AAUJ due to Gender

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	D F	t	Sig
Students' perception of the importance of listening skills	Male	95	3.1825	.39730	187	2.208	.028
	Female	94	3.0479	.43968	184.699		.029
listening problems related to the content of the listening text	Male	95	3.2991	.74123	187	1.258	.210
	Female	94	3.1578	.80280	185.490		.210
Listening Problems related to linguistic features	Male	95	3.1667	.81867	187	.676	.444
	Female	94	3.0621	1.04412	176.091		.445
Listening problems related to concentration	Male	95	3.3979	.88750	187	-.509	.611
	Female	94	3.4596	.77256	184.019		.611
Listening problems related to the listener	Male	95	3.1789	.87591	187	-.347	.729
	Female	94	3.2234	.88505	186.917		.729
Listening problems related to the speaker	Male	95	3.4592	1.00273	187	.525	.600
	female	94	3.3830	.99322	187.000		.600
Listening problems related to the physical setting	Male	95	3.7158	1.28908	187	-.027	.979
	Female	94	3.7207	1.24642	186.901		.979
Total	Male	95	3.3429	.63967	187	.53	.597
	Female	94	3.2935	.64114	187		.597

Table (9) shows that the significance for the total was (0.597) which is higher than (0.05). This means that there are no significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) level in the difficulties encountered by EFL students due to gender variable.

Results Related to the Fourth Sub-Question

The hypothesis related to this question is stated in this way: There are no significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension due to type of school.

To answer the fourth sub-question, "Are there significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL learners due to their school type (private, public)?" the researcher used independent t-test. Table (10) shows the results.

Table (10): Results of Independent Sample T-Test for the Difference in the Difficulties Encountered by EFL Students as Perceived by ELC students at the AAUJ due to Type of School

Items	Type of school	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	D F	t	Sig
Students' perception of the importance of listening skills	Public School	159	3.1069	.43099	187	-.64	.521
	Private School	30	3.1611	.38278	44.070		.490
listening problems related to the content of the listening text	Public School	159	3.2191	.75155	187	-.398	.691
	Private School	30	3.2806	.89418	37.125		.726
Listening Problems related to linguistic features	Public School	159	3.1132	.96699	187	-.048	.962
	Private School	30	3.1222	.76930	48.083		.955
Listening problems related to concentration	Public School	159	3.4465	.81573	187	.68	.495
	Private School	30	3.3333	.91476	38.197		.531
Listening problems related to the listener	Public School	159	3.1667	.8772	187	-1.24	.216
	Private School	30	3.3833	.8765	40.7		.221
Listening problems related to the speaker	Public School	159	3.4112	1.015	187	-.32	.748
	Private School	30	3.4750	.9028	44.0		.729
Listening problems related to the physical setting	Public School	159	3.6714	1.122	187	-1.17	.242
	Private School	30	3.9667	1.85083	33.1		.404
Total	Public School	159	3.3050	.6316	187	-.658	.511
	Private School	30	3.3889	.6844	38.887		.537

Table (10) shows that the significance for the total was (0.511) which is higher than (0.05). This means that there are no significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) level in the difficulties encountered by EFL students due to type of school variable.

Results of the Fifth Sub-Question:

The hypothesis of this sub-question is stated in this way: There are no significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension due to the number of school years studying.

To answer the following sub question, "Are there significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension due to the number of school years studying?" the researcher used One-Way ANOVA test. Table (11) shows the results.

Table (11): Results of One-Way ANOVA Test for the Differences in the Difficulties Encountered by EFL Learners as Perceived by ELC Students at AAUJ due to Number of School years Studying English

Item		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Students' perception of the importance of listening skills	Between Groups	.592	2	.296	1.664	.192
	Within Groups	33.080	186	.178		
	Total	33.672	188			
Listening problems related to the content of the listening text	Between Groups	.006	2	.003	.005	.995
	Within Groups	112.520	186	.605		
	Total	112.526	188			
Listening problems related to linguistic features	Between Groups	.322	2	.161	.182	.834
	Within Groups	164.583	186	.885		
	Total	164.905	188			
Listening problems related to the speaker	Between Groups	1.030	2	.515	.744	.477
	Within Groups	128.696	186	.692		
	Total	129.726	188			
listening problems related to listener	Between Groups	.333	2	.166	.214	.808
	Within Groups	144.727	186	.778		
	Total	145.060	188			

listening problems related to the speaker	Between Groups	.140	2	.070	.070	.932
	Within Groups	186.392	186	1.002		
	Total	186.532	188			
listening problems related to the physical setting	Between Groups	2.084	2	1.042	.649	.524
	Within Groups	298.600	186	1.605		
	Total	300.685	188			
Total	Between Groups	.114	2	.057	.139	.871
	Within Groups	76.692	186	.412		
	Total	76.806	188			

Table (11) shows that the significance for the total was (0.871) which is higher than (0.05). This means that there are no significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) level in the difficulties encountered by EFL students due to type of number of school years studying English.

3. Result Related to the Second Tool of the Study (Interview):

The interview was the second tool the researcher used to allow for students to speak freely and fully about some issues that would serve the purpose of the study, finding out the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension. Twelve students were interviewed; they were chosen randomly from the subjects of the study.

Interviewees were allowed to speak in Arabic, so that they can express their ideas easily. The interviewer kept prompting and asking follow up questions to help the interviewees express their opinion as possible as they can.

To present various views from the interviewed students, key comments and quotes were summarized and presented.

1. Question (1):

Was listening taken into consideration in your school? Explain.

In the first question of the interview, the students were asked to talk about listening exercises they took at school and whether or not they were taught how to listen. It is worth mentioning that the first question is stated

thoroughly because it is going to be a justification for the answers students will provide for the following questions. All students stated that they have never learned how to listen though some of them admitted that they took listening exercises. Only one student said that he received listening practice, but he has never known about listening strategies.

Interviewee (1) and (8), who studied in governmental schools in Israel, commented that that they only took two listening courses in the tenth grade to prepare them for a placement test in the last year of school. Teachers used Arabic to explain and give instructions. They have never known anything about how to listen or listening strategies. They just listened to English excerpts and answered questions based on them at the end. They added that English language is a third language there. They start learning English in the third grade and the only focus was on mastering English letters.

Interviewee (2) studied in the Friends School, a private school in Ramallah. He said that he started taking listening exercises when he was in the first grade. He added that his teachers used English language inside the classroom instead of Arabic language, which helped him in listening comprehension. He commented that his school had multimedia labs and a good quality listening equipment.

Interviewees (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (9), (10) and (11) who studied at governmental schools in the West Bank, said that they received no listening practice at school at all and stated that teachers used to skip every exercise

that focused on listening. Instruction was given in Arabic, which hindered their listening comprehension.

Interviewee (6) commented, "I started learning English language when I was in the fifth grade. A religion specialized teacher gave us the English courses. She spoke in Arabic all the time. Listening and other aspects of English were not taught well until I was in the seventh grade. A new teacher started teaching me English. She used both Arabic and English for instruction, but she never focused on listening exercises."

Interviewee (4) said, "I started learning English when I was in the first grade. Forty students were in the classroom. The teacher used to bring a bad quality CD player, the sound was not clear, and only good students answered the teacher's questions. The tests were based on the book material. In the listening exam, students knew where the answers were."

Interviewee (9) said, "I started learning English in the fifth grade. We never took listening exercises. But once we had a poem in the book, the teacher played the poem in the CD player and we listened to it with no questions and comments that followed."

Interviewee (10) replied, directing her speech to the interviewer, her teacher, "I hate English. It is difficult for me to understand you when you speak in English in the classroom. I cannot comprehend what you say. I started taking English courses when I was in the first grade. My teacher used to use English language inside the classroom. When I did not

understand what she said, I asked her to repeat. Unfortunately, she was repeating in Arabic. I feel so bad when I listen to a person speaking in English. Hardly do I understand what he\she says. No listening exercises were offered to us."

Interviewee (11) stated, "I started learning English in the first grade. My English teacher gave us chances to listen to simple things such as a poem or a short lesson. She taught me until the third grade. The catastrophe was in the fourth grade. The teacher was teaching nothing. He used to come to the classroom closing the door and playing sport inside the classroom. I have never learned how to listen."

2. Question (2):

What do you feel while listening to a recording?

All interviewees' answers were negative towards what they feel when they listen to English language. Their answers were that they felt afraid and confused, except for one student who got English listening practice at school.

Interviewee (1) and (8) stated that they used to feel afraid when it comes to listening exercises.

Interviewee (12) commented, "I feel horrible when listening to English. I hate watching English movies, and I do not like listening lessons."

Interviewee (10) frankly stated, "I hate English because I hardly understand what is spoken to me."

But Interviewee (2) said, "I feel comfortable while listening. Listening is not something new to me. I am used to listening exercises. I do not understand every single word. But I can answer most of the questions based on the listening exercise."

3. Question (3):

What makes listening difficult for you?

Eleven out of twelve interviewees agreed that speaking quickly and gliding over words are what makes listening comprehension difficult.

Interviewee (2) commented, "They swallow words. I cannot understand English because of this."

Interviewee (11) commented, "When you speak, I understand you. But when you set us to listen to native speakers and listening excerpts, I do not understand."

Interviewee (12) said, "Listening is difficult. But sometimes I enjoy listening because I am familiar with the vocabulary used in the English talk or conversation. When you have a good command of vocabulary, things will be easy for you while listening. Vocabulary matters."

4. Question (4):

Do you think that listening comprehension is important? Comment.

All the interviewees agreed that listening comprehension is very important. They ranked it as the second important skill after the speaking skill. One student said that listening comprehension is the first skill to be taken into consideration.

Interviewee (1) said, "Listening skill is the most important skill. It helps me understand grammar, vocabulary and how to use vocabulary, and it helps us how to speak and what to say in particular situations and contexts."

4. Summary:

This chapter examined the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension as perceived by ELC students studying at the Arab American University. It included two main sections. The first one presented the results the researcher got from the questionnaire. The other section presented results acquired from the interview.

Answers for all the questions of the study are presented in this chapter.

Chapter Five

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

1. **Discussion of the Study**
2. **Discussion of the Minor Questions and the Related Hypotheses**
3. **Discussion of the Interview Results**
4. **Conclusion**
5. **Recommendations**
6. **Summary**

Chapter Five

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

1. Introduction:

This chapter discusses the results of the study questions and hypotheses respectively. In addition, it presents conclusion and recommendations.

2. Discussion of the Study:

Based on the findings related to the major question:

1. What listening difficulties do EFL learners face when they listen to spoken English?

In regard to the difficulties students encounter in listening comprehension, the following were the findings of the study.

The highest percentage of students refer the difficulties they encounter in listening comprehension to the following reasons. For example, noises around can be a major factor that would cause difficulty in listening comprehension. Other reasons are listening excerpts that are of unfamiliar topics, and the ones that have unfamiliar vocabulary and complex grammatical structure. Moreover, students think that poor quality recordings can be a major hindrance for listening comprehension. Of course, students believe that enjoying the listening exercise can help in comprehension and vice versa. These are the difficulties that face students

in listening comprehension the most. In fact, these were the statements that took very high effect degree.

The above mentioned results agree with Underwood (1989), Goh (2000), Hasan (2000) and Abidin & Juan (2013) in their studies conducted on listening comprehension problems. They all found out that word recognition and new vocabulary can be a hindrance to listening comprehension. In addition, the results of the current study supported the findings of Underwood (1989), Koichi (2002), Anderson & Lynch (2003), and Graham (2006) in regard to the role unfamiliarity of the listening topic and lack of prior knowledge in English vocabulary play in listening comprehension.

Furthermore, other related studies to the aforementioned results are Watson's and Smeltzer's (1984), Yagang's (1994) and Hasan's (2000) that claimed any distraction such as noises can cause a break in listening comprehension.

The researcher attributes those findings to the fact that students lack general knowledge about life. English teachers do not focus on topics related to I2 culture. All they focus on are topics that are not of students' interest. In addition, teachers do not pay attention to the knowledge the text has and relating texts with each other and students' life. But they focus on getting students read to answer the questions that follow. The way teachers teach is mechanic. They do not give students chances to use language in authentic and real-life situations. Moreover, grammar is taught the way

mathematics is taught at schools. Actually, some grammar and vocabulary seem difficult for students. So it is not strange that students find listening comprehension complicated. Any new structure is difficult for them. Last but not least, all the previous reasons could lead to getting bored when listening to English language.

Other problems that encounter students in listening comprehension received moderate effect degree. For example, students find that listening excerpts containing jargon and idioms are difficult. Also they face problems when listening texts are long. In fact, long texts lead to losing concentration, feeling tired and not being able to catch up the flow of speech. Feeling tired also causes losing concentration while listening.

As well, students are unable to understand listening texts when they have expected answers in their minds as well as when they are looking for particular ideas in the listening excerpt. Indeed, it is not easy for students to predict what could come next in a listening excerpt.

Vocabulary recognition is another dilemma student's face while listening to English texts. Actually, students try to understand every single word, which hinders their listening comprehension. Moreover, pronunciation of vocabulary matters. Sometimes students do not recognize what is said because they are not familiar with the pronunciation of some words. Similarly, students could know the pronunciation while listening but cannot guess and realize what these words are. Furthermore, students are unable to infer meaning of some words while listening. As a result, they

stop listening and trying to understand the rest of the listening text. Additionally, not being able to recognize and understand words lead students to feel afraid and then to stop listening.

Moreover, students agreed that natural speech full of hesitation and pauses; not seeing the body language of the speaker and not being able to repeat what the speaker says; not pausing enough while speaking are all difficulties they encounter in listening comprehension.

Furthermore, it is not easy for students to answer WH questions based on what they listen. This means that it is difficult for them to listen and take notes in the same time to provide proper answer for WH questions.

These results support the findings of previous studies. Examples of such studies are Rost's (2002), Flege & Eefting's (1987), Yen's (1987) and Rixon's (1986). All found out that students lack phonological awareness of English language, which affected their listening comprehension. The way words are pronounced is a problem for EFL students when it comes to listening comprehension.

On the one hand, the aforementioned studies are in accordance with Brown's (1989), Korst's (1997), Underwood's (1989), Flowerdew and Miller's (1996), Hasan's (2000), Osuka's (2008), Ja'afr's (2013), Abidin and Juan's (2013). They all reached to finding that speed rate of speech impaired listening comprehension, and students are unable to control the speed of

speakers. Repeating the listening excerpt is not their option and it is not authentic to repeat it. On the other hand, they disagree with the findings of Rost (1990) and Ellis (1994) who reported that speed rate of speech did not trouble listening comprehension. Rost claimed that it could be a problem for low-leveled students and Ellis said that it was a result not a cause of poor listening comprehension.

Students' attitudes towards trying to understand every single word of the listening excerpt and the intolerance of speech vagueness were not different from those of the following studies: Ur's (1984), Fearch and Kasber's (1986), Underwood's (1989), Chen's (2002), Kanchali's (2005), Hedge (2006) and Lia Yan's (2007). Kinchali (2005) stated that students were not used to the nature of the stressed English language. Chen (2002) declared that students stopped listening and didn't know what come next in a listening excerpt because they focused on figuring out the meaning of the current ideas.

Besides, lack of visual support and not seeing the speaker's body language were other salient problems students faced in listening comprehension as explained in Underwood's (1989), Brown's (1994), and Rixon's (1997).

Not pausing long enough while speaking confused students in listening comprehension as the current study has showed as well as Nakic (1981), Long (1993) and Korst (1997) showed in their respective studies.

Surprisingly, few students agreed that the following are hindrances for their listening comprehension. First of all, texts that contain slang expressions, which is not expected since other items such as texts containing idioms and jargon expressions received moderate effect degree. The researcher refers this to the fact that students might not understand what slang expressions exactly mean. Also, students' listening is not affected negatively by long listening texts. Moreover, few students agreed that they understand nothing from the listening text. This means that students can understand some ideas or vocabulary but not everything in the text. A low percentage of students are also unable to guess the meaning of words they know while listening; to recognize different intonation, and pitch that speakers use; to predict what would come next based on what they listen in the listening excerpt. Finally, feeling anxious when listening to English texts is another item that received low effect degree.

Of course these results are not in accordance with studies like Underwood's (1989) that stated that students are not used to English prosody. They did not realize the changes in pitch and intonation; Ja'fir's (2013) found out that one of the factors impairing listening comprehension was colloquial expressions in the listening excerpt; Chen's (2002) reported the fact that students missed what came next in the listening text when they focused on figuring out the meaning of some vocabulary and ideas, and the fact that students did not recognize the words they know while they are listening; King & Behnke's (2003) reached to the conclusion that anxiety levels during listening activities impaired listening comprehension.

3. Discussion of the Minor Questions and the Related Hypotheses:

Are there significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension as perceived by ELC students at the AAUJ due to academic level, academic year, gender, type of school and number of school years studying English?

The researcher found out that there were no significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension as perceived by ELC students at the AAUJ due to academic level, academic year, gender, type of school and number of school years studying English.

All the hypotheses which were derived from these questions were confirmed. Tables (6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11) illustrated that there were no significant statistical differences in the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension as perceived by ELC students at the AAUJ due to the following variables: Academic level, academic year, gender, type of school and number of school years studying English.

The hypothesis of the third sub-question is stated in the following way: There are no significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the difficulties encountered by EFL students in listening comprehension due to their gender. This hypothesis is accepted for all the domains of the study, except for the first domain, which has to do with students' perception of the

importance of listening skills. In fact, there are significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in students' perception of listening skills due to gender.

4. Discussion of the Interview Results:

Actually, the interview was conducted to let students speak more freely about listening comprehension and the difficulties they face while listening. The results of the interview supported the questionnaires.

Students agreed that they have never received guidance on how to listen when they were at school. One student had listening exercises as a main part of the curriculum. This student studied at the Future school, one of the best private schools in the West Bank in Palestine. But others rarely did they get any teaching on listening skills. Accordingly, it is not surprising that students hate listening exercises, feel disappointed and find listening comprehension difficult. Moreover, this means that private schools try to be different by paying attention to listening skills. But it is not necessarily that all private schools are so since the results of the questionnaire showed that there were no significant differences in the difficulties encountered by EFL students as perceived by ELC students at the AAUJ due to type of school. The Friends school is an exception.

In addition, students in the interview mainly referred the difficulties they encountered in listening comprehension to the fact that speakers speak quickly and glide over words, which received a moderate effect degree in the questionnaire. However, unfamiliar vocabulary, lack of background

knowledge, not enjoying the listening excerpt, noises around and poor recordings received high effect degree in the questionnaire results.

In fact, in the questionnaire and interview, students showed a positive perspective towards the importance of listening skills. In the questionnaire, item (1) got a very high effect degree. In the interview, students ranked listening as the first and second amongst the other skills.

5. Conclusion:

Findings of the study show that there are many factors that contribute to the difficulties in listening comprehension. Not recognizing words, unfamiliarity of topics, noises and quality of equipment, fast rate of speech are the top factors that impair listening comprehension.

Another important point is students' feeling towards listening. Students enjoy listening exercises though they feel afraid sometimes. As a matter of fact, when students enjoy what they listen to, they will concentrate, which will increase their listening comprehension. The opposite is true, too. When students are anxious because they are about to listen to English conversation or native speakers, they stop listening and concentrating. The feeling of failure and the idea of trying something new and succeed in it stop them.

Additionally, schools of boys and girls, and private and public ones are the same in the policies they follow in teaching English language with very slight differences. Listening skills are ignored, which affect negatively

on the whole mastering of English language. Even the number of school years studying English does not have any good effect on listening comprehension. The reason behind this is that teaching English at schools skip listening skills and does not teach the language in authentic situations, so that students can make use of it in their daily life. Students get stunned when listening to daily-life conversation and to native speakers since they are not used to them.

Furthermore, this study discovered that students are not only bad at listening comprehension, but also they lack lots of vocabulary, and they have very little idea about using and understanding vocabulary in context. Students were not taught how to use what they learn. They just memorize what is written in books without getting the chance to use.

6. Recommendations:

On the basis of the study findings, the researcher suggests these recommendations to future researchers, ministry of education and teachers:

Recommendations for Teachers:

- The researcher recommends that EFL teachers give students more guidance on how to listen.
- Teachers are urged to regulate sessions and invite native speakers, so that students can meet English speakers and talk to them from time to time.

- It is hoped that teachers use English inside the classroom. In this way students get used to listening English.
- The researcher recommends that teachers have to give students chances to use language in authentic situations.
- It is necessary that teachers get students acquainted with the prosody of language pitch, intonation, rhythm and stress.
- It is really important that teachers highlight the differences between students' mother tongue and English language.
- Since teachers are the milestone in the classroom, the researcher recommends the ministry of education provide training courses for teachers on how to teach listening strategies.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Education and Curriculum Designers:

- The researcher proposes that the ministry of education stresses the idea of including listening skills into governmental exams like Tawjihi exam (National exam must be taken when students finish school years, so that they can join higher education.)
- It is very crucial that curriculum designers take into consideration listening skills while setting the educational objectives of the English curriculum. Accordingly more listening exercises have to be included.

Recommendations for researchers:

- It is highly recommended that researchers search for strategies that would lift students' level in listening comprehension.
- It is recommended that more research on how to improve listening skills have to be conducted.
- It is hoped that more research is carried out with large sample because the sample size was too small to generalize an overall conclusion applying to all EFL learners.

7. Summary:

This chapter discussed the results of the study and related them to previous studies.

The questions of the study are discussed fully. It drew conclusions based on the findings.

Moreover, the researcher wrote conclusions for teachers, researchers, Ministry of Education and curriculum designers.

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Appendixes

Appendix I

Dear students,

This questionnaire is one of the tools used by the researcher to collect the necessary information for accomplishing a study entitled "Difficulties Encountered by EFL students in Listening Comprehension from the Perspective of the ELC students at the Arab American University".

This questionnaire consists of two parts: part one contains personal information: academic Level in English, Academic year, and Gender. And part two contains the whole items of the questionnaire

The researcher would be pleased if you answer the parts appropriately in the space provided. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and the given information will be used for research purposes only.

Thank you for your cooperation

The researcher: Ahkam Assaf

Mobile: 0568574416

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Part (1): Personal Information

Please put the mark (x) in the place that suits your case:

Gender: a- Male () b- Female ()

Academic Level in English: a- Advanced English Level () b- Intermediate English Level () c- Beginning English Level ()

Academic year: a- First year () b- Second year () c- Third year () d- Fourth year ()

Type of school: a- Public School () b- Private school ()

Number of school years during which English courses were studied: a- 12 years () b- 8 years () c- less than 8 years ()

Part (II):

This part consists of all items of the questionnaire, which are classified into seven domains:

Domain 1 has to do with students' perception of the importance of listening skill.

Domain 2 has to do with listening problems related to the content of the listening text.

Domain 3 has to do with listening problems related to Linguistic features.

Domain 4 has to do with listening problems caused by the failure to concentrate.

Domain 5 has to do with listening problems related to listener.

Domain 6 has to do with listening problems related to the speaker.

Domain 7 has to do with listening problems related to the physical setting.

Please answer the following items by putting (X) in the box that best expresses your perspectives.

Item no.	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly disagree	Disagree
I	Students' perception of the importance of listening skills					
1.	I am aware of the perceived importance of English listening skill.					
2.	I find that listening comprehension is difficult.					
3.	I find that listening comprehension is boring.					
4.	I find that listening comprehension is exciting.					
5.	I receive sufficient training in English listening comprehension at my school.					
6.	I never heard of listening strategies.					
II	Listening problems related to the content of the listening text					
7.	I find it difficult to understand listening texts in which there are too many unfamiliar words.					

8.	I find listening comprehension difficult when the spoken text contains jargon.					
9.	I find listening comprehension difficult when the spoken text contains idioms.					
10.	I find Listening comprehension difficult when utterances contain slang expressions.					
11.	I find listening comprehension difficult when the text contains Complex grammatical structures.					
12.	I find listening Comprehension difficult when I listen to long spoken texts.					
13.	I feel tired when I listen to a long spoken text.					
14.	I feel distracted when I listen to a long spoken text.					
15.	I find it difficult to understand listening texts when the topic is unfamiliar.					
16.	I use my experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the spoken text.					
17.	I find it difficult to understand every single word of incoming speech.					
18.	I find it difficult to understand the whole listening passage.					
III	Listening problems related to Linguistic features					
19.	I find pronunciation familiar but					

	cannot recognize the words.					
20..	I cannot recognize words I know while listening.					
21..	I find it difficult to recognize the signals, which indicate that the speaker is moving from one point to another.					
22.	I stop listening and start thinking about the meaning of the word when encountering an unknown word.					
23.	I find it difficult to infer the meaning of an unknown word while listening.					
24.	I find it difficult to follow the sequence of the spoken text when the sentences are too long and complex.					
IV	Listening problems caused by the failure to concentrate					
25.	I lose focus of the talk when I have an expected answer in my mind.					

26.	I am unable to concentrate because I look for the answers and listen to the dialogue at the same time.					
27.	I lose my concentration when the text is too long.					
28.	I lose my concentration if the recording is in a poor quality.					
29.	I lose the flow of speech because I concentrate very hard on understanding every word or phrase I hear.					
V	Listening problems related to listener					
30.	I find it difficult to get a general understanding of the spoken text from the first listening.					
31.	I find it difficult to predict what would come next at the time of listening					
32.	I stop listening when I have problems in understanding a listening text					

33.	I find it difficult to recognize the words I know because of the way they are pronounced.					
34.	I find it difficult to tell where one word finishes and another begins There are words that I would normally understand in writing, but when I hear them in a stream of speech.					
35.	I feel anxious when I listen to spoken texts.					
36.	I find listening comprehension difficult when I am not interested.					
37.	I find listening comprehension difficult when I feel tired.					
38.	I fear that I cannot understand what I will hear before doing listening comprehension tasks,					
39.	I find it difficult to answer questions which require other than a short answer (e.g. why or how questions).					

VI	Listening problems related to the speaker					
40.	I find it difficult to understand the natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses.					
41.	I find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly.					
42.	I find it difficult to understand the meaning of the spoken text without seeing the speaker's body language.					
43.	I have difficulty understanding speakers with unfamiliar accents.					
44.	I find it difficult to understand when speakers speak too fast.					
45.	I find it difficult to understand the recorded material if I it is not repeated.					
46.	I find it difficult to understand the listening text when the speaker does not pause long enough.					

47.	I find it difficult to understand spoken texts that have unfamiliar stress and intonation patterns.					
VII	Listening problems related to the physical setting					
48.	I find it difficult to concentrate with noises around.					
49.	I find it difficult to understand English when there are unclear sounds resulting from a poor-quality CD player.					
50.	I find it difficult to concentrate when the room is not conditioned.					
51.	I find it difficult to understand English when there are unclear sounds resulting from poor acoustic conditions of the classroom.					

Appendix II

Questions of the Interview

1. Question (1)

Was listening taken into consideration in your school? Explain.

2. Question (2)

What do you feel while listening to a recording?

3. Question (3)

What makes listening difficult for you?

4. Question (4)

Do you think that listening comprehension is important? Comment.

Appendix III**List of Abbreviations**

L2	Second language
AAUJ	The Arab American University
ELC	English Language Center
EFL	English language as a Foreign Language
ESL	English language as a Second Language

جامعة النجاح الوطنية

كلية الدراسات العليا

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اعداد

أحكام حسن محمد عساف

اشراف

د. أحمد عوض

قدمت هذه الرسالة استكملا لمتطلبات الحصول على درجة الماجستير في اساليب
تدريس اللغة الانجليزية بكلية الدراسات العليا في جامعة النجاح الوطنية في
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ب

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الملخص

هدفت الدراسة الى التوصل الى معرفة الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلاب الذين يتعلمون اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية في المهارات الاصغائية كما يراها طلاب مركز اللغة الانجليزية في الجامعة العربية الامريكية في جنين .تتلخص اهداف الدراسة في معرفة هذه الاهداف اولاً، ومن ثم معرفة اثر كل من العوامل الثابتة التالية كالجنس، العام الدراسي الاكاديمي ومستوى اللغة الانجليزية لكل طالب ونوع المدرسة التي درس بها الطالب وعدد السنوات التي درس فيها اللغة الانجليزية على المهارات الاصغائية للطلاب.

من أجل تحقيق هذه الاهداف، قامت الباحثة بتطوير اداتي دراسة لجمع المعلومات: استبانة و اسئلة مقابلة. اولاً، تم توزيع الاستبانة على 081 طالبة وطالبة ممن يدرسون في مركز اللغة الانجليزية في الجامعة العربية الامريكية-جنين والذين تم اختيارهم بشكل عشوائي. ثم تم مقابلة 04 طالب من اولئك الذين تم اختيارهم للإجابة على الاستبانة، اشتملت المقابلة على اربعة اسئلة. اجريت هذه الدراسة على طلاب الجامعة العربية الامريكية الذين يتعلمون اللغة الانجليزية في مركز اللغة الانجليزية في الجامعة العربية الامريكية-جنين. تكونت عينة الدراسة من (15) ذكور و(12) اناث.

بينت نتائج الدراسة ان مشاكل الطلاب الاكثر هي عدم قدرتهم على ادراك الكلمات سواء تلك الجديدة او حتى التي يعرفونها وعدم معرفتهم باي معلومات سابقة تدور حول موضوع القطعة السمعية، كما وتعتبر التشويشات الصادرة عن المسجل الصوتي و نوعيته الرديئة من الاسباب

المعيقة لفهم القطعة السمعية، و يرى الطلاب ايضا ان عدم الاستمتاع بموضوع المادة السمعية هو عائق اخر لفهمها، بالإضافة الى ما سبق ذكره اجمع الطلاب في المقابلة التي اجريت ان ما يجعل فهم ما يسمعون صعب هو التحدث بسرعة و عدم التحدث بطريقة واضحة اثناء الكلام، حيث ان هذه المشاكل حصلت على نسبة متوسطة عند تحليل الاستبانة .

كما وجدت الباحثة انه لا يوجد فروق في اجابات الطلاب حول الصعوبات التي تواجههم في فهم اللغة الانجليزية المحكية بسبب الجنس او العام الاكاديمي او المستوى الاكاديمي باللغة الانجليزية او نوع المدرسة التي تلقى تعليمه بها او حتى عدد السنوات التي درس بها الطالب اللغة الانجليزية. في ضوء ما توصلت اليه هذه الدراسة، اوصت الباحثة ان يكون هناك المزيد من البحوث حول اهمية المهارات الاصغائية وصعوباتها والاستراتيجيات التي يمكن استخدامها لتسهيل عملية الاصغاء للغة الانجليزية، كما واوصت الباحثة وزارة التربية والتعليم من جهة ومعلمي اللغة الانجليزية من جهة أخرى للاهتمام بشكل أكبر بتعليم مهارات الاصغاء في المدارس.