

# Problems of Teaching the Listening Skill to Yemeni EFL Learners

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**Abstract-** The listening skill seems to be the most difficult among all language skills. This difficulty stems from linguistic and non-linguistic problems i.e. difficulties that accompany the process of teaching and learning listening. This paper aims to investigate the most problematic areas in teaching the listening skill. Two data collection procedures were employed to collect the data for this study; a classroom observation, and a questionnaire for teachers. Fifty teachers of English language responded to the questionnaire and 11 secondary schools in five districts of Aden Governorate were observed for the purpose of collecting data on the teaching of the listening skill. The data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

The findings revealed a set of problems that encounter teachers in teaching listening and consequently contribute to the difficulty of the listening skill.

These problems are classified into linguistic and non-linguistic problems. The non-linguistic problems are the main hindrances to teaching listening in the context of the study including problems relating to learners, teachers, and teaching environment which have mostly led to neglecting this skill. The linguistic problems are observed in the pronunciation, stress, intonation, vocabulary, and syntactic structure. The study suggests some pedagogical implications to improve the process of teaching listening in the secondary schools of Yemen.

**Index Terms-** Listening, Listening Comprehension, Difficulties of Listening Comprehension, Linguistic Problems, Non-linguistic Problems.

## I. THE DEFINITIONS OF THE LISTENING SKILL

According to Richards, et al. (1992: 216), listening comprehension is "the process of understanding speech in a second or foreign language". They also add that "The study of listening comprehension processes in second language learning focuses on the role of individual linguistic units (e.g. phonemes, words, grammatical structures) as well as the role of the listener's expectations, the situation and the context, background knowledge and the topic". Rost (2001: 7) assures that "The term listening is used in language teaching to refer to a complex process that allows us to understand spoken language". In addition, Howatt and Dakin (1974, cited in Saricoban 1999) state that listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This process involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and vocabulary, and comprehending the meaning. An effective listener is able of carrying out the four elements simultaneously.

Based on these definitions, it is clear that listening involves both linguistic and nonlinguistic knowledge. The linguistic knowledge includes understanding of lexis, grammar, phonology, and discourse. The non-linguistic knowledge may include understanding the context or situation, the topic, and the purpose of the interaction.

## II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LISTENING SKILL

Listening is not only the most important language skill which is overused by people in real life situations, but also a fundamental part of the process of second language learning (hereafter, SLL). So, training in listening comprehension (LC) is necessary to assist students to make the transition from classroom language to real language more easily and effectively. In other words, it has a vital role in the development of general communication skills and the English language competence. According to Bulletin (1952 cited in Saricoban, *ibid*) listening is one of the fundamental language skills through which children, young people and adults gain a large portion of their education, information, background knowledge of the world, ideals, sense of values, and appreciation. Rost (2001: 7) also supports that "Listening is not only a skill area in language performance, but is also a critical means of acquiring a second language (L2). Thus, in this day of mass communication it is of vital importance to teach pupils to listen effectively and critically.

## III. THE DIFFICULTY OF THE LISTENING SKILL

At this point, interpretations of neglecting the listening skill (LS, hereafter) can be put clearly. It is always the most difficult and challenging task for second language (SL) learners (Paulston 1976 and Eastman 1987 cited in Mee, 2001). According to Vandergrift (2007: 191) the characteristic of listening that makes it difficult is that "Listening is an invisible mental process making it difficult to describe", so the listener's task, here, is more challenging. In addition, the listener is engaged in many processes such as discriminating between sounds, understanding vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpreting stress and intonation, remembering and interpreting this within the immediate, as well as the larger socio-cultural context of the utterance (Vandergrift, 2007 and Wipf, 1984: 346). Moreover, it is not often taught and practised, nor possible to go over again what ones heard, whereas it is simple to read and re-read a difficult page in a book (Broughton et. al, 1978: 66).

#### IV. THE MAIN PROBLEMS IN LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Listening comprehension is an intricate process in which different processes and factors are involved. According to Guo and Wills (2006: 5) "Listening Comprehension is a complex psychological process of listeners' understanding language by sense of hearing. It is an interactive process of language knowledge and psychological activities". Since LC involves different variables i.e. linguistic and non-linguistic, so it will be clear that any defect in these two variables will affect this process negatively.

In what follows some problems which can affect LC will be discussed. These problems are related to the main two categories of factors i.e. the linguistic and non-linguistic. The first category discusses some different kinds of language problems whereas the second, the third, and the fourth ones discuss other non-linguistic problems. These are the background problems, the students' psychological obstacles, and other sources of difficulty. This classification is inspired from the classifications given by Anderson and Lynch (1988) as well as Guo and Wills' (2006) classification.

##### 4.1 Language Problems

Some linguistic problems namely those related to the pronunciation area including the sound system, stress and intonation, vocabulary, and syntactic structure will be discussed here.

###### • Pronunciation

Under this heading different issues of the sound system, stress and intonation will be discussed. As regards some problems related to the sound system of English in contrast to the Arabic sound system, Kharma and Hajjaj (1997) emphasise and discuss the phonemic problems which result in differences in meaning and which may lead to misunderstanding such as the pronunciation of individual sounds, words, phrases, stress, rhythm, and intonation. They also discuss types of mistakes with vowel and consonant sounds which result from differences in the two languages (i.e. Arabic and English) or as a result of existing a sound in one language and the absence of this sound in the other. Such phenomenon causes difficulty in understanding such sounds which do not exist in learners' native language (Hasan, 1991: 142). An example of these problems is the sounds /f/ and /v/ as in fast and vast. These sounds result in problem for Arab learners where the sound /v/ in Arabic is only used in borrowed words whereas in English it is existed as a main sound and /f/ is used by some Arab learners for both sounds in English pronunciation as in of /bʌv/ and off /bʌf/. Similarly, there is a confusion between /ʃ/ and /tʃ/, consonant doubling (as in allow /\*æɪ- laʊ/ instead of /ə'laʊ/), and consonant clusters. They also refer to some problems with the vowel sounds such as the confusion of some pairs of vowels. For example, learners may face difficulty when one sound is really existed in their native language but as an allophonic variation of another one i.e. /i/ and /i:/. In addition, difficulty in recognition and production of some vowel sounds, the intrusive vowels where the Arab learners tend to insert vowel sound between consonant clusters as in students /\*stju:dntɪs/ instead of /stju:dntɪs/, or spring /\*sɪ'prɪŋ/ instead of /sprɪŋ/. Fox (1974: 15) agrees that "sound confusion seems to be a significant part of the problem of listening comprehension".

The stress and intonation patterns which are not used by foreign learners cause problem of LC (Ur, 1984: 12). This area of stress, rhythm, and intonation represents a problem for Arab learners of English because of the differences between English and Arabic rules in this area. For instance, Kharma and Hajjaj (1997) mention that Arab learners make some mistakes in word stress as misplacement of word stress (e.g. si'lently /\*sɪ'lɛntli/ instead of 'silently /\*sɪ'lɛntli/), confusion of some pairs of words (e.g. 'produce /\*prɒdju:s/ for both noun and verb). Regarding sentence stress, they mention some other problems such as failure to adopt the stress-timed rhythm of English (they eat an apple /\*'ðeɪ 'i:t 'æŋ 'æpl/), and failure to adopt the weak vowels in connected speech (e.g. anatomy /\*æ'nætəmi:/ instead of /ə'nætəmi/). So, they have to learn these patterns of stress, rhythm, and intonation as they tend to adopt Arabic intonation when they speak English (Kharma and Hajjaj, 1997: 32).

Similarly, different foreign learners such as Japanese and Chinese find difficulty in understanding the simplest conversations in English. Norris (1993: 49) mentions some reasons behind this. The first reason is the students' inability to perceive certain English sounds accurately as a result of the absence of such sounds in Japanese. The second reason is the students' unfamiliarity with stress and intonation patterns of English. Hamouda (2013) also points out that pronunciation and accents are among the problems that hinder Saudi students in LC. In addition, Solak and Firat (2014) found out that Turkish students at a state-run University in Turkey face difficulties in pronunciation. Yalmaz and Yavuz (2015) found out that the teaching of phonetics is neglected in Turkish public schools.

###### 4.1.2 Vocabulary

Vocabulary is one of the important issues in LC. It is also "a good quality of listening comprehension" (Thomas and Dyer, 2007). Yet, it can be one of the difficulties and factors of LC (Hassan, 2000 and Thomas and Dyer, 2007, and But 2010). One of the matters why it represents a difficulty is that the vocabulary used in conversations or in a spoken language often varies and differs from that for the written language (Broughton et al, 1978: 72). Consequently, students sometimes show inability to understand unfamiliar words a thing which may confuse them (Gilakjani and Ahmadi, 2011). Solak and Firat (2014) also found that "presence of too many unfamiliar words in a text is a reason for the failure in comprehension".

###### 4.1.3 Syntactic Structure

One of the linguistic problems which makes the message more or less complex is the syntactic structure. Guo and Wills (2006) point out that understanding the meaning of words only and inability to recognise the main clause and the subordinate clause and the relationship between them in a sentence will be inaccurate understanding. They also present an example of Chinese students of English who face a clear challenge in listening because of the complexity of many sentence types which are very different from those in their native language. Likewise, studies performed by Hamouda (2013) and Vogely (1998) confirmed that grammatical structures interfered with LC.

###### 4.2 Background Problems (or) Inferential Problems

One of the factors which affect LC is the background knowledge which refers to some differences in culture, sociocultural and sociolinguistic factors. In this regard, Guo and Wills (2006: 6) assert that cultural background knowledge and

thinking affect LC. Anderson and Lynch (1988: 35) state that in learning foreign languages, learners do more than learning the linguistic system of those languages. Such a statement indicates to another area in learning foreign languages i.e. non-linguistic. As a matter of fact a language is the tool through which people express different features of their life such as beliefs, ideas, facts, and different feelings [...] Language is a mirror that reflects the national culture of its speakers". So, this implies that during learning FL learners learn something about the culture of people of that language. In this case, the differences in cultures from a place to another cause a difficulty in LC (Gilakjani and Ahmdi (2011), Vandergrift (2007) and Wipf (1984: 346). This is what Anderson and Lynch (1988: 35) refer to in that "gaps in our knowledge of the L2 culture, of the associations and references available to native users, can present obstacles to comprehension". In addition, Saricoban (1999: 4) adds that lack of sociocultural, factual, and contextual knowledge of the target language can be obstacles to LC. This clearly refers that the problems of comprehension are not only inherent in a language.

### **4.3 Student's Psychological Obstacles Influence their Listening Capacity**

Psychological factors as Guo and Wills (2006: 5) define "refer to those non-mental factors not directly involving cognitive processes such as students' interest, attention, learning emotions, attitudes and willpower". Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983: 92) and Hasan (1991: 117) state that students' motivation has great importance in acquiring knowledge and skills. Broughton et al. (1978: 59) refer that students "can often mimic the required accent effectively in order to mock it, and their apparent inability to produce it in class is psychological rather than physical". Besides, the low amount of motivation affects learning negatively.

Similarly, Beare (2009) also adds that the mental barrier is often one of the major obstacles for students. For instance, many students just tune out or they seem to be involved unwillingly in an internal dialogue trying to translate specific words. Others convince themselves that they are unable to understand spoken English well and create problems for themselves because of lack of confidence. In this regard, Guo and Wills (2006: 6) found out that many Chinese students lack confidence in their oral English language capability and they also have a self-defeating and defensive attitude to their engagement in it. In addition, Hamouda (2013) showed that Saudi students face difficulty in LC due to anxiety, lack of motivation, and lack of interest.

These factors are of great importance in the learning process in general, and in LC, specifically, where they can increase or decrease the students' ability in LC tasks.

### **4.4 Other Sources of Difficulty**

The discussion of this part will be managed around the main problems in LC which can be related to the main components of the learning process in general and the LC process, in particular. These are the learner, the teacher, and the teaching environment.

#### **4.4.1 Sources of Difficulty by the Listener**

There are some behaviours in which the listener affects his comprehension of the message. For example, Flowerdew and

Miller (1992:74) state that inability to concentrate is a major problem that students face in LC. In addition, the listener may be preoccupied and not listening or may be so interested in what he/she has to say than listening attentively. Moreover, the absence of desire of asking for clarification and students' trial to evaluate and make judgments about the speaker, the teacher, or the message contribute to the distractions of LC. Nadig (1999) at this point agrees with Dozer (1997) and the latter also asserts the importance of students' interest in increasing listener's comprehension. Similarly, Hamouda (2013) found out that failure to concentrate, preoccupation, and lack of proficiency in English language are major problems that Saudi students face in LC

#### **4.4.2 Sources of Difficulty by the Speaker**

Regarding the difficulties which a speaker causes for a listener, Nadig (ibid) mentions that making the voice too low to be heard, making the message too complex either by including more detailed information or many issues make the task of the listener more difficult. Moreover, as Duzer (1997) points out that the colloquial language, the speaker's rate of speaking either too fast or too slow or using many hesitations contribute to the difficulties for the listener. The speaker's pronunciation sometimes also leads to misunderstanding the message. As Broughton et al. (1978: 58) state "in order to imitate correctly one must have heard correctly". They also add that different reasons cause such problems in pronunciation and it can not only be the responsibility of the teacher. Consequently, students' motivation and psychological abilities and their need to listen to themselves are crucial factors for developing pronunciation. These can serve as highly significant factors in pronunciation.

#### **4.4.3 Teaching Environment**

The teaching environment must be as suitable as possible for learning, in general, and FL teaching, in particular. Chaugule (2009) states that it is basically essential to establish an appropriate physical and psychological atmosphere in classrooms. There must be also special conditions and further facilities for developing teaching and encouraging students to learn an FL because teaching does not only involve methods and techniques but also materials development, sufficient time, class organisation and possibly training. So, classroom organisation should encourage interaction, allowing pairing and grouping of students. Consequently, large classes are not suitable for teaching listening and teachers' strategies for teaching listening are not effective in such an environment (Eltaib, 2011). In addition, Duzer (1997) and Allen and Lusha (2008) assert the importance of visual supports and the non-verbal language in the process of LC. Broughton et al. (1978: 71) also add that visuals are one way of reinforcement of some types of tapes. So, listening is considered as a visual as well as an auditory act, as people communicate much through body language. These visual supports can improve LC. Therefore, unavailability of these visuals or inability to use them effectively in classroom leads to difficulties in LC. In addition, the time devoted to lessons should be sufficient to perform listening tasks. Marysleessor et al. (2012) found out that time and large classes are regarded as challenges teachers face in teaching listening and speaking. Another problem that hinder the teaching of the LS is the fact

that schools pay more attention to other skills such as writing, reading and structures rather than the LS Azmi et al. (2014) and Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016).

## V. PREVIOUS STUDIES

In point of fact, there were a number of studies which tried to investigate the difficulties of teaching listening. For instance, Hamouda's study (2013) aimed to investigate the listening problems encountered by Saudi students in the EL listening classroom. The sample consisted of 60 students of first year English, Qassim University. He used questionnaires and interviews to collect the data. The results of the study showed that accent, pronunciation, speed of speech, insufficient vocabulary, different accents of speakers, lack of concentration, anxiety, and bad quality of recording were the major LC problems encountered by EFL Saudi learners.

Zainol Abidin (2013) also has investigated LC problems encountered by Chinese students learning in Malaysia. He has conducted interviews to collect the data from the students. The findings revealed that the main problem encountered by the Chinese students is the lack of prior knowledge in English vocabulary. Furthermore, there are differences in the accent of the native speakers, the short span of concentration, and the learning habits of Chinese students.

Saidur (2014) tried to find out the difficulties that face both the teachers and the students EFL/ESL listening classroom at Secondary level Education in Bangladesh. He used a questionnaire, focus group discussion and class observation to collect the data. Both the teachers and the took part in this study. The study revealed that the main problem is the exam system where only two skills are tested in the examination, so both the teachers and students are avoiding the LS intentionally. In addition, students are facing some problems such as vocabulary problem, shyness problem, pronunciation problems, speedy conversation, contacted forms, the differences between the features of Bengali and English language, no practice for the LS outside the classroom, and focusing on understanding the meaning of all words rather than the context. Teachers also face a lot of problems such lack of training on listening skills, large classes, unavailability of facilities such as computers, listening passage, sound system, Teachers' Guide and in some cases electricity. So, he concluded that the teaching of the LS is still disappointing and needs to be improved.

Similarly, Eltaib (2011) investigated the difficulties of teaching the LS to large classes in Sudanese universities. He used a questionnaire for teachers and a test for the students to collect the data. The sample consisted of thirty teachers and fifty students. This research proved that large classes have negative impact on teaching listening because it needs a quiet place and small number of students to ensure good quality of teaching listening. In addition, it proved that teachers' strategies of teaching listening in large classes are not effective.

Furthermore, Yilmaz and Yavuz (2015) conducted a study to examine the frequency of the problems seen in three listening categories of the problems based on teachers, the problems based on students' own strategies and the problems based on learner's psychology. The study was conducted in Turkey Soray Primary School in İstanbul in Turkey among 4th grade students in the

ages of ten and eleven including 58 students in three classes. A questionnaire and a listening task were utilized to collect the data. The results revealed that the biggest deficiency as a problem is learning and teaching phonetics. It also showed that the students have problems based on some psychological reasons such as the high level of anxiety as well as problems relating to the lack of practicing listening.

## VI. METHODOLOGY

### 6.1 Aims of the Study

The study aims to:

- Investigate the problems of teaching the listening skill in the Yemeni secondary schools in Aden governorate.
- 2. Find out some solutions for developing the teaching of the listening skill in the secondary schools.

### 6.2 Context and Participants

This study aims at investigating the problems of teaching the LS in the secondary schools in Aden Governorate, Yemen. The sample of the study consisted of fifty teachers holding a Bachelor of Arts degree and their years of experience range from 1-31 years. They were selected randomly from 11 secondary schools out of 32 secondary schools in five districts of the governorate with a percentage of 43%. The observation has also been conducted at the same schools at the same schools. The total number of the observed periods was 36 periods in different classes.

## VII. INSTRUMENTS

The study employed two instruments for collecting the data; a questionnaire for teachers and classroom observation. The questionnaire aimed to elicit sufficient data from the teachers' points of view about the problems that they encounter in teaching listening. It was designed in two main ways: structured and unstructured.

Similarly, the observation is a very important and useful instrument for collecting data on classroom situation. It aimed to observe what is really done in the classroom rather than what is said to be done. In other words, it tries to select the data which cannot be obtained by the questionnaire through focusing more on teachers and students' behaviours and activities in the classroom as well as teaching environment. It was non-participant and structured observation.

## VIII. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The results of the questionnaire and the observation will be analysed and discussed in what follows. Firstly the results of the questionnaire will be introduced.

- **Analysing the Results of the Teachers' Questionnaire**  
**Q.1- Do you think that the listening skill is more difficult for the students than the other skills? Why?**

The data revealed that the majority of the subjects (76%) consider the LS as more difficult for learning a language than the other skills, whereas only 24% of them do not think that. This

means that most of the teachers are aware of the difficulty of the LS. For the purpose of clarity, those who stated that it is the most difficult were asked to interpret their responses in the open part of this question (i.e. *Why?*). They attributed that to some reasons. These are the unavailability of the facilities, students' low level, the lack of knowledge and practice of the sub-skills of listening such as identifying sounds, stress, and intonation patterns, demotivation for learning the LS.

**Q.2-What are the main problems that you as a teacher face in carrying out the listening tasks in the classroom?**

The problems that teachers encounter in teaching the LS as stated in this open question will be summarized as follows:

1)Problems relating to the learners such as students' low level in general and specially in English, demotivation, their negative attitudes towards the TL and the LS, in particular.

2)Problems relating to the facilities i.e. lack of facilities and in most cases unavailability of them such as tapes, recorders, videos, as well as using old books by students where most of the tasks already done by previous batches, so these tasks fail to achieve their aims.

3) Problems relating to the teaching environment such as the physical conditions, noise, the density of students in the classroom, and the insufficient time devoted for lessons.

4) Problems relating to the difficulty of the LS itself.

5) Problems relating to the little amount of training and practice of the TL and the LS whether inside or outside the classroom.

Similarly, based on other questions, the researcher could conclude that teachers and administrations also contribute to the difficulties and problems of teaching LC. This will be shown through the analysis of the following questions.

**Q.3- Put the following problems in the order according to the degree of difficulty in teaching the listening skill, by numbering them 1, 2, 3 and 4. 1 is the most difficult problem, 4 is the least difficult: A- Language problems, B- Background problems, C- Students' psychological obstacles, D- Unavailability of facilities.**

The potions will be represented in the figure by these letters (A, B, C, and D) respectively.

Similarly, the results indicated that the problems of teaching the LS in the context of the study, as stated by the teachers, are ranged as follows. The majority (54%) of the subjects vote for the unavailability of the facilities ( D in the figure) as the first problem or the most difficult problem that hinders the teaching of the LS. Then, the language problems (A) take the second level of difficulty. At the third level of difficulty, the students' psychological obstacles (C) are considered to be the first one in this level where 32% of the subjects vote for it. Lastly, 38% of the subjects consider the background problems (B) as the least difficult problem in teaching the LS. The differences among these percentages showed that these problems represent difficulties in both learning and teaching and the degree

of difficulty may differ from a teacher to another as well as from a situation to another.

**Q.4- Put the following aspects of the listening skill in the order according to the degree of difficulty in teaching it by numbering them 1, 2, 3 and 4. 1 is the most difficult, 4 is the least difficult: - Grammatical differences - Sound system - Stress and intonation - Comprehending the whole message**

Figure (2) showed that 76% of the subjects consider stress and intonation patterns as the most difficult aspect of the LS. 76% of the subjects confirm that the sound system is on the second level of difficulty. Vocabulary comes on the third level of difficulty where 80% of the subjects vote for it. Lastly, 84% of the subjects consider the grammatical differences as the least difficult aspect of the LS.

**5- Do you carry out listening tasks during the course as it is suggested in the Teacher's Book? If yes, to what extent do you do that? If not why?**

The results also showed that 58% of the subjects use the listening tasks during the course as it is suggested in the teachers' book and only a third of them apply such tasks to a great extent, while the majority use them to some and a limited extent. However, 42% of them do not use these tasks during the period of the course at all. Those who say that they do not use these tasks ascribe this to some reasons. These are; unavailability of the facilities in schools such as tapes and recorders, crowded classes, schools administrations' carelessness of teaching listening and involving listening tasks in tests and exams, students' low level, and inadequacy of time for implementing the syllabus. Therefore, it is clear that teachers and administrations sometimes contribute to the problems of teaching the LS by neglecting it.

**6- Did/ Do you have any particular course of training in teaching English language focusing on using listening techniques?**

The results revealed that the majority of the subjects (84%) did not receive any particular training course in ELT focusing on using listening techniques. This, clearly, shows that the administrations and the policy of education do not pay attention to listening as an effective skill for teaching and learning FL.

**8.2 Analysing the Observation Results**

The data collected by the observation will be analysed focusing on the place of the LS in the real classroom situation, teachers and students' activities, problems they encounter in the classroom as well as the teaching environment.

**• The Place of the Listening Skill in the Classroom Situation**

Four issues will be discussed under this category to obtain a complete picture of the place of the LS in the classroom situation. These are: (1) teacher focus (2) carrying out activities (3) aids used (4) types of listening activities.

**A- The teacher focuses during the lesson more on:**

Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing
10%	58%	10%	22%

*Table (1): The importance of the listening skill in the classroom situation.*

The observation revealed that the application of the listening tasks in the classroom was very low (10%) whereas teachers focused more on reading (58%) and writing skills (22%).

**B- Carrying out listening activities during the lessons:**

Yes	No
11%	89%

*Table (2): Carrying out listening activities.*

It appears through the observation and according to teachers' guide that those lessons for which the listening activities should be carried out were 15 lessons out of the 36 lessons, but the performed activities were only 4 with a percentage of 11% as it is shown in the table above. So, it is clear that the majority of teachers did not follow teachers' guide for conducting English lessons in the class.

**C- The aids used:**

Teacher Model	Taped Materials Model
50%	50%

*Table (3): The aids used for presenting listening tasks.*

Table (3) displays that 50% of the performed listening activities depended on the teacher model and 50% of them used the taped materials model.

The type of the activities given to the students were only three activities in which the aim of these tasks was to extract and write specific information from a recorded monologue and conversation, and another activity was for consolidation. So, it is clear that the listening activities given to the students were very few and concentrating more on comprehension. Thus, it is a good practice, but pronunciation activities were not included in the course or even presented by teachers in the class except reading new vocabulary in chorus.

These limitations, appeared in the three points discussed above, can be attributed to different reasons discussed in the questionnaire results. For example, the main prominent reason, as the teachers stated, is unavailability of the facilities such as taped materials and recorders etc. Similarly, it reflects teacher' demotivation to work properly in such conditions.

**2- Teacher's Techniques and Activities**

- *Using visual supports*

Yes	No
25%	75%

*Table (4): Using visual supports.*

Table (4) displays that the majority of the teachers (75%) did not use the visual supports to help in introducing the lessons, whereas only 25% of them used such visuals. These visuals were mostly pictures, while only one used real objects and another used drawing.

**b) Following Teacher's Book:**

Yes	No
42%	58%

*Table (5): Following the Teacher's Book.*

Table (5) shows that 58% of the teachers in the observed periods did not follow the recommended methodology in the TB, while 42% of them tried to do so.

**c) Teacher's pronunciation**

the items	To a great extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
a) pronounces sounds correctly	<b>67%</b>	33%	0%	0%
b) focuses on stress and intonation	0%	14%	42%	<b>44%</b>

*Table (6): Teacher's pronunciation.*

The results showed also that while the teachers' pronunciation of sounds was to a great extent correct, the focus on stress and intonation was to a limited extent and mostly they never did.

**• Students' activities and problems**

On the other hand, there were some students' behaviors and distractions in the class such as the noise, preoccupation during the tasks with other activities which represent distractions to listening. In addition, there were some prominent problems in students' performance. These will be shown in Table (7) below:

The problems	Percentages
a) pronouncing sounds	88%
b) stress and intonation	94%
c) comprehending the whole message	19%
d) syntactic distinctions	19%

*Table (7): The most prominent problems in students' performance.*

It can be referred, here, that the areas of the sound system, stress and intonation, which have great importance in understanding the spoken language were not included in the course.

**• Classroom Environment**

Furthermore, the teaching environment i.e. the classroom also includes some problems that hinder the teaching of the listening skill such as density, disarrangement, and time inadequacy.

**IX. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The general findings of the study will be summarised and categorised as follows:

The results of the study proved that the listening skill is the most difficult and challenging task for learning a language and this goes in accordance with Paulston 1976, Eastman 1987, Mee 2001.

2. The results also showed that the problems of teaching listening can be categorized into two main categories, i.e. linguistic and non-linguistic. It was proved that the non-linguistic problems were the main hindrances to teaching the listening skill in the context of the study. These are as follows:

a) Unavailability of the facilities such as tapes, recorders, videos, computers, data shows, visual supports, and also new copies of course books for the students.

b) Problems relating to the learners such as students' psychological obstacles, the students' low level, demotivation, failure to concentrate and preoccupation as also proved in the studies of Hamouda (2013) and Guo and Wills (2006). In addition, this study added students' negative attitudes towards English and the listening skill, the little amount of students' training and practice of English and the listening skill inside and

outside the classroom, the latter is consistent with Sadiur's (2014) and Yilmaz and Yavuz's (2015) results.

c) Background problems as it was also consistent with Anderson and Lynch (1988), Saricoban 1999, Guo and Wills (2006), as well as Gilakjani and Ahmdi (2011).

d) Problems relating to the teaching environment such as crowdedness, noise as well as to the time devoted to the English language lessons. These conditions are not suitable environment for teaching listening and this is congruent with Etaib (2011) and Maryslessor et al. (2012).

e) Problems relating to the teachers themselves such as demotivation for teaching the listening skill as a result of the difficulties surrounding the process of teaching such a skill and also the little amount of training for teachers. So, they tend to neglect the listening tasks during the course. In addition, it was clear through all these conditions surrounding the teaching environment that schools pay more attention to other skills such as reading, writing and structures but neglect the LS and this echoed with the findings of similar researches conducted by Azmi et al. (2014) and Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016).

3- The linguistic aspects of the difficulty of the LS revealed in this study are respectively ranked as follows; stress, intonation perception, sounds system, vocabulary, and the grammatical differences. These results are also consistent with those of Vandergrift (2007) and Wipf (1984).

a)The results of the study with respect to pronunciation problems are consistent with the results of Hamouda (2013) who found out that Saudi students have problems in pronunciation that hinder LC. This also goes in accordance with what Kharma and Hajjaj (1997) assert that Arab learners face difficulties in pronunciation. The results also were consistent with those of Norris's (1993), Solak and Firat's (2014) results that also Chinese students and Turkish students respectively face difficulties in pronunciation that hinder LC.

b)With respect to the lack of and unfamiliarity with vocabulary, Hassan (2000), Thomas and Dyer (2007), But (2010), Gilakjani and Ahmdi (2011), Solak and Firat (2014) also concluded in their studies of LC problems that the presence of too many unfamiliar words in the text is a reason for the failure in comprehension.

c)The results of the study with respect to the grammatical structures are consistent with results of Vogely (1998) and Hamouda (2013) which confirmed that grammatical structures could confuse students and hinder LC.

## X. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

This study provided some implications for English classroom and particularly for teaching listening based on the findings provided previously in this study.

- Availability of the facilities and effective ELT techniques are prerequisite for teaching listening.

2. Improving learners' roles in the classroom and helping them to develop positive attitudes towards the listening skill can be fulfilled by grading listening activities and techniques throughout the course and implementing them.

3. Improving the classroom environment and the arrangement of the students in suitable classes are very helpful for teaching listening.

4. Raising teachers and schools administrations' awareness of the importance of the listening skill and developing training programmes for teachers are seen to be important for developing the teaching of the listening skill.

## XI. CONCLUSION

This paper has introduced some main problematic issues that hinder the teaching of the listening skill to Yemeni EFL learners. The results showed that the teaching of the listening skill in the context of the study suffers a set of problems; linguistic and non-linguistic. These non-linguistic problems are represented in the unavailability of the facilities, the learners, the classroom environment, lack of training and practice, the teachers, as well as the time devoted to English language teaching. In addition, there were also the linguistic problems which included pronunciation represented in stress, intonation and the sound system, vocabulary as well as syntactic structure. The study also presented some pedagogical implications for developing the teaching of the listening skill.

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