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A STUDY ON EFL TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES WITH
EFL LEARNERS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION PROBLEMS

THESIS BY

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ÖZET

İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN DİNLEDİĞİNİ ANLAMA PROBLEMLERİ VE İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN ALGI VE UYGULAMALARI

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Devlet üniversitesinde çalışan bir İngilizce öğretmeni olarak Türkiye'deki devlet üniversitelerinde çalışan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin üniversite hazırlık öğrencilerinin dinlediğini anlamaya ilgili sorunlarını nasıl algıladıkları ilgimi çeken bir konu olmuştur. Bu çalışma İngilizce öğretmenlerinin İngilizce'yi bir yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin karşılaştıkları dinleme-anlama sorunlarını nasıl algıladıklarını ve bu problemlere yönelik sınıf içi uygulama veya çözüm yollarını araştırmak için yapılmıştır. Bu çalışmadaki katılımcılar Gaziantep Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksek Okulu'nda görev yapmakta olan İngilizce öğretmenleridir. Bu amaçla, yürütülen bu çalışmaya 56 İngilizce öğretmeni katılmıştır. Bu araştırmada nitel ve nicel araştırma yöntemleri birlikte kullanılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, nicel veri analizi için katılımcılara 30 maddelik dinleme anlama sorunlarıyla ilgili bir anket verilmiştir. Ayrıca, nicel verinin sonuçları dikkate alınarak, 10 katılımcı öğretmen ile bu sorunlarla etkin bir şekilde başa çıkabilmeleri için öğrencilerine nasıl yardım ettiklerini öğrenmek amacıyla mülakat yapılmıştır.

Elde edilen verilerin değerlendirilmesiyle öğretmenlerin, dinleme becerisinin öğrencileri için çok önemli olduğunu düşündükleri, öğrencilerin karşılaştıkları farklı türden sorunların farkında oldukları ve bu sorunlarla olabildiğince etkin bir şekilde başa çıkabilmeleri için öğrencilerine farklı çözüm yolları ve sınıf içi uygulamaları sundukları ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dinlediğini anlama sorunları, Öğretmenlerin algıları, Öğretmenlerin bu sorunlarla ilgili çözümleri ve uygulamaları

ABSTRACT

A STUDY ON EFL TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES WITH EFL LEARNERS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION PROBLEMS

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As an EFL teacher working at a state university, I have been interested in finding out how EFL teachers at state universities perceive prep school EFL students' listening comprehension problems. In this sense, this research was done to investigate how EFL teachers perceive students' problems related to listening comprehension and what in-class practices and solutions they provide in order to deal with these problems. The participants of this study were EFL teachers working at Gaziantep University Higher School of Foreign Languages. For this purpose, the study was conducted with 56 EFL teachers. This study was carried out by employing qualitative and quantitative research designs. In this regard, the participants were given a perception questionnaire consisting of 30 items related to students' listening comprehension problems. In addition, considering the results of the quantitative data, interviews were conducted with 10 teachers participating in the questionnaire in order to find out what in-class practices and solutions they had in order to help their students to cope with these problems efficiently.

With the evaluation of the data gathered, it was revealed that EFL teachers believed that listening was very significant for students as a skill, they were aware of different listening comprehension problems that students face, and so they provided their students with effective solutions and classroom practices in order to deal with these problems as efficiently as possible.

Keywords: Listening comprehension problems, Teachers' perceptions, Teachers' practices or solutions for listening comprehension problems

ABBREVIATIONS

LC : Listening Comprehension

DISL : Discovery Listening

MALQ : Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire

SBI : Strategy-Based Instruction

SILL : Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

SLA : Second Language Acquisition

ST : Schema Theory

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CHAPTER I

1.1. Introduction

This chapter starts with a discussion of the background of the study. Next, it presents the statement of the problem, the aim of the study, the research questions and the limitations of the study. Finally, operational definitions of the study are pointed out.

1.2. Background of the study

The acquisition of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing plays a major role in the successful learning of the second language (L2) for learners. Around the world, the ever-growing importance of English language teaching has made it necessary for learners to have good communication skills in both social and academic surroundings. In order for an effective communication to take place, there is undoubtedly a substantial burden on the shoulders of EFL teachers in the teaching of these skills. Being aware of the significance of communication skills for EFL learners, EFL teachers need to teach language learners how to speak the target language with some fluency. However, like several other researchers prominent in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Rivers (1966) brought forward an idea saying that, “Speaking does not of itself constitute communication unless what is being said is comprehended adequately by another person” (p. 196).

Listening, which plays a fundamental role not only in communication but also in interpersonal relationships, is unfortunately one of those skills that has long been given the least importance in language education. With the increasing demand and attention on communication in the process of language learning, listening has been given more importance, as it is an indispensable prerequisite of communication (Richards, 2005). Besides, because English is one of the most-widely used languages around the world as a second or foreign language; it is now more possible than ever for language learners to be exposed to the language in different situations such as entertainment and academic purposes. In order to maintain continuity in academic success, learners are expected to be able to listen efficiently. This is considered necessary especially when they follow their lectures or want to study abroad.

With the use of technology in language education effectively, now EFL learners can be provided better by their teachers with many opportunities to enhance their efficiency in listening comprehension. In this sense, materials or activities related to listening are usually prepared by teachers taking learners' interests and levels of proficiency into account. Even in such cases, learners' inadequate exposure to English as a foreign language in their daily life mostly results in lack of practice. Considering this, learners do not have any problems understanding their teachers as the primary source of language input that they hear on a regular basis or doing the activities in their books. However, as Yıldırım stated (2013), "Since the utterances that learners hear in real life communication situations may differ, listening and listening comprehension are two problematic skills for many language learners" (p.2).

Considering the fact that language is a medium of communication, it has been a significant facet for most of foreign language teachers to teach English for communication since the introduction of Functional Language and Communicative Approach into language teaching in 1970s (Osada, 2004; Vandergrift, 1999). Since then, there have been significant debates and changes as a result of these debates in the field of foreign or second language education. One of the most striking changes was the shift from the passive role attributed to listening to an active one as a receptive skill (Vandergrift, 1999). In parallel with this, listening comprehension has attracted considerable attention being acknowledged as a critical dimension in language acquisition (Duzer, 1997).

With this in mind, a considerable number of researchers have stated that listening is an essential means of communication, and that it is regarded as the process of hearing, understanding, remembering, interpreting, evaluating, and responding (Brownell, 2002). Even though listening comprehension is "an active and conscious process in which listeners construct meaning by using cues from contextual information and existing knowledge" (O'Malley, Chamot & Kupper, 1989, p.19), there is still a common notion that it is a passive skill. Contrary to this general belief, Brown (1994) indicates that listening involves listening for individuals' thoughts, feelings, and intentions. Doing so definitely requires the active involvement of listeners, their effort, and practice.

Listening, once somehow neglected and shifted to a secondary position in language teaching and acquisition, came into focus and could attract a considerable attention as a skill only after 1970s (Vandergrift, 1999). As Osada (2004) indicates, “the status of listening in language education changed from being incidental and peripheral to a status of central importance. As researchers became increasingly interested in exploring this skill, more research, theory building, and curriculum development on listening were done” (p. 55). Likewise, Goh (1997) states that the key skill that is vital and unavoidable in language acquisition is listening. Nunan (2002) believes that listening is the basic skill in language learning, and that listening comprehension is a highly complex problem-solving process.

In this sense, Anderson and Lynch (1988) and Brown (2006) state that listening is a skill that can be broken down into a set of distinct sub-skills. The two main sub-skills that explain the listening processes are top-down and bottom-up processes. Nation and Newton (2008) define the bottom-up as “the process in which the listener taps into background knowledge of the topic, the situation or context, the type of text, and the language” (p.40). According to Duzer (1997), the bottom-up processing includes listening for the main idea, predicting, drawing inferences, and summarizing. By contrast, bottom-up strategies are text based; the listener relies on the language in the message, that is, the combination of sounds, words, and grammar that constructs meaning (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Some examples of bottom-up skills are such as listening for specific details, recognizing cognates, and recognizing word-order (Berne, 2004).

With the increased importance given to listening skills in language learning, teaching listening and listening comprehension have become prominent and drawn the attention of a considerable number of researchers as well (e.g., Berne, 2004; Chang & Read, 2006; Isazadeh & Marzban, 2012; Wilson, 2003). Besides, there are some research studies whose focus has been particularly on the listening comprehension problems and strategies of learners (Glakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Hasan, 2000; Kurita, 2012; Küpper & Chamot, 1989; Selamat & Sidhu, 2012; Snow & Perkins, 1979; Vandergrift, 1999).

As stated above, most of such studies done previously have examined the issue of listening comprehension considering only the learners' point of views. As far as the researcher of this study is concerned, there haven't been any studies that directly explore teachers' perceptions of learners' listening comprehension problems and further examine the ways they handle these problems. It is undeniable that how teachers perceive their learners' listening comprehension problems and their solutions to these problems is highly important in the process of language teaching and learning (Graham, 2006).

1.3. Statement of the problem

Listening is one of the fundamental skills of language learning and acquisition. It is vital for the learners of English as a second language since it is through this skill that learners can both form an intact basis in the process of language learning and communicative competence (Kurita, 2012). Without the skill of listening, it is hard for language learning to take place, and hence no effective communication can be generated as expected. In spite of its importance, it has been somewhat neglected or poorly taught for a long time (Hasan, 2000). Only after the importance of communication in language teaching and learning was understood, could listening be regarded as a crucial skill and given necessary attention by many researchers (Yıldırım, 2013).

In this regard, a great variety of research studies have been conducted on the issue of improving learners' listening comprehension (e.g., Goh, 1999; Selamat & Sidhu, 2013). Also, there are many studies investigating students' listening comprehension strategies (e.g., Berne, 2004; Wilberschied & Berman). In addition, researchers have focused their attention on learners' listening comprehension (LC) problems (e.g., Graham, 2005; Hasan, 2000; Osada, 2004; Stepanoviene, 2012). However, studies conducted in relation to learners' listening comprehension problems investigated only the perceptions of learners regarding the difficulties they experienced in listening process. As far as the researcher is concerned, there hasn't been a particular study that directly focused on the learners' listening comprehension problems from teachers' perceptions or opinions.

Almost all the studies done so far have emphasized that listening is usually considered the most challenging and difficult skill in English language learning by many EFL students around the world (Kutlu & Aslanoğlu, 2009). Similarly, listening is regarded as a skill that is really hard to acquire for the university students in Turkey. They face this problem frequently although English language teaching and learning are two compulsory parts of the curriculum, and also they start learning English at the very early years of their formal education. This is primarily as a result of giving more emphasis on teaching the other skills like reading, writing, and grammar rather than listening and speaking equally in language classes. Quite unsurprisingly, both this big negligence in the teaching of listening as a skill adequately and learners' limited exposure to English outside of the classroom result in learners' lack of communication ability or competence. Accordingly, a great majority of university students still regard listening as a big burden, and they have listening comprehension problems, which indeed affect their success in language learning process. Knowing the problems or difficulties that hinder learners' effective comprehension of the oral messages or spoken texts is highly important for teachers to facilitate their learners' listening comprehension skills. Considering this, there is a great need to first find out such problems efficiently by consulting teachers so as to help learners to deal with these problems as effectively as possible.

1.4. Aim of the study

This study is based on the thought that one of the most significant issues of language education is to provide learners with how to be able to improve their communication ability and overcome their listening comprehension problems in the process of language acquisition. An effective way to achieve this intention is to acquaint teachers with the problematic areas in listening comprehension or problems their learners encounter so that necessary treatment measures or solutions can be taken. The engagement of teachers in the process of identifying and generating solutions for learners' listening comprehension problems is highly important. In this case, as Field (1998, p.112) states, listening becomes 'a diagnostic activity', in which the function of the teacher is to identify and redress learners' weaknesses as listeners. In this regard, it is considerably important to consult teachers by seeking and learning their perceptions of listening comprehension problems in order to find effective solutions or ways to

handle learners' weaknesses. Therefore, the first aim of this study is to identify EFL teachers' perceptions of learners' listening comprehension problems. The second aim is to learn what practices or solutions teachers generate to deal with these problems.

1.5. Research Questions

This study is an attempt to find the answers to the following questions:

1. What are EFL teachers' perceptions of EFL learners' listening comprehension problems in a university context?
2. What are EFL teachers' reported practices or solutions in order to cope with EFL learners' listening comprehension problems?

1.6. Limitations

Despite the fact that examining teachers' perceptions of learners' listening comprehension problems is of great importance, as they can affect their classroom practices and learners' comprehension, the literature on teachers' perceptions of listening comprehension problems is insufficient. It is hoped that the findings of the present study will make a positive contribution to identifying foreign language teachers' perceptions of and solutions to these problems. However, some limitations of the study should be considered as well. One limitation of this study is the limited number of participants, which was 56 foreign language instructors. Additionally, this study is limited to only one state university and department, Gaziantep University Higher School of Foreign Languages. Although the number of the participants is quite natural for this study, a bigger sample is needed in order to be able to make generalizations. Considering this fact, the findings cannot be generalized to the broader community based on the current study alone (Duzer, 1997).

1.7. Operational Definitions

Listening: It is "the activity of paying attention to and trying to get meaning from something that we hear" (Underwood, 1989, p.1).

Listening Comprehension: "Listening comprehension is an active and conscious process in which the listener constructs meaning by using cues from contextual

information and from existing knowledge, while relying upon multiple strategic resources to fulfill the task requirement” (O’Malley, Chamot & Küpper, 1989, p.19). According to Flowerdew and Miller (1997), “It is the receptive skill in the oral mode. When we speak of listening what we really mean is listening and understanding what we hear (p.21). Listening comprehension can also be defined as “the ability to recall and understand information which is presented orally. This information might be presented through a book, filmstrip, video, or felt board set (Field, 1998, p.37).

Bottom-up Processes: These are the processes “the listener uses to assemble the message piece-by piece from the speech stream, going from the parts to the whole” (Nation & Newton, 2008, p.40). Field (1998) states, “bottom-up processing involves perceiving and parsing the speech stream at increasingly larger levels beginning with auditory-phonetic, phonemic, syllabic, lexical, syntactic, semantic, propositional, pragmatic and interpretive (p.110).

Top-down Processes: These are the processes “that involve the listener in going from the whole—their prior knowledge and their content and rhetorical schemata—to the parts” (Field, 1998, p.110). In other words, “the listener uses what they know of the context of communication to predict what the message will contain, and uses parts of the message to confirm, correct or add to this. The key process here is inferencing” (Nation & Newton, 2008, p.40).

CHAPTER II

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to make a review of the relevant literature and to give background information about the significance of listening, defining listening comprehension, the process of listening comprehension, listening comprehension problems, current research conducted on listening comprehension problems of language learners, and teaching listening comprehension with strategies.

2.2. The Significance of Listening

Listening is the key skill that has a significant place in the constitution of communication in our daily life. As Flowerdew and Miller (1997) indicate “it is an essential tool, which is one of the constructive aspects in the communication process, for communicating with other people” (p.21). Through the studies conducted by many researchers, it is understood well that the time allocated for listening is relatively more than the other language skills; that is, speaking, reading, and writing. In support of this, Mendelsohn (1994) states that “of the total time spent on communicating, listening takes up 40-50 %; speaking 25-30 %; reading, 11-16 %; and writing, about 9 %” (p. 9). In accordance with this, a study conducted by Kurita (2012) indicated that female college students spent 42 percent of their total verbal communication time in listening while they spent 25 percent in speaking, 15 percent in reading, and 18 percent in writing. In another study conducted by Barker, Edwards, Gaines, Gladney, and Holley (1980) the prominence of listening in communication is highlighted. In this study the results showed that the portion of time college students spent on verbal communication was 52.5 percent for listening, 17.3 percent for reading, 16.3 percent for speaking, and 13.9 percent for writing. Brown (1994) stated that elementary students spend almost 60% of their classroom time in listening. According to Wilberschied and Berman (2004), listening is the primary means through which incoming ideas and information are taken in.

In addition to its critical role in daily life communication, listening has a considerable place in education as well. According to Wolvin and Coakley (1997), both in and out of the classroom, listening uses up more of daily communication when compared to the other forms of verbal communication. Listening has been necessary for students throughout all levels of their educational development and classroom instruction (Wolvin & Coakley, 1997; Feyten, 1991). As Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) state, listening is used more frequently than the other language skills in the classroom environment. Considering this, it is no doubt that listening comprehension plays a central part in the success of academic settings. It is now regarded as a significant factor that contributes highly to learners' academic success (Duzer, 1997). On the other hand, Osada (2004) suggests that listening has long been less emphasized than the other skills despite its inevitable importance in education. After a long-time neglect, however, nowadays more attention is being given to listening and it is regarded as a core skill contributing markedly both to the lives of people and also learners' academic achievement. As listening is a primary medium of learning and communication, there is a need to define and describe this process satisfactorily enough (Yıldırım, 2013).

2.3. Defining Listening Comprehension

Defining listening has been an issue of discussion among researchers since it first came to the fore in the early 1960s. Since then, listening has been shown a renewed interest and it has been defined by researchers in different ways. Anderson and Lynch (1988) made a definition of successful listening by saying that “understanding is not something that happens because of what a speaker says: the listener has a crucial part to play in the process, by activating various types of knowledge, and by applying what he knows to what he hears and trying to understand what the speaker means” (p. 6). As it is understood, listeners hear the incoming input, and at the same time, they actively process the message to comprehend it efficiently. As Kemp (2010) states, the objective of listening comprehension is that it enables listeners or learners to talk and write about what they hear after listening. Buck (1992) suggests that listening is an active process in which listeners construct meaning with the help of knowledge for the incoming sound that involves linguistic as well as non-linguistic knowledge accordingly. From this point of view, what is required of a proficient listener is to interpret what a speaker intends to

say, handle a listening conversation, understand what is meant in the discourse as a message, and comprehend the message regardless of understanding every word (Mendelsohn, 1994).

As Purdy (1997) defined, listening comprehension is “the active and dynamic process of attending, perceiving, interpreting, remembering, and responding to the expressed (verbal and nonverbal), needs, concerns, and information offered by other human beings” (p. 8). According to Rost (2002), listening comprehension is a process of inference in which listeners infer something from the incoming message or input. During this process, listeners utilize both linguistic knowledge and world knowledge or previous knowledge in order to generate a mental representation of what they have heard. Rost (2002) goes on stating that listeners utilize bottom-up and top-down processes to internalize this mental representation and to succeed in effective comprehension. In his definition of listening, Field (1998) states that “listening is the process of receiving what the speaker actually says, constructing, and representing meaning, negotiating meaning with the speaker and responding, and creating meaning through involvement, imagination, and empathy (p. 112). In order to listen efficiently enough, listeners are required to have the ability to decipher the message, the ability to use various strategies and processes in an interaction, and utter something in response to what is said to him or her considering the purpose and mode of the communication (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). Keeping all these stated in mind, it is understood that listening comprehension is not solely a unidimensional process of receiving audible knowledge or symbols, but rather an interactive process (Brown, 2006).

2.4. The Process of Listening Comprehension

Although listening is regarded as a complex and covert activity or a process of which no one is sure how it works or how people learn to listen and understand, researchers prominent in the field of Second Language Education (SLE) have made different attempts on explaining this obscure process. To a great majority of researchers, listening comprehension is accepted as a process in which listeners focus on aural input or incoming knowledge, constitute meaning from passages, and relate what they have heard to the existing knowledge (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). In cognitive psychology, comprehension is defined as the activity through which information is processed. As

such, schemata that are the guiding structures in the process of comprehension gain a big importance for listeners.

2.4.1. The Schema Theory

Field (1998) describes schemata as “a complex knowledge structure in the mind which groups all that an individual knows about, or associates with, a particular concept” (p. 113). According to Kurita (2012) schema is a primary source in representing our knowledge about any concepts such as the ones related with objects, events, situations, actions that take place around us. According to the cognitive comprehension theory, listeners use linguistic and situational knowledge as well as their expectations of the new input or message in order to activate schemata. Once a schema is activated, it will enable a listener to generate comprehension by functioning as a guiding structure. In support of this, Cahyono and Widiati (2010) indicate that listeners will succeed in comprehending the text if the incoming information is compatible with the schema. Contrary to this, if either of them is incompatible, the information or the schema will not proceed accordingly. In principle, the schema theory is based upon two means of information processing: bottom-up processes and top-down processes (Wilson, 2003). Wilson (2003) further states that these two types of processings synchronise with each other to create an interactive processing. Considering this, it is understood that listening comprehension process is consisted of three types in all: bottom-up processing, top-down processing, and interactive processing.

2.4.2. The Bottom-Up Processing

Bottom-up primacy is the first of the three types of processing. O'Malley, Chamot, and Küpper (1989) indicate that it is initiated by the new incoming information. Thereon, the aspects of the incoming data are taken in the data processing system through the most matching bottom-level schemata. In this case, we understand it is termed as the process in which sounds are decoded from the minimal meaningful units; namely phonemes, to complete texts (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). It proceeds to the next step in which the process of decoding and then connecting these phonemic units takes place in order to construct words. Words are connected so that phrases are constructed. Next, phrases are connected together to constitute utterances. And eventually with the construction of utterances, complete and meaningful texts are

constructed. In other words, meaning is generated only after at the end of this complicated process (Richards, 2005). In this sense, a variety of knowledge types such as the phonological knowledge, morphological knowledge, lexical and syntactical knowledge combine to interact with each other in a hierarchial way in order to aid meaning. Thereon, the listener utilizes “his knowledge of words, grammar, and syntactical knowledge to process form” in the bottom-up processing (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005, p. 24).

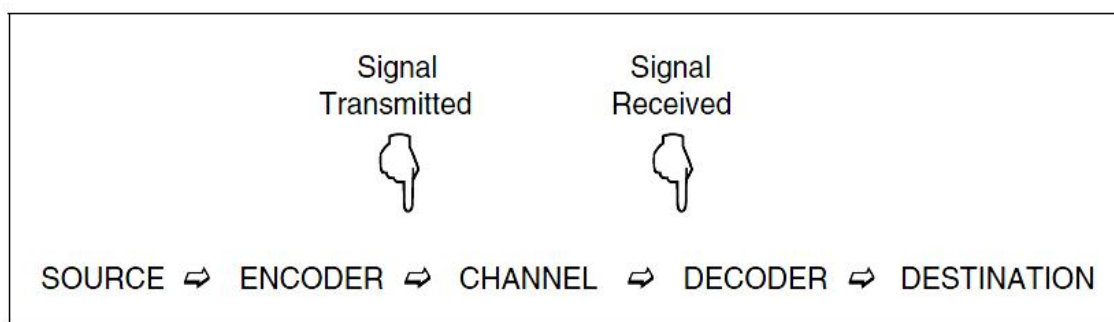


Figure 1. *The transmission of information in communication (Adapted from Field (2008))*

However, as Field (2008) stated, bottom-up processing has its weak sides as well. Since understanding a spoken text is an interactive process that requires more than just one’s linguistic knowledge, the listener essentially needs to put the top-down processing in process for an efficient comprehension (Aponte-de-Hanna, 2012).

2.4.3. The Top-down Processing

Top-down processing is the second type of these processing models, and it is described as the process in which the listener uses his or her background knowledge in order to comprehend the meaning of a text or message (Graham, 2006). According to Hall (2011), in top-down processing, general predictions are made by the system depending on “a higher level, general schemata, and then it searches the input for information to fit into these practically satisfied, higher order schemata (p.233). In this sense, the listener utilizes new input as clues to actively construct or reconstruct what the speaker originally means. In order to comprehend what he/she hears, during this process of reconstruction, the listener makes use of his or her previous knowledge of the context and situation in which the listening activity takes place. In exemplifying context and situation, Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) suggest that things like knowledge of the

topic being talked about, the speaker or other speakers, their relation with each other or with the situation, and previous events are involved in context and situation.

As Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) further state, the important point in here is whether the listener is familiar with the incoming information h/she hears or not. If, as they suggest, the incoming information can not activate the schemata, it is probable that the listener will only depend on his linguistic knowledge in listening comprehension to a great extent. In addition, even if the listener can activate a schema, it is likely that he/she will not have the suitable schema the speaker expects of him. Taking all these into consideration, the listener might fail in efficient comprehension if he/she only relies on top-down processing (Ching-Shyang Chang & Read, 2007).

2.4.4. The Interactive Processing

The last type of the processes is the interactive processing. As Graham (2006) states, it is via the interactive processing that the listener can overcome the disadvantages of bottom-up processing and top-down processing in order to facilitate the comprehension. According to Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011), there was a tendency that only the top-down processing was accepted to enhance listeners' listening comprehension. However, now there is a common acknowledgement that the combination of both bottom-up processing and top-down processing is needed to promote effective listening comprehension. In addition to this, the integration of background knowledge whose processing is complex and simultaneous, linguistic knowledge, and contextual knowledge provides listeners with easy and effective listening comprehension and interpretation (Wilson, 2003). With this in mind, Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) suggest that the listener will use both his background knowledge and try to make predictions easily if the content of the text is familiar to him. Contrary to this, when the listener is not familiar with the content of the listening text and insufficient in language competency, what he can only do is generally to rely on his linguistic knowledge or lexical and syntactical knowledge in some cases.

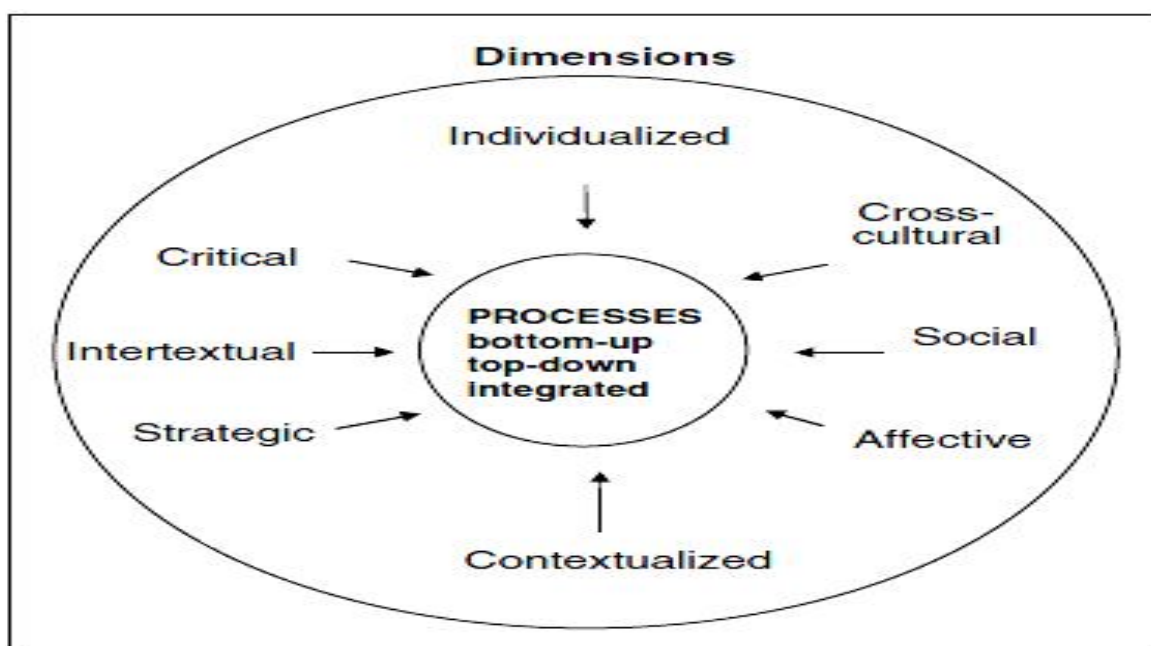


Figure 2. *An interactive model of second language listening comprehension (Adapted from Flowerdew & Miller (2005))*

2.5. Listening Comprehension Problems that Learners Encounter

There have been many research studies that have shed light on the fact that listening is the most difficult skill to acquire for learners (Ching-Shyang Chang & Read, 2007). This is primarily because there has been more emphasis and attention on the skills such as reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar rather than listening as a receptive skill. Thus, learners who attempt to learn English as a foreign language usually face obstacles or difficulties in comprehending listening accordingly. In this regard, Underwood (1989) mentions seven obstacles or problems leading to inefficient listening comprehension on the part of listeners.

The first one is that listeners usually have difficulty in controlling the speed rate of a spoken text or conversation. Underwood (1989) states many English language learners have the notion that they cannot control how quickly a speaker speaks, which in fact results in their inefficiency in listening comprehension. Often refraining from mentioning this to the speaker or lecturer when missing a section of a listening recording, listeners feel somehow anxious or demotivated towards listening and communication in their classes (Tavil, 2010).

The second problem is listeners are not usually given the choice of making the repetition of listening recordings. This is a significant problem in listening comprehension. In other words, it is not dependent on listeners whether to play or replay any parts of a listening recording when they have a problem in their comprehension. Since teachers decide and control the repetition of a recording any time they want, very often listeners have difficulty in the concentration of completing listening tasks (Stepanoviene, 2012). And therefore, teachers find it hard to understand whether listeners have covered any sections of what they have listened to or not.

The third most common obstacle that listeners usually encounter is the one related to their lexical knowledge. As listeners generally have a limited vocabulary knowledge, they may sometimes stop and try to think about the meaning of an unknown word articulated by the speaker or teacher during a conversation. This might in return cause them to miss the next section of the speech, and fall behind the listening comprehension progress (Hasan, 2000).

As Gonzalez (1985) states, the fourth problem that listeners often face is listeners' failure in recognizing the signals that show the speaker is moving from one point to another, giving an example, or making the repetition of a point. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) highlight the fact that while listeners do not often have difficulty in understanding discourse markers such as "firstly", "secondly", or "next" in formal situations or lectures, it is not usually the same in the case of signals. According to both of the researchers, in informal situations and conversations signals are relatively more unclear or obscure because it is hard for listeners to understand them in different intonation patterns, sudden changes in pitch, pauses, gestures, and increased loudness. In particular, as they argue, listeners who are not proficient enough in listening comprehension may experience difficulty in relation to comprehending signals.

Another problem listeners usually face in the process of listening comprehension is their lack of contextual knowledge. Duzer (1997) suggests that it is crucial for listeners to have common knowledge and common content so that their communication gets easier. Although listeners can understand the meaning of a listening or spoken text superficially, they might have difficulty in understanding the text in part or whole if they are unfamiliar with the context of the text. Moreover, if listeners are from different

cultures or personal backgrounds, they may even easily misapprehend nonverbal clues like gestures, nods, tone of voice, or facial expressions (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011).

The next most common drawback that listeners experience in listening classes is their lack of concentration in a foreign language. As stated by Richards (2005), even the shortest distraction or attention deficit can hinder listeners' listening comprehension remarkably. In accordance with this, Osada (2004) suggests that conversation is easier for listeners if they think the topic of the listening task or text is interesting. However, students often think that listening is tiresome although they are indeed concerned with listening activities. This is primarily because listening is a complex skill and it requires a great amount of effort on the side of the listener to follow through on the whole listening activity and understand its meaning thoroughly (Carrier, 1999).

The last problem that listeners often find difficult to overcome is listeners' preestablished habits or assumptions about learning. According to Cahyono and Widiati (2009), listeners usually tend to catch every sentence or understand every word in a particular listening task. They also state that teachers expect students to understand every word in a listening recording or conversation either by repeating or pronouncing each word attentively. Hence, students mostly tend to feel worried when they have difficulty in understanding the words or phrases in a recording. As a result of this, their motivation and self-confidence will be affected negatively. Considering this, it is crucial for teachers to show tolerance of ambiguity and imperfection in terms of learners' understanding (Underwood, 1989).

2.6. Promoting Motivation and Attention to Improve Listening Comprehension

Learning a second language is not easy work for many second language learners. While some of them attempt to learn the second language desirably, a great majority of them do not have the intention of learning it. In other words, learning the target language is not somehow an important or ultimate goal worth putting some effort in for them. The primary reason behind this is believed to be lack of motivation and attention. That is to say, learners without sufficient motivation and attention do not learn the second language effectively enough. The situation is the same in the case of four skills; namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. That is, the acquisition of the four skills is hindered in the case of no motivation or attention (Campbell, 2011).

In this sense, there has been a great emphasis on the significance of motivation in the field of language learning and the process of language acquisition recently. Especially, when it comes to listening as a receptive skill, learning does not take place and comprehension is impaired without motivation to a task (Taylor, 1981). According to Pinner (2012), motivation and attention are two of the most significant factors that affect the language learning process of language learners, especially their listening skills. Similarly, Boyle (1984) states that motivation and attention play an important role in learners' listening comprehension. He further suggests that listening comprehension is a complex activity that requires motivation and attention to occur accordingly. Sugino (2010) indicates that motivation influences learners' autonomy, attention, effort, persistence, and willingness towards learning a language. Therefore, lack of these factors affect listeners in that they do not comprehend a spoken text or listening task properly.

Oroujlou and Vahedi (2011) state that language teachers cannot teach listening skills effectively if they do not understand the relationship between motivation and its effect on listening comprehension. Both of the researchers put emphasis on the significance of motivation and attention stating that they are two main determinants of second language learning and effective listening comprehension. In spite of this, a great number of learners unfortunately lack motivation or motivation in their listening classes. No matter how hard teachers try, students' passivity is found everywhere in the whole process of English learning (Boyle, 1984). In this regard, teachers need to bear in their minds that what their learners in fact need is mainly motivation and attention in order for them to construct the necessary listening comprehension skills (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011). At this point, teachers, as language facilitators, need to study out the potential reasons of their students' demotivation in listening classes, and enhance their motivation through some well-defined motivational strategies.

Considering all these, it is highly significant to decide which strategies to use in order to enhance students' motivation and attention in listening lectures. Choosing the suitable strategies can be very effective to increase language learners' external motivation and to create good attitude towards listening as a difficult skill to acquire (Mohammadi, Moenikia & Zahed-Babelan, 2010). There are quite a lot of motivational strategies that have been put into practice by language practitioners to promote students'

motivation in language classes as well as in listening classes. Related with this, many researchers and language practitioners have put forward various ideas in terms of which motivational strategies to use during the process of teaching listening. (Campbell, 2011) and Pinner (2012) are only two of such researchers who have made some recommendations to determine which motivational strategies to use for our students' motivation in our language classes. Several of these strategies recommended by the two researchers are as follow:

2.6.1 Creating a Friendly Atmosphere in the Listening Classroom

Teachers need to develop a friendly atmosphere in which all students feel recognized and valued. Doing so will help students feel more comfortable and motivated towards language learning activities, and specifically listening activities. (Campbell, 2011) and Riley (1994) support the opinion that providing a safe and comfortable environment where everyone feels like a part of the whole is one of the most important factors in encouraging their motivation and good attitude. This gives students the impression that learning English and naturally learning how to listen effectively will be easy and enjoyable. In this sense, pair and group activities can be very useful to reduce the pressure of teacher-student interaction and allow students to feel recognized by their peers.

2.6.2. Encouraging Students to Personalize the Classroom Environment

Teachers should provide their students with a learner-centered and low-anxiety classroom environment. Since listening is the most difficult skill that can cause anxiety and the sense of inefficiency, enhancing listeners' motivation and attention gains a great importance. As Oroujlou and Vahedi (2011) state, doing so has a great influence on learners' development in language acquisition. Creating such an environment can relax the students and promote a friendly atmosphere, which will enhance their willingness and attitude to learn and develop their listening comprehension skills. Feeling self-confident and comfortable enough, they will display greater motivation towards listening even if it may sound hard to acquire for them.

2.6.3. Creating Situations in Which Students Feel a Sense of Accomplishment

Generating a sense of accomplishment is a significant factor in motivating students. Teachers need to give positive feedback and reinforcement on listeners' answers or work. Doing so can enhance their satisfaction and encourage positive self-evaluation. A student feeling a sense of accomplishment can have a better attitude towards directing his or her own studies and learning outcomes (Özütürk, 2012). Teachers need to provide their students with positive comment or feedback in the process of listening process as they are more affected by teachers' doing so. When they feel their good work is appreciated by their teachers, they will feel more enthusiastic and motivated for success in seemingly difficult listening tasks.

2.6.4. Providing Pair and Group Activities to Develop Students' Confidence

Students learn better by doing, making, writing, designing, creating, and solving. Passivity is a factor that decreases students' motivation and interest and causes lack of positive attitude towards language learning and its skills. According to Boyle (1984), small-group activities and pair work can increase students' enthusiasm, involvement, and willingness toward participating in the class activities as well as listening tasks. This will most probably enhance students' self-confidence by showing responsibility of being a part of the whole during these tasks. In group activities even the quietest students have the chance to express their ideas and feelings on a topic because they believe it is easier to speak to groups of three or four than to a whole class. In this case, students will feel less reluctant to speak to the whole class as long as they keep their participation active.

2.6.5. Connecting Language Learning to Students' Interests Outside of Class

It is considerably important that teachers do not limit their students only to traditional ways of learning. We, as teachers, need to encourage our students to integrate their classroom experience to their interests or activities outside of the language class so that they can develop their language skills more efficiently. For instance, their activity of playing computer games can be linked to computer-assisted language learning. Similarly, choosing authentic listening materials or activities will facilitate their acquisition of listening comprehension to a great extent (Pinner, 2012; Campbell, 2011). Such motivational teaching strategies can easily increase language

learners' motivation levels and positive attitude toward not only English language learning but also listening as a fundamental skill in second language learning.

2.7. Teaching Listening Comprehension with Strategies

How to instruct listening has been an important issue for teachers and researchers for a long time. In nature, listening is a challenging and demanding skill for almost any language learners because a great majority of them do not have any idea on how to learn and succeed in this covert skill. Besides, although teachers often do their best to enhance students' listening skills, there is still much to do when considering students' ongoing incompetence in their listening classes. As Snow and Perkins (1979) indicate, it has been understood that traditional ways of listening instruction are not effective enough to cope with our students' listening problems. Therefore, students feel demotivated or unenthusiastic towards listening lectures and tasks. In this sense, most of the time, teachers feel obliged to improve less proficient listeners' listening comprehension skills. This undoubtedly necessitates the use of effective listening strategies on the part of EFL teachers or instructors in their listening classes (Goh, 1997; Duzer, 1997; Vandergrift, 1999; Wilson, 2003).

2.7.1. Note-taking and the Sentence Method

Listening is considerably influenced by the particular note-taking strategy that a student uses. Teng (2011) suggests that note-taking is generally considered to promote the process of learning and covering lecture material. The researcher states that students who take notes while listening to the lecture and review their notes perform better in EFL lecture comprehension than those who only listen to the lecture without taking any notes. According to Teng (2011), taking notes during listening lectures help students to remember key points of the lectures and cover the learning material better. Besides, taking notes during listening lectures provides students with organizing what teachers say, and feel more secure and confident. Note-taking also helps students to answer the questions better, make them feel more at ease, and provides them with remembering the information in conversations. It is seen that taking notes during listening lectures contributes well to students in terms of the sense of self-confidence and the feeling of comfort. Since practice makes perfect, students who want to be effective EFL note-takers need to do more practice of note-taking in class and self-learning. The important

point is that teachers need to guide their learners in terms of teaching them how to learn more about note-taking with various practices during listening classes.

Considering this, according to Aminifard & Aminifard (2012), one of the most common and effective way of note-taking is the ‘sentence method’. This method of note taking is very easy to make use of and appropriate for lectures that lack organization and when information is covered by the instructor very quickly. Students record every new thought, fact or topic on a separate line. All information is recorded, but it lacks clarification of major and minor topics. The researcher also states that listeners’ immediate review and editing are required to determine how information should be organized.

2.7.2. Keeping Diary for Self-reporting

What learners know about their learning can considerably affect the process and even success of their learning. Goh (1997) puts particular emphasis on the strong relationship between students’ note-taking habits and their success in listening as a receptive skill. In this sense, the researcher indicates that teachers have an important role in both teaching and encouraging learners to be able to express themselves for better listening comprehension in the listening process. She suggests that what learners know about their learning can remarkably affect the process and even success of their language learning. She further states that unsuccessful learners are usually less aware of effective ways of handling learning tasks. Regarding this, Goh (1997) indicates that listening diaries and self-reporting are two efficient ways that increase students’ metacognition and listening comprehension.

Additionally, Teng (2011) suggests that there is a strong relation between learners’ metacognitive awareness and their success in listening. The researcher mentions three main factors that influence learners’ cognitive learning. These are person, task, and strategy. Regarding this, she indicates that students’ listening comprehension is shaped remarkably by three kinds of knowledge. She calls them person knowledge, task knowledge, and strategic knowledge. These three types of knowledge directly affect students’ achievement in listening comprehension (LC). In this sense, she believes that self-reporting is an effective way that helps learners be aware of their knowledge in listening. The researcher also states that if students keep a

diary as a way of self-reporting, they can observe and assess their knowledge and success during the listening process. Moreover, listening diaries can encourage learners to think about their own listening and consider ways of improving this skill.

2.7.3. Strategy-Based Approach in Teaching Listening

Using different strategies is regarded as a necessity by many teachers in order to support students with their listening skills. Aponte-de-Hanna (2012) states that there has been little research on the topic of second language learners and listening comprehension strategies. The researcher suggests that listening comprehension is easy to take place if the right strategy training is applied in our language classes. Considering this fact, even less effective learners can improve their listening skills through well-defined listening strategies. She suggests an approach for teachers believing that it increases students' listening comprehension. The researcher states that the use of Strategy Based Approach is significant since it makes students' progress in listening comprehension possible. There are several significant steps for teachers to take when they use this approach. With regard to this, she says that teachers need to find out what strategies students are using. She states that teachers can ask students to complete a strategy survey at the beginning of the educational semester. The MALQ and SILL could be used for this purpose. Hanna (2012) urges that these two questionnaires are useful because they raise students' awareness in listening.

As the second step, teachers need to select one or two strategies that they think are missing on the part of their students and identify them by name. Next, teachers can explicitly explain to students why and when these strategies could be used during the listening process. Jowkar (2012) thinks that teachers need to model how to use each strategy by providing students with 'think aloud'. As stated by the researcher, modeling is a technique that allows teachers to explicitly show students how a behavior or activity should be completed. For instance, the teacher can play an audio-tape, and 'think aloud' the type of information that facilitates the students' comprehension. The next thing teachers need to do is to ask students to describe what they have heard or observed during the listening tasks. In this sense, students are expected to describe what background noise, gestures, body language, and where something is taking place, or choice of clothes being worn by the speaker(s). Furthermore, Hanna (2012) states that teachers need to give opportunities for students to practice their individual listening

strategies, and ask them to assess how well they use them by engaging them in group discussions.

2.7.4. Discovery Listening (DISL) and Strategy-Based Instruction (SBI)

Marzban and Isazadeh (2012) state that Discovery Listening (DISL) and Strategy-Based Instruction (SBI) are two efficient listening strategies that teachers can use in order to increase students' listening comprehension skills. The researchers indicate that these two listening strategies are essential to be learnt by students since they enhance students' comprehension of the spoken text that might be complex and hard to understand. According to the researchers, the main focus of SBI approach is on making the L2 learners more aware of the strategies available in language learning and how to use them systematically and effectively enough. In this respect, the researchers make an emphasis on the use of metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies that facilitate listening comprehension and make learning more effective. As stated by Badger, White, Sutherland, and Haggis (2001), metacognitive strategies concern what listeners do for planning, monitoring, and evaluating their listening process. Cognitive strategies are the ones for knowing how to go about the input and material or implement a strategy in a listening task. Socio-affective strategies focus on listeners' collaboration with others in order for more effective comprehension to take place and also lowering listening anxiety.

Discovery Listening (DISL), as stated by Hayati and Jalilifar (2009), is a listening comprehension strategy that aims at improving learners' listening ability by getting and encouraging them to discover and then cope with their own listening difficulties during listening texts or tasks. The researchers state that the task in Discovery Listening has three phases: listening, reconstructing the original text, and discovering students' weaknesses and strengths in listening tasks. Considering all these stated above, it is understood well that listening is more than what a listener hears, and that listening comprehension is a covert and complicated process which requires the efficient use of LC strategies. Therefore, teachers' role in teaching the appropriate listening strategies to learners considering their needs and interests is of paramount importance. This is essential, as Dunkel (1986) indicates, developing competency in listening comprehension is the key to achieving proficiency in the other skills as well. It is no doubt doing so means a significant responsibility and so imposes a big burden on

the shoulders of teachers, but if our learners are expected to be effective listeners and competent in their communicative skills, this inevitably needs to be put into practice by teachers (Bidabadi & Yamat, 2011).

CHAPTER III

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The first aim of this study was to find out EFL teachers' perceptions of EFL learners' listening comprehension problems. The second aim of the study was to learn about what reported practices or solutions EFL teachers have in order to deal with EFL learners' listening comprehension problems. This chapter describes and explains the research design, the participants, the data collection tool, the data collection procedures, and the methods used for the analysis of the data.

3.2. Research Design

In this study a descriptive research design was employed by the researcher. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), descriptive research design is defined as "the survey that describes and present data, for example, in terms of summary frequencies such as mode, mean, median, range, or standard deviation" (p. 503).

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to collect and analyze the data in order to find out the EFL teachers' perceptions of the problems that EFL learners encounter in listening comprehension process. Besides, it was aimed to find out what practical solutions the EFL teachers have or strategies they use in order to deal with the EFL learners' listening comprehension problems. According to Spafford, Itzo Pesce, and Grosser (1998), the aim of the quantitative research is to screen large groups of students; make academic, behavioral, and social comparisons; make predictions; determine academic strengths and weaknesses in a study, and etc (p. 279). Among the quantitative research methods, a survey research method was used by the researcher to collect the necessary data. As known, survey design includes both longitudinal studies by questionnaires and interviews to collect data. As Spafford, et al. (1998) state, in survey method "a large group of people are asked the same questions and the answers are described statistically either via questionnaires or personal interviews (p. 279). They also state that, "a survey method can provide answers to the questions such as what? where? when? and how?, but it is not easy to find out why?. The primary focus with a survey questionnaire tends to be on 'fact finding' " (p. 279).

In this study qualitative research design was employed too. Spafford, Itzo Pesce, and Grosser (1998) define qualitative research as “research efforts that are participant-oriented (e.g., collecting observations or interviews to create impressions or diagnostic intuitions) and inductive in nature” (p.230). They further suggest that qualitative research usually focuses on a problem or issue at hand with little reference to previous findings (p. 231). In addition, Cohen et al. (2007) state that qualitative research is significant since it “investigates the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials” (p. 503).

3.3. Participants

The data for the present study were gathered from a group of 56 EFL instructors working at Gaziantep University Higher School of Foreign languages. 36 (66 %) of the respondents were female, and 20 (34 %) of them were male. Random sampling strategy was used when choosing the participants of the study. According to Cohen et al. (2007), random sampling is a method “in which each and every member of the population has an equal and dependent chance of being selected” (p. 504). Otherwise, if the participants had been chosen from a group of teachers whose teaching experience was over a certain year, the data would have been limited to only a particular group of participants. And also, the data might have been insufficient in this respect.

While the majority of the participants are from Turkey, 7 of them are from the USA, and 2 of them are from Taiwan. The participants’ age ranged from 25 and 52. They have been teaching English to the students in different modules such as C1 plus, C1, B2 plus, B2, B1, A2, and A1. By any means, all of the instructors have been experienced in terms of teaching the four skills of English language; that is, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The teachers who participated in the study have different years of experience (see Table 1) as well as educational backgrounds (see Table 2).

In Table 1, the participants of the study were classified into four categories according to their years of teaching experience. The first one shows the number of the participants who had 1-5 years of teaching experience. The next one indicates the number of the participants who had 6-10 years of teaching experience. The other one indicates the number of the participants who had 11-15 years of teaching experience. And the last one shows the number of respondents whose teaching experience was 16 years and more. As it is shown in Table 1, the largest group of the teachers in this study

had 6-10 years of teaching experience and those who had 16 and more years of experience followed this. On the other hand, the group having the smallest number was the one with 11-15 years of experience. It is also a surprising data that a great majority of the instructors working at this higher school are comparatively younger and newer in the teaching profession (with a number of 14 and percent of 25).

Table 1. Teachers' years of experience in teaching

Years of experience	Frequency	Percent
1-5 years of experience	14	25.0
6-10 years of experience	21	37.5
11-15 years of experience	5	8.9
16 and more years of experience	16	28.6
Total	56	100.0

Table 2. Teachers' educational background

Teachers' majors	Frequency	Percent
Department of English Language Teaching	27	48.2
Department of English Language and Literature	23	41.1
Department of American Culture and Literature	1	1.8
Department of Translation and Interpreting	1	1.8
Department of Linguistics	4	7.1
Total	56	100.0

As it is seen in Table 2, most of the teachers are the graduates of English Language Teaching Departments of their universities and a great number of the teachers have 10 to 15 years of teaching experience.

3.4. Data Collection Tool

The data were collected mainly from two sources: a perception questionnaire that was administered to the teachers and follow-up interviews held with them. For this survey, a 5 point Likert scale ranging from '1' representing *never* to '5' *always* questionnaire was used. The questionnaire, which was originally prepared by Hasan (2000), was adapted by another Turkish researcher, Demirkol (2009). The questionnaire included all the common kinds of problems related with learners' listening comprehension. The teacher questionnaire is composed of 30 items. The researcher classified the 30 items in the questionnaire under five categories. In this sense, the categories were specified as *listener*, *speaker*, *message*, *task*, and *strategy*.

In the teachers' perception questionnaire there are two parts: part A and part B. The first part consists of teachers' consent and their background information including the teachers' years of experience in teaching. And also, their university majors were asked in the open ended part of the questionnaire, Part A, in which teachers were asked to list students' listening comprehension problems (see Appendix 1). The second part, part B, was the questionnaire including 30 questions that asked teachers' perceptions in relation to students' listening comprehension problems. In this part of the questionnaire, students' listening comprehension problems were evaluated with a 5 point Likert scale ranging from '1' representing *never* to '5' *always* (see Appendix 2).

Considering the results of the questionnaire, the researcher prepared the interview questions in order to find out what practices or solutions the teachers employed to overcome the students' listening comprehension problems in their language classes. In this regard, ten of the teachers who had participated in the questionnaire previously were chosen randomly for the interview according to the results of the questionnaire. The teachers participating in the semi-structured interviews were asked four questions (see Appendix 3 for sample interview questions). The responses of the participants to the interview questions were written down by the researcher through note-taking during the interviews (see Appendix 4 for sample interview notes). Each of the interviews lasted 10-15 minutes respectively. With the data gathered from the interviews that were held with the teachers individually, it was aimed to learn in detail about teachers' opinions and solutions in regard to students' listening comprehension problems.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedures

As the first step, the quantitative data collected through the questionnaire survey were coded and analyzed by using the latest version of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 20). In order to find out the participants' most and least frequently reported listening comprehension problems, descriptive statistics were used. Additionally, the researcher found it useful to combine the frequencies of *always* and *often* options to better analyze and understand the different frequencies of the listening comprehension problems reported by the teachers. This was done for each item under the five categories of the perception questionnaire.

As the second step, the data collected from the interviews were evaluated with content analysis. Content analysis is described as “the scientific study of content of communication. It is the study of the content with reference to the meanings, contexts ,and intentions contained in messages” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 503).

CHAPTER IV

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter the findings and the discussion of the study are presented. The purpose of the study was to identify EFL teachers' perceptions of listening comprehension problems that EFL students encounter in language classes. Through this study, it was also aimed to learn what solutions or practices EFL teachers employ in order to solve such problems more efficiently. To this end, the data of the study were gathered through a survey questionnaire and follow-up interviews were carried out with the teachers. The findings of the study are presented in two main sections. In the first section, the findings gathered from the quantitative data are presented. In the second section, the findings obtained through the qualitative data are discussed.

4.2. Findings from the Quantitative Data

The researcher employed a perception questionnaire to get the data about EFL teachers' perceptions of learners' listening comprehension problems. The findings gathered through this data would give answers to the first research question: *What are EFL teachers' perceptions of EFL learners' listening comprehension problems in a university context?* in the following sub-sections respectively.

4.2.1. EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Listening Comprehension Problems

Through descriptive statistics, the data analysis revealed the learners' listening comprehension problems that were reported most and least frequently by EFL teachers. The examples of teachers' perceptions of the most and least frequent listening problems can be seen in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3. Listening problems reported most frequently by teachers

Item Number	Related Category	Mean
18	Speaker	4.51
12	Strategy	4.46
5	Speaker	4.42
23	Listener	4.39

Note 1: Item 18 is related to pace of speech

Item 12 is related to providing pre-listening information about the text

Item 5 is related to providing visual clues to understand the spoken text

Item 23 is related to unclear sounds resulting from poor quality of the tape recorder

Note 2: Teachers' mean score for item 18 is 4.51, for item 12 is 4.46, for item 5 is 4.42, and for item 23 is 4.39.

Table 4. Listening problems reported least frequently by teachers

Item Number	Related Category	Mean
4	Task	3.17
29	Speaker	3.16
10	Strategy	3.14
14	Task	2.91

Note 1: Item 18 is related to pace of speech

Item 12 is related to providing pre-listening information about the text

Item 5 is related to providing visual clues to understand the spoken text

Item 23 is related to unclear sounds resulting from poor quality of the tape recorder

Note 2: Teachers' mean score for item 4 is 3.17, for item 29 is 3.16, for item 10 is 3.14, and for item 14 is 2.91.

As can be seen in Table 3, teachers considered the most frequent listening comprehension problems of students as being the ones related to speaker, strategy, and listener categories. When it comes to the least frequent listening comprehension problems reported by teachers, as can be seen in Table 4, teachers referred to task,

speaker, and strategy categories most. Considering the teachers' reported perception differences and various mean scores in these categories as tabled above, there is a need to look at all the categories of students' listening comprehension problems respectively in order to find out how teachers perceived the items under each category in detail.

4.2.2. Problems Related to Speaker Category

There are seven items under the speaker related problems category (see Table 5).

Table 5. Speaker related problems

Item No	Description
1	pronunciation
5	visual clues
13	providing tape scripts before listening
16	understanding a natural speech with hesitations
18	understanding well when the speakers speak fast
28	varied accents
29	understanding the meaning of the spoken text without seeing the speaker's body language

Table 6 shows the teachers' perceptions of students' speaker related problems.

Table 6. Teachers' perceptions of speaker related problems

Item No	M	Alw(%)	Ofn(%)	Sms(%)	Sdm(%)	Nvr(%)
1	3.98	21.4	57.1	19.6	1.8	0.0
5	4.42	58.9	28.6	8.9	3.6	0.0
13	3.98	37.5	39.3	10.7	8.9	3.6
16	3.39	7.1	44.6	30.4	16.1	1.8
18	4.51	62.5	28.6	7.1	1.8	0.0
28	3.87	25.0	39.3	33.9	1.8	0.0
29	3.16	7.1	26.8	42.9	21.4	1.8

Note: M= Median, Alw= Always, Ofn= Often, Sms= Sometimes, Sdm= Seldom, Nvr= Never

As can be seen in Table 6, the majority of the items under this category (6 items) have a frequency of higher than 50% considering the combination of *always* and *often* options in each of them. First of all, item 1 which is related to pronunciation has one of the highest rates in the table (78% for the combination of *always* and *often* options). It can be interpreted that a great number of teachers agree to the idea that mispronunciation of or not pronouncing words clearly enough hinder learners' understanding of the spoken text. Similarly, teachers support the idea that providing visual clues (Item 5) and tape scripts (Item 13) beforehand help listeners to comprehend a spoken text or a listening task efficiently (87.5% and 76.8% for the combined *always* and *often* options of the two items respectively). Supporting this Wilberschied and Berman (2004) suggest that appropriate and effective use of advance organizers such as photos, pictures, diagrams, charts, or videos prepare the students for the listening task and improve their listening comprehension.

Item 16 and 28, with frequencies of 51.7% and 64.3% respectively, show that natural speeches full of hesitations and pauses as well as speakers' varied accents constitute a problem in learners' listening comprehension. As Marzban and Isazadeh (2012) state, the articulation of a natural speech with hesitations, pauses, or varied accents cause difficulty for students in getting the gist of the meaning. Of all the items in Table 5, item 18 (difficulty in understanding well when the speakers speak fast) has the highest frequency (91.1%). Teachers believe that speakers speaking too fast, regardless of being native or nonnative, might cause considerable problems in terms of listening comprehension on the part of language learners. As for the item that has the least frequency in this table, teachers think that students sometimes find it difficult to understand the meaning of the spoken text without seeing the speaker's body language (Item 29 with a frequency of 42.9% for the *sometimes* option).

4.2.3. Problems Related to Message Category

The message related problems category consists of three items (see Table 7).

Table 7. Message related problems

Item No	Description
6	interpreting the meaning of a long spoken text
15	unfamiliar words
27	difficult grammatical structures

Table 8 shows the teachers' perceptions of students' message related problems.

Table 8. Teachers' perceptions of message related problems

Item No	M	Alw(%)	Ofn(%)	Sms(%)	Sdm(%)	Nvr(%)
6	3.82	14.3	57.1	25.0	3.6	0.0
15	3.80	14.3	53.6	30.4	1.8	0.0
27	3.71	19.6	41.1	30.4	8.9	0.0

Note: M= Median, Alw= Always, Ofn= Often, Sms= Sometimes, Sdm= Seldom, Nvr= Never

As Table 8 presents, the items 6, 15, and 27 have frequencies over 50% (71.4%, 67.9%, and 60.7% for each item respectively) for the combined *always* and *often* options. For the item 6 (difficulty in understanding a long spoken text), it can be concluded that teachers perceive the long spoken texts as being relatively challenging for the students to interpret. This may be particularly because learners often have a tendency to lose their motivation or attention when they are exposed to long spoken texts or uninteresting listening tasks which indeed require high concentration to be interpreted well enough (Boyle, 1984).

As concerns the next two items 15 and 27 having frequencies of 67.9% and 60.7%, it is understood that a clear majority of the teachers find it troublesome for language learners to cope with such problems like unfamiliar words and difficult grammatical structures. One possible reason for this, as Ching-Shyang Chang and Read (2006) suggest, is students' exposure to inappropriate and insomuch as boring listening texts or grammatical structures requiring knowledge beyond the students' current levels. As they further state, an alternative solution for these two particular problems is to help students focus on the specific task. This can be done effectively by providing them with various pre and post listening activities in which they are supported with the teaching of difficult vocabulary and sentence structures.

4.2.4. Problems Related to Listener Category

This category of listening comprehension problems has the most items of all the categories (see Table 9).

Table 9. Listener related problems

Item No	Description
2	feeling nervous due to not being able to understand the spoken text
7	answering questions which require long answers
8	preferring teachers reading aloud than recorded spoken text
9	not being able to concentrate when missing a few words
20	spending great effort that makes students feel tired
21	quickly forgetting the words that they hear
22	finding uninteresting texts difficult
23	unclear sounds resulting from poor quality of the tape recorder
25	not being able to understand the general idea of a text from the first listening
26	outside noise and poor classroom conditions

Table 10 displays the teachers' perceptions of students' listener related problems.

Table 10. Teachers' perceptions of listener related problems

Item No	M	Alw(%)	Ofn(%)	Sms(%)	Sdm(%)	Nvr(%)
2	4.14	35.7	44.6	17.9	1.8	0.0
7	3.66	14.3	44.6	33.9	7.1	0.0
8	3.80	25.0	42.9	21.4	8.9	1.8
9	3.53	14.3	32.1	46.4	7.1	0.0
20	3.28	5.4	32.1	51.8	7.1	3.6
21	3.39	3.6	41.1	46.4	8.9	0.0
22	3.82	17.9	48.2	32.1	1.8	0.0
23	4.39	55.4	30.4	12.5	1.8	0.0
25	3.23	8.9	28.6	41.1	19.6	1.8
26	4.08	44.6	30.4	14.3	10.7	0.0

Note: M= Median, Alw= Always, Ofn= Often, Sms= Sometimes, Sdm= Seldom, Nvr= Never

As it is seen in Table 10, the frequencies of the items in the listener category indicate that six of these ten items have a rate more than 50% in terms of the combined always and *often* options. With item 2, which has a rate of 80.3% for the *always* and *often* options, a great majority of teachers think that not understanding a listening recording or a spoken text mostly results in the students' feeling anxious or worried; a factor which in fact impedes students' listening comprehension to a considerable extent (Gönen, 2009).

Item 7 (answering questions that require long answers), with a frequency of 58.9%, shows that teachers often find it hard for students to respond to the questions such as *why* or *how* during a spoken text or conversation. Another frequently reported item (item 8), with a rate of 67.9%, shows that students do not feel comfortable in the case of listening to a recorded text rather than their own teachers reading the text aloud. This can be interpreted as indicating that students do not feel at ease during recorded

listening texts because of speakers' varied accents, the speech rate in a conversation, not having the opportunity to ask for the repetition of a listening recording, or asking clarification questions for a clear understanding (Stepanoviene, 2012).

In items 9, 20, and 21, with frequencies of 46.4%, 51.8%, and 46.4% (for the *sometimes* option respectively), missing any parts of a recorded text, spending great effort to understand a listening text, and quickly forgetting the words in an audio text sometimes causes students to lose their concentration while listening to a passage or a conversation. Another item reported most frequently is item 22, which is related to finding uninteresting texts difficult. Having a high frequency of 66.1%, item 22 sheds light on the fact that students stray away from a listening text or topic if it does not arouse their interest adequately. In order to support this, Kurita (2012) suggests that an uninteresting topic or a listening text is an obstruction in students' listening comprehension, which is a significant issue that needs to be handled properly by teachers.

Items 23 and 26, which have the highest rates of 85.8% and 75% (for the *always* and *often* option respectively), are both related to unclear sounds resulting from poor classroom conditions and poor quality tape recorders. It can be concluded that teachers are aware of the fact that the conditions of the current language classes are highly poor, and so there is a need to improve this stated condition of the classes. According to Hasan (2000), one way to solve this problem is to renew the technological equipment or audiovisual aids such as projectors for visual listening activities and better tape recorders for effective auditory acuity and clarity.

The least frequently reported item of all these items is item 25 (37.5% for the *always* and *often* options). This item indicates that teachers believe that students sometimes (41.1%) find it demanding to understand a particular listening text in general from the first listening trial. This means students need to listen to a listening recording or a text repetitively, at least two times for an efficient listening comprehension (Graham, 2006).

4.2.5. Problems Related to Strategy Category

This category of listening comprehension problems includes five items (see Table 11).

Table 11. Strategy related problems

Item No	Description
10	predicting the words
12	giving pre-listening information
19	about using experience and background knowledge of the topic
24	paying attention to the topic markers
30	listening to every detail to get the main idea

Table 12 shows the teachers' perceptions of students' strategy related problems.

Table 12. Teachers' perceptions of strategy related problems

Item No	M	Alw(%)	Ofn(%)	Sms(%)	Sdm(%)	Nvr(%)
10	3.14	7.1	21.4	50.0	21.4	0.0
12	4.46	55.4	37.5	5.4	1.8	0.0
19	3.33	3.6	39.3	46.4	8.9	1.8
24	3.37	5.4	41.1	39.3	14.3	0.0
30	3.16	5.4	33.9	33.9	25.0	1.8

Note: M= Median, Alw= Always, Ofn= Often, Sms= Sometimes, Sdm= Seldom, Nvr= Never

As Table 12 shows, teachers think that the strategies students use in listening comprehension tasks are partly effective and partly ineffective (Hasan, 2000). On one hand, students employ effective listening comprehension strategies such as the use of pre-listening information, background knowledge of the topic, their own experience, and topic markers in order to promote the understanding of a listening text (e.g. Item 12 with a frequency of 92.9% and item 19 with a frequency of 42.9% for the *always* and *often* options, and item 24 with a frequency of 46.5% for the *sometimes* option). As Aponte-de-Hanna (2012) suggests, pre-listening information, background knowledge,

and topic markers such as *firstly, as a conclusion*, and so on are among the prerequisite factors for students to overcome their listening comprehension problems.

On the other hand, Table 8 also reveals that teachers think their students partly use ineffective strategies in listening comprehension. For instance, trying to predict the words that they associate with the topic (item 10 having only a small percentage of 28.5%) and listening to every detail to get the main idea of the spoken text (item 30 having a percentage of 39.3%) are two of such ineffective strategies. Hasan (2000) states that students probably do so because they assume that every word or detail in a listening text or recording is important and thus must be understood well.

Hasan (2000) goes on stating that they are therefore under a false impression, which indeed causes them to feel anxious as they are not able to hear or understand every detail or single word in a text. He further suggests that students generally have a tendency of trying to learn something with rote-memorisation. What causes students to do so, as he states, might be information overload in a listening or spoken text, which as a matter of course hampers their ability to get the gist of the topic or to get an overall comprehension of the text.

4.2.6. Problems Related to Task Category

This category of listening comprehension problems includes five items (see Table 13).

Table 13. Task related problems

Item No	Description
3	holding a discussion after listening to a spoken text
4	predicting what is going to be said
11	writing a summary of the spoken text
14	filling a chart or graphic while listening
17	taking notes while listening to a text

Table 14 shows the teachers' perceptions of students' speaker related problems.

Table 14. Teachers' perceptions of task related problems

Item No	M	Alw(%)	Ofn(%)	Sms(%)	Sdm(%)	Nvr(%)
3	3.73	16.1	42.9	39.3	1.8	0.0
4	3.17	7.1	26.8	44.6	19.6	1.8
11	3.57	19.6	32.1	35.7	10.7	1.8
14	2.91	3.6	25.0	35.7	30.4	5.4
17	3.48	16.1	32.1	35.7	16.1	0.0

Note: M= Median, Alw= Always, Ofn= Often, Sms= Sometimes, Sdm= Seldom, Nvr= Never

As table 14 illustrates, teachers think that students have difficulty in participating in a discussion following a spoken text (item 3 having a frequency of 59%). This may be attributed to the fact that students are mostly deprived of regular in-group discussions, pair, or group works in relation to listening classes. In order to improve this situation, students' self confidence and willingness can be promoted by different activities in which they are encouraged to work with one another or in groups so that they can be competent in discussions.

With item 4 (predicting what is going to be said from the title of the spoken text), teachers, with a frequency of 44.6%, are of the opinion that students sometimes experience difficulty in making predictions for the content of a spoken text regarding its title. As Ching-Shyang Chang (2007) states, this may be due to students' common aptitude of processing every word of the text rather than focusing their attention on certain cues in order to make predictions. Students' difficulty in making predictions might also be as a result of their limited knowledge of the target language or contextual knowledge. A noteworthy solution offered by Hasan (2000) for this listening comprehension problem is to provide them with enough preliminary information about a particular listening topic before giving them the related listening comprehension exercise or task.

Another issue teachers regard as problematic is students' inefficiency in writing a summary of a given listening text or spoken text (item 11 with a frequency of 51.7%).

Since writing is a productive skill which is already challenging enough in itself for students, writing a summary for a spoken text or task is more challenging for them as might be expected. That is the reason why most of the students usually lose their attention or concentration on a listening task. A possible solution for this problem is to provide students with enough preliminary listening exercises based on the practice of writing summaries (Badger, White, Sutherland & Haggis, 2001).

As concerns the next two items (item 14 with a frequency of 35.7% for the *sometimes* option and item 17 with a frequency of 48.2% for the *always* and *often* options), teachers perceive chart or graphic filling and taking notes during listening tasks as being problematic for students. This might be mainly because of the complex and covert nature of listening as a receptive skill which requires students to both comprehend the listening text and follow the flow of the same text with a focused attention simultaneously. Osada (2004) offers an effective solution for this problem highlighting the significance of appropriate listening tasks involving the practice of note-taking and chart or graphic filling on a regular basis.

4.3. Findings from the Qualitative Data

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 teachers in order to find out what reported practices or solutions and general perceptions they had regarding students' listening comprehension problems. The interviews were made with each of the teachers individually by noting down their utterances or answers during the interviews. The interviews consisted of 2 questions. With the first question, it was aimed to find out the feelings of students during a listening task or spoken text. With the second question, it was aimed to shed light on teachers' practices and solutions to overcome students' aforementioned listening comprehension problems by considering the survey results. The findings gathered through this data would give answers to the second research question of the study: *What are EFL teachers' reported practices or solutions in order to cope with EFL learners' listening comprehension problems?* in the following sub-sections respectively. At this point, it is important to note that the teachers' responses to the interview questions were more or less similar to each other.

4.3.1. How Students Feel about Listening according to Teachers

According to the teachers, students' overall tendency towards listening is negative. Except for some cases, most of the teachers indicated that students are often demotivated and reluctant towards listening activities or tasks particularly when they believe that they will not comprehend anything. Therefore, they lose their enthusiasm feeling bored in the listening related activities easily. The following responses illustrate some of the teachers' opinions in relation to this issue:

It changes according to the speaking or listening topic and of course students' motivation. If the topic is something they are interested in, they feel enthusiastic, but if it is not, they feel bored.

They sometimes feel bored but they may feel interested as well depending on the topic. In this case, they try to focus their attention and understand the listening text. It is important to help students know what is going to be done with the given task. Thus, they might plan a better organization when they know the purpose and the procedure.

They usually feel anxious and demotivated. During a speaking or listening task, they often feel bored and shy, which is something I observe in listening and speaking classes very often. Except for some proficient ones, most of them lack motivation. I think there are mainly three reasons for this: the speed rate of the speech, lack of contextual knowledge, and self-confidence to express themselves.

Students will feel confused if you interrupt them during a speaking topic or a listening task. In this case, they will not concentrate on their task. However, this might vary depending on learners' background knowledge and age factors.

Considering the adult learners, I have observed that they are mostly interested in a topic at the beginning of the speaking or listening task we are going to discuss. However, due to some external factors such as mobile phones, friends chatting or tiredness, they get distracted and start to lose focus and attention. Therefore, I always bring up an activity to attract their lost attention.

Two of the teachers had a more positive attitude while answering the question as it follows:

This year, I feel luckier as the students are keen on listening and speaking classes by luck. That is, they participate in most of the activities quite voluntarily without having to make them so.

In the first sessions, they seem to be confused by the overload that listening and speaking tasks impose on them, but they gradually get used to enjoying their activities.

Considering all the extracts stated by the teachers above, it can be concluded that students do not maintain a positive attitude towards the listening as well as speaking activities except for only a few self-motivated and enthusiastic ones (Graham, 2006). When the teachers were asked what they do to motivate them to listen, they stated that they often try to inform such students about the significance of listening and its activities in language learning. In addition, they stated that they try to choose appropriate and authentic listening activities, apart from the ones in their coursebooks, considering their interests and levels as much as possible.

4.3.2. Students' Listening Problems and Teachers' Classroom Practices

When the teachers were asked about students' most common listening problems and their classroom practices, they stated different opinions and experiences in relation to this issue. Below are some examples of teachers' responses regarding students' above mentioned problems and teachers' solutions for these problems:

The general listening problems for Turkish university students are mostly the rate of speed when I talk and the accent I use. Turkish students learn English in British accent, so when we speak in American accent, sometimes they get confused. And also, the vocabulary we use sometimes causes them not to understand us correctly. Therefore, they lose the focus of the whole conversation content. In order to overcome this problem, I slow down my speed of talking in the classes and try to see if everyone catches up. Also, I point out the differences between British and American accents so that they could understand.

One of the main problems they encounter in listening classes is lack of motivation or concentration. That is why, they sometimes feel reluctant to listen. Another common problem they face is that they usually have difficulty in catching the important cues or details in a listening text while trying to understand every single word in that text. As a

solution for this, I try to motivate them by trying to make a connection between the topic they listen to and their own life. Moreover, I pause and replay the recording when they miss a particular section or do not understand it.

Students' listening problems most commonly faced can be summed up as it follows:

- *Problems related to their background or contextual knowledge*
- *Problems related to the audio devices*
- *Personal problems that might hinder their understanding and concentration*
- *Noise that is usually made outside the classroom*

In order to deal with these problems, I check all the CDs and audio devices before going to the classroom so that I will not face any other problems during the lessons.

The problems students mostly face in listening classes are poor quality tape recorders and classroom conditions. For example, there is often acoustic confusion while a listening recording is being played at the same time as in another classroom. Also, as students usually have difficulty in distinguishing the 'schwa sound' from some other similar ones, they can not understand some words in a listening or spoken text right. In order to cope with this problem, necessary equipments for an ideal language classroom such as Itools should be established in all of the classrooms. When sometimes tape recorder is not enough on its own, I ask students to open the recording scripts if they have any problems with understanding the listening text. Also, if there is a problematic word, I write it down on the board.

The most frequent listening problem students face in my lessons is the fact that they try to understand every word in a listening text. Besides, they generally do not know the meanings of the key words in a listening text, especially in a longer one. As a solution, I write the necessary key words on the board before the listening activity. And also, in a speaking activity I get their ideas about the subject in the listening text before they listen.

I believe that students do not take listening classes seriously enough although it is a very significant skill in language learning. I also think that most of the teachers are unaware of the aim of this skill. In order to enhance this awareness, both teachers and

students need to shoulder the responsibility of giving necessary importance to listening and listening activities more.

Considering all these stated above, it can be understood that listening is a problematic area in language learning and teaching. In spite of being a complex and challenging skill, it can be improved quite efficiently by teachers through different methods, practices that are based on teaching experiences, and some other necessary and effective additional measures (Richards, 2005).

CHAPTER V

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter a brief summary and the conclusions of the study are presented. And then, suggestions for further studies are presented.

5.2. Summary of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of EFL learners' listening comprehension problems and find out teachers' practices or solutions in order to overcome these listening problems.

The present study was carried out with 56 EFL teachers who were administered a perception questionnaire on students' listening comprehension problems. In addition, 10 teachers, who were chosen by considering the results of the questionnaires, were interviewed in order to find out their general opinions about listening comprehension and what classroom practices or solutions they would provide. As mentioned previously (see Chapter 3), this study employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods. In this respect, the data gathered from the questionnaires were analyzed through SPSS (version 20) by using descriptive statistics, and content analysis was used to analyze the teachers' responses to the interview questions.

The following research questions, addressed to conduct the study, will lead the chapter:

1. What are EFL teachers' perceptions of EFL learners' listening comprehension problems in a university context?
2. What are EFL teachers' reported practices or solutions in order to cope with EFL learners' listening comprehension problems?

5.3. Conclusions

According to the responses to the interview questions it is clearly understood that most of the EFL teachers think that listening comprehension is a problematic area for EFL students. Although teachers believe that students face various kinds of

problems in terms of listening comprehension, they also state that it is a skill that can be improved gradually if it is handled meticulously. What is important at this point is it should be kept in mind that it is quite natural and normal that students have difficulty in listening comprehension. This is because listening is a complex and covert skill in nature (Vandergrift, 1999). However, the issue that is more important is to what extent EFL teachers and students are aware of listening comprehension problems and what teachers actually do in practice in order to deal with these problems (Hasan, 2000).

Considering the findings from the quantitative data, five categories of students' listening comprehension problems came into prominence. These are speaker related problems, message related problems, listener related problems, strategy related problems, and task related problems about which teachers had different frequencies and opinions.

Regarding the speaker related problems, a great majority of the sampled teachers ($M=4.51$) believe that teachers' speaking too fast is a significant obstruction that impedes students' understanding. As Graham (2006) states, fast speech rate is an important factor that can hinder students' listening comprehension. In order to overcome this problem, what teachers can do best is to balance the speed rate of their speech in both listening and speaking classes. That is, teachers or lecturers might try to speak in a medium speed in order not to cause such a problem.

In addition to the above-stated speaker related problems, the findings revealed that most of the teachers ($M= 4.42$) think that visual clues such as pictures, diagrams, charts, or videos enhance students' listening comprehension efficiently. This clearly shows that, except for some individual attempts, teachers do not support their students with visual clues adequately. This finding is in accordance with the findings of the study by Wilberschied and Berman (2004). In their study, the researchers state that appropriate and effective use of visual aids as advance organizers prepare the students for a better listening comprehension. The researchers go on suggesting that it is with the help of such visual aids that students can overcome their comprehension deficits as they provide students with enriched contextual knowledge. Another most frequently reported problem is related to the issue of pre-listening support. A considerable number of teachers ($M= 3.98$) believe that there is a need to provide students with tape scripts as a means of pre-listening support. This might hint that students find it hard to comprehend

a listening text or recording sufficiently. Therefore, supporting our students with prepared tape scripts as a supplementary contribution will help them to improve their listening comprehension skills (Goh, 1999).

Considering the message related problems that were among the most frequently reported problems, a good number of teachers ($M=3.82$) think that long spoken texts make it difficult for students to understand the gist of the texts easily. This is primarily because students lose their concentration during long spoken or listening texts. In this sense, teachers need to choose the texts that are appropriate in terms of length and difficulty. Teachers also believe that unknown words hinder students' listening comprehension to a considerable extent ($M=3.80$). This result confirms one of Hasan's (2000) studies in which he states that unknown words are among the widely accepted problems hindering listening comprehension. In this case, teachers need to guide their students considering how to improve their lexical knowledge for effective listening comprehension to take place. Although word knowledge is clearly important for comprehending listening texts better, this problem needs more investigation since knowing the meaning of words is not enough in itself for a more effective listening comprehension. As Graham (2006) claims, students need to know both the exact pronunciation as well as identifying these words during a stream of speech.

Regarding the listener related problems, unclear sounds due to poor quality of the tape recorder and poor classroom conditions together with outside noise were most frequently reported problems ($M= 4.14$). This result is in accordance with the findings of Graham's (2006) study in which she stated that inside and outside noise and poor classroom conditions can interfere with students' listening comprehension. It can be interpreted that there is a need to improve the physical conditions of the language classrooms in order to prevent such problems. However, it is also possible to prevent these problems by taking some precautions such as replacing the poor quality tape recorders with the more quality ones. Another alternative solution is making the walls of the language classrooms thicker in terms of construction and more acoustic for a better language education to take place.

Another problem that was reported most frequently by the teachers ($M=4.39$) was students' feeling nervous and worried because of not understanding the spoken text. As Underwood (1989) suggests, one of the main reasons why many students feel

unsuccessful is not being able to understand the spoken text sufficiently because they are expected by their teachers to understand all the words in the text. This result indicates the fact that teachers should not force their students by expecting them to understand every word in a particular text. Instead, they need to guide their students how to get the gist and specific information in the listening text effectively (Vandergrift, 1999).

In addition to the problems stated above, another problem with a high frequency was students' preference of their teachers reading aloud instead of recorded spoken texts (M=3.80). In fact, this is an expected result because it is known that students feel more motivated and they can focus their attention on a spoken or recorded listening text if they know they can use their teachers' gestures, body movements, or facial expressions to understand the message (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011).

As for the strategy related problems, it can be seen that the problems of this kind were reported a bit less frequently when compared to the previously stated problems. Nevertheless, of the the five problems categorized under this scale, the problem with the highest frequency was giving pre-listening information about the listening text (M=4.46). This indicates that students might find it easier to cope with understanding a listening text if they are provided with more pre-listening information. How teachers can handle this problem depends on their preparation of various listening activities that support the students with the pre-listening information of the topics. Some of them may be videos, authentic pictures or photos, or even teachers' own experiences in order to facilitate their listening comprehension before the listening text is provided. It is known that students feel more motivated if they think what they will do in relation to a listening task that is not so challenging to cover by them (Ching-Shyang Chang, 2007).

As concerns the task related problems that are the least frequently reported ones, the two issues that were perceived as the most problematic were holding a discussion following a spoken text (M=3.73) and writing a summary of the spoken text (M=3.57). The result of the former problem shows that students may not be encouraged enough to participate in a discussion topic or group discussions after a spoken text. Another possible reason is they, as learners of the language learning process, are not willing to take part in such discussions due to lack of self-confidence, motivation, or finding the spoken text rather difficult to comprehend. In either case, it is one of the responsibilities

of teachers to promote their students' motivation and instilling both a positive attitude and hope in students in order to make them feel self-motivated and eager to perform active participation in listening tasks (McDonald, 2010). The result of the latter problem indicates that teachers find it difficult for students to write a summary of the spoken text. As it is known, writing requires sufficient proficiency as a productive skill on the part of students. Therefore, it may be said it is some normal that students have difficulty in writing a summary for a spoken text, while in fact they have difficulty in comprehending the spoken text itself (Richards, 2005). However, as the researcher suggests, providing students with enough practice of writing summaries for spoken texts at certain times can enhance students' listening as well as writing skills.

5.4. Suggestions for Further Research

The purpose of this study was to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of EFL learners' listening comprehension problems and find out teachers' classroom practices or solutions regarding these problems. The various listening comprehension problems reported by teachers obviously show that there is a need for further studies. In order to understand the previously stated listening problems in detail, there is a need to conduct a larger scale study in different universities of Turkey.

In addition, students' awareness of these listening problems and any potential reasons behind them may be investigated in more detail in order to suggest more grounded solutions. Besides, since listening comprehension strategies affect students' comprehension to a considerable extent, a further investigation into their awareness of the listening comprehension strategies and to what extent they know and use these strategies may be carried out. It would also be useful to conduct a research into a comparison of both teachers and students in terms of their perceptions of listening comprehension problems thoroughly for more enlightening results (Berne, 2004).

As noted in the limitation part before (see Section 1.6.), the number of the informants of this study was not enough to make more generalizations based on the results and to confirm the conclusions. Accordingly, a study involving more participants may be conducted for the very purpose later on. Also pedagogically, teachers need to make some necessary improvements by raising their students' awareness of listening problems and lead them into dealing with their listening problems effectively

(Boyle, 1984). Besides, teachers can foster their students to practice listening outside the classroom too if they are expected to improve this skill. Moreover, it can be ideal to provide students with different listening activities and texts with different accents. Recognizing different accents through such activities can improve their listening skills.

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7. APPENDICES

7.1. APPENDIX 1: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This study is being conducted by Sinan Özyurt, who is currently enrolled in Çağ University MATEFL program. The aim of this study is to explore students' listening comprehension problems from the teachers' point of view. The participation in the study is completely voluntary and the answers will be used only for scientific purposes. If you would like to get further information about the study, please, get in touch with Sinan Özyurt at e119155@yahoo.com. Thanks for your participation in the study.

Background Questions:

How long have you been teaching English? 1-5.... 6-10... 11-15... 16- more...

Which department did you graduate from?

- Department of English Language Teaching _____
- Department of English Language and Literature _____
- Department of American Culture and Literature _____
- Department of Translation and Interpreting _____
- Department of Linguistics _____

Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Listening Comprehension Problems Part A

Dear Participant,

This part of the study aims to explore your perceptions of students' listening comprehension problems. Please consider any level (elementary, intermediate, or advanced) students and list their listening comprehension problems as many as possible.

- | | |
|--------|---------|
| 1..... | 6..... |
| 2..... | 7..... |
| 3..... | 8..... |
| 4..... | 9..... |
| 5..... | 10..... |

7.2. APPENDIX 2: Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Listening Comprehension Problems Part B

Instruction: The questionnaire below aims to explore your perceptions of students' listening comprehension problems. There is not a correct or incorrect answer for any of the items. The first item that comes to your mind will reflect your approach best. Circle the item that represents your approach. Please answer all the items.

Listening Comprehension Problems Questionnaire

Item No	Questions	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	My students find it difficult to understand the meaning of words which are not pronounced clearly.	1	2	3	4	5
2	My students feel nervous and worried when they do not understand the spoken text.	1	2	3	4	5
3	My students find it difficult to hold a discussion after listening to the spoken text.	1	2	3	4	5
4	My students find it difficult to predict what speakers are going to say from the title of the spoken text.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Visual clues help my students understand the spoken text (pictures, diagrams, charts, video, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
6	My students find it difficult to interpret the meaning of a long spoken text.	1	2	3	4	5
7	My students find it difficult to answer questions which require other than a short answer (e.g. why or how questions).	1	2	3	4	5
8	My students find it more difficult to listen to a recorded spoken text than to my reading aloud.	1	2	3	4	5
9	When my students miss a few words, they find it difficult to concentrate on the rest of the passage.	1	2	3	4	5
10	My students try to predict the words that they associate with the topic.	1	2	3	4	5
11	My students find it difficult to write a summary of the spoken text.	1	2	3	4	5
12	Pre-listening information about the text improves my students' listening comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5
13	Tape scripts provided before listening exercises help my students understand the text.	1	2	3	4	5
14	My students find it difficult to fill a chart or graphic while listening.	1	2	3	4	5
15	Unfamiliar words interfere with my students' listening comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5

Item No	Questions	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
16	My students find it difficult to understand natural speech which is full of hesitation and pauses.	1	2	3	4	5
17	My students find it difficult to take notes while listening.	1	2	3	4	5
18	My students find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak too fast.	1	2	3	4	5
19	My students use their experience and background knowledge of the topic to understand the spoken text.	1	2	3	4	5
20	My students spend great effort to understand a listening text and this makes them tired.	1	2	3	4	5
21	My students quickly forget the words they hear while listening.	1	2	3	4	5
22	My students find it difficult to understand the spoken text which is not of interest to them.	1	2	3	4	5
23	Unclear sounds resulting from poor quality tape recorder interfere with my students' listening comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5
24	My students pay attention to the topic markers such as firstly, as a conclusion, on the other hand, while listening.	1	2	3	4	5
25	My students find it difficult to get a general understanding of the spoken text from the first listening.	1	2	3	4	5
26	Unclear sounds resulting from poor classroom conditions or outside noise interfere with my students' listening comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5
27	Difficult grammatical structures interfere with my students' listening comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5
28	My students find it difficult to understand well when speakers speak with varied accents.	1	2	3	4	5
29	My students find it difficult to understand the meaning of the spoken text without seeing the speaker's body language.	1	2	3	4	5
30	My students listen to every detail to get the main idea of the spoken text.	1	2	3	4	5

7.3. APPENDIX 3: Sample Interview Questions

1. How do students feel during a conversation with you, or during a listening task following a listening text?
2. What are the most common listening problems that students face in the classroom?
 - What do you do to solve these problems?

7.4. APPENDIX 4: Sample Interview Notes

R: How do students feel when they listen to you during a conversation or a listening task?

T: They usually feel anxious and demotivated. During a speaking or listening task, they often feel bored and shy, which is something I observe in listening and speaking classes very often. Except for some proficient ones, most of the students lack motivation.

R: Why do you think so?

T: I think there are mainly three reasons for this: the speed rate of the speech, lack of contextual knowledge, and self-confidence to express themselves.

R: What are the most common listening problems that the students face in the classroom?

T: The problems students mostly face in listening classes are poor quality tape recorders and classroom conditions. For example, there is often acoustic confusion while a listening recording is being played at the same time as in another classroom. Also, as students usually have difficulty in distinguishing the ‘schwa sound’ from some other similar ones, they can not understand some words in a listening or spoken text right.

R: In this case, what do you do to solve such a problem?

T: In order to cope with this problem, necessary equipments for an ideal language classroom such as Itools should be established in all of the classrooms. When sometimes tape recorder is not enough on its own, I ask students to open the recording scripts if they have any problems with understanding the listening text. Also, if there is a problematic word, I write it down on the board.