Listening Strategies Applied by Students of Adel's University

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Abstract: *This study discusses the challenges faced by the English students of Adel's university, and the listening strategies applied by them when communicated with others or with the teacher during their English language courses. The participants were nineteen first year of English major students enrolled at Adel's university in Aden. The instrument of the study was the questionnaire which was adopted from Nakatani (2006)'s Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI) (the listening part only) the questionnaire was employed to collect the quantitative data. The results were analyzed and interpreted to find out the listening strategies used by the students to overcome the listening difficulties they face as well as knowing the HP and LP differences in using the listening strategies.*

Keywords— *listening strategies, English students, proficiency level.*

INTRODUCTION

Listening is one of the important skills in foreign language learning, among the four language skills (reading, writing and speaking) researches show that listening skill is employed most frequently by the students. Therefore, strategies for listening and the ability to use them effectively are particularly significant in language learning since it considers as an active process (Bentley & Bacon, 1996). According to Vandergrift (1999) listening comprehension means the process of understanding speech in a foreign language by receiving the information through the ears. However, some foreign language learners may face confusion and misunderstanding if they cannot comprehend what people want to express.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Listening as Skill and a Strategy

According to Scarcella & Oxford (1992), listening is an important skill which develops faster than speaking and it can affect the development of reading and writing abilities in learning a new language. This happens when one
receives the input through listening to information before responding orally or in writing. On the other hand, Young (1997) points out that listening skill is not easy to be acquired because it

requires the listeners to understand the meaning from the oral input depending on their own background knowledge of the words in order to be able to make suitable interpretations of the spoken context. Vandergrift (1999) supports that listening is a complex skill, because
it is an active process of interpretation performed by the listeners to understand what they hear depending on their prior knowledge and this process sometimes require the language learners who have limited memory capacity of the target language to use various listening strategies. According to Oxford (1990) language learning strategy consider as behaviors used by language learners to improve the acquisition, storage, retention, recall, and use of information. Several researchers consider listening comprehension strategies as learning strategies.
Thus, based on the definition and classification of listening strategies, the strategy is the decision or behaviors the listeners make or adopt in order to listen effectively and comprehensively.

Communication Strategies process of Foreign Language Learning

People used different ways and methods to express themselves in every aspect of life. These methods are considered necessary for the communication development. Due to the crucial need for CSs, hundreds of studies have been conducted on different aspects of the CSs and their roles in the language teaching. A study by Bialystok (1990), clarified that people send and receive messages effectively as well as navigate tactfully through the meanings of the messages. Dörnyei (1995) outlined a descriptive classification of communication strategies. Ya-ni (2007) explained that CSs are responsible for the known ease and fluency with drifting from one idea to next when speaking a mother language, which is constantly disrupted by gaps in our knowledge of a second language. The gaps can be in form of a word, structure, phrase, tense or idiom. The attempts to cope with these gaps are described as communication strategies. Language learners often use CSs to overcome the problems encountered while attempting to speak a foreign language or second language. They faced difficulty to solve communication problems when they lack adequate competence in the target language. When such problems arise, they may try to avoid particular vocabularies or grammatical items; or paraphrase when they do not have appropriate form. Subsequently, CSs are techniques utilized to cope with difficulties in communicating in an imperfectly known second language (Stern, 1983). CSs are also defined as systematic techniques employed by a speaker to fully express his intentions when faced with some difficulties during communication (Ya-ni, 2007). In this regard, a language user employs CSs to compensate for his own linguistic limitations in order to realize his intended meaning (Poulisse, 2000).From the findings deduced from several reports, all definitions reveal the same purpose of communication strategies, namely to solve communication problem by applying some kind of techniques.

2.3Nakatani Oral Communication Strategy Inventory OCSI

Nakatani (2006) provided his model OCSI to investigate the CSs used by Japanese EFL learners while they are communicating in English in the classroom, the inventory model that was derived from students' completion in an open-ended questionnaire. The model is divided into two main types that are strategies for coping with speaking problems and strategies for coping with listening problems. The strategies used to cope with speaking problems contains some categories can help the speakers to communicate easily and maintaining the conversation. In addition, it also contains some categories explain how the learners are avoiding their communication breakdowns, when the speakers decide to give up attempts to communicate, or leave the message unfinished. On the other hand, the strategies used for coping with listening problems are employed by the learners when the listening problems occur in interaction. Such as sending some signal to show understanding to avoid communication gaps, paying attention to the speaker's eye contact, facial expression and gestures; and making clarification requests. For the sake of the study the researcher will only present the strategies for coping with listening problems.

The following Nakatani (2006, pp. 155-157), a summary of the OCSI is presented as follows:

Strategies for Coping with Speaking Problems

1. **Social-affective strategie**s involve learners' affective factors in social contexts.
2. **Fluency-oriented strategies** are related to fluency of communication.
3. **Negotiation for meaning while speaking strategies** are relevant to the participants' attempts to negotiate with their interlocutors.
4. **Accuracy-oriented strategies** are concerned with a desire to speak English accurately.
5. **Message reduction and alteration strategies** involve avoiding a communication breakdown by reducing an original message, simplifying utterances, or using similar expressions that can be confidently used.
6. **Nonverbal strategies while speaking** require using eye contact, gestures, or facial expressions to give hints and to help the listener guess the intended meaning.
7. **Message abandonment strategies** are associated with message abandonment by learners in communication.
8. **Attempt to think in English strategies** involve thinking as much as possible in the foreign language during actual communication. The importance of these strategies is that oral communication usually requires a quick response to interlocutors.
☐ **Strategies for Coping with Listening Problems**
1. **Meaning-negotiation strategies while listening** are clearly characterized by negotiating behavior while listening.

2. **Fluency-maintaining strategies** involve paying attention to the fluency of conversational flow.

3. **Scanning strategies** include focusing on specific points of speech, such as subject and verb, the interrogative, and the first part of the speaker's utterance, in which important information is usually contained.

4. **Getting-the-gist strategies** require paying attention to general information contained in speech rather than to specific utterances and considering the context and the speaker's previous sentences to guess overall meaning.

5. **Nonverbal strategies while listening** are related to making use of nonverbal information, such as speaker's eye contact, facial expression, and gestures.

6. **Less active listener strategies** represent negative attitudes towards using active listening strategies for interaction. Students who utilize this strategy translate the message into their native language little by little and depend heavily on familiar words.

7. **Word-oriented strategies** reflect a learner's tendency to capture the meaning of speech by paying attention to individual words.

Communication Strategies Use and Proficiency Level

The effect of the proficiency level on the choice of CSs is still a controversial issue. This is because there is no fixed agreement on the results' of previous studies in order to decide what strategies are used in each of the proficiency level. However, it is still a fact that the differences among the degree of proficiency level affect the choice of communication strategies. Bialystock (1997) supports this notion by arguing that the proficiency level of the speaker helps to predict the choice of the communication strategy, especially for less advanced language learners who find some difficulties in communication. There are many studies discussed the relationship between language proficiency and the choice of communication strategies. The majority of these studies presented by: (Bialystok, 1983; Paribakht, 1985; Teng, 2011; Rabab'ah, 2001; Abu-Nawas, 2012; Nakatani, 2006;Ya-ni, 2007 and Huang, 2010) proved that there is strong relationship between the language proficiency level and the use of communication strategies. In general, low proficiency level of the learners uses more strategies to solve their communication blocks. On the other hand, high proficiency learners employ fewer CSs than low proficiency learners.

The studies also pointed out that high proficiency learners tended to use fewer avoidance strategies, but more compensatory strategies than low proficiency ones. In contrast, low proficiency learners depended on using avoidance strategies.

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:
1) What are the overall listening strategies used by the students?
2) How the listening strategies vary between high and low proficiency?

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 19 freshmen students from Al-Adel's university in Aden- Yemen participated in this study. All The sample population is fairly homogeneous in terms of sex and age, in which all of them were girls and their ages were approximately between 19-20 years old. All the participants have the same educational background their main language was Arabic and they were only exposed to English in their English classes. For the purpose of answering research question (2) the participants were divided into two groups, a high level proficiency group and a low level proficiency group that was judging by their entrance examination. The participants who assigned from 100-80 were considered as high level proficiency group and the participants who assigned from 79-50 were considered low level proficiency group. It was noted that 11 participants was considered as high level proficiency and 8 participants was considered as low level proficiency.

INSTRUMENTS

The research instrument was the listening strategies questionnaires and it was adopted from the oral communication strategy inventory (OCSI) which was designed by Nakatani (2006).
The OCSI of Nakatani (2006) was designed to determine the use of oral speaking or listening strategies. The OCSI is consisting of 58 items, which is divided into two parts: 8 categories of strategies for coping with speaking problems and 7 categories of strategies for coping with listening problems as was explained in the literature section. For the purpose of the research, the author will only use the 7 categories of strategies for coping with listening problems of Nakatani's OCSI model. The author applied the questionnaire survey on the 19 participants of the Al-Adel's university in order to answer the research questions of this study.

DATA ANALYISIS

The Answer of Question (1): What are the overall listening strategies used by the students?

Analyzing the subjects' responses of the overall use of the listening strategies:
To determine the overall use of the listening strategies**,** the students were given the questionnaire**.** The analysis of this questionnaire was done by using SPSS in order to get the Mean (M) and the standard deviation (SD) from the data. The following table presents the mean and SD of the overall listening strategies.

Table 1: Overall Listening Strategies

Factor name	Mean	SD
Negotiation for meaning	4.5	1.29
Fluency-oriented strategies	4.2	1.25
Non-verbal strategies	3.6	1.14
Getting the gist	3.4	1.12
Less-active listener	3.0	1.8
Word oriented	2.5	1.1
Scanning strategies	1.87	.67

Table 1 shows that the negotiation for meaning was the highest ranking strategy with an average (M= 4.5), this is because the students tried to maintain the conversational goal with their partners by negotiating with the speaker and asked for help in order to avoid misunderstandings. Respectively, the second strategy was the fluency-oriented strategies (M=4.2) in which the students paid attention to what the speaker said or made clarification requests in order to understand the speaker's intentions. The third strategy was the non-verbal strategies (M=3.6) the students used, facial expression, eye contact and body language in order to reveal their difficulties in understanding by using gestures. The fourth strategy was getting the gist (M=3.4), the students here focused on the general information rather than the utterance. The fifth strategy was less-active listener (M=3.0), when the students faced some difficulties in understanding what they listened, they tended to use this strategy in order to translate the message to their mother tongue. The sixth strategy was the word oriented strategy (M=2.5), the students used this strategy when they focused on each single word the listen to it. The last strategy was scanning strategy (M=1.87), the students used this strategy when the focused on some important information such as grammar aspects or the utterances of the speaker.

The Answer of Question (2) How the listening strategies vary between high and low proficiency?
Analyzing the subjects' responses of the listening strategies used by high and low proficiency
To determine the overall use of HP and LP listening strategies the researcher used SPSS in order to get the Mean (M) and the standard deviation (SD). The V- value and P-value were provided just for more clarification the table2, but the searcher does not focus on them in the analysis of the data. The following table presents the listening strategies used by HP and LP groups.

Table2: The Listening Strategies Used by HP and LP Groups

Listening strategies	High proficiency students		Low proficiency students		T-value	P-Value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Negotiation for meaning	4.31	0.66	3.45	0.78	-.101	.046
Fluency-oriented strategies	3.90	0.72	3.94	0.78	-.094	.049
Non-verbal strategies	4.63	0.49	4.31	0.76	-.107	.043
Getting the gist	4.40	0.72	3.54	0.91	-.136	.045
Less-active listener	4.06	0.78	4.49	0.61	-.133	.045
Word oriented	3.33	0.98	4.12	0.71	.090	.048
Scanning strategies	4.22	0.71	4.34	0.62	-.177	.037

The analysis of the listening strategies used by HP and LP students of table (2) revealed that, there were significant differences in the use of the seven strategies between the two groups. For HP group, the most used strategy while listening with others was nonverbal strategy (M = 4.63, S.D. = 0.49). It was followed by getting the gist strategy (M = 4.40, S.D. = 0.72). It was followed by negotiation for meaning strategy (M = 4.31, S.D. = 0.66). It was followed by scanning strategy (M = 4.22, S.D. = 0.71). It was followed by less-active listener strategy (M = 4.06, S.D. = 0.78). In this regard, in consistent with the above information, the least used strategy was fluency-oriented strategy (M = 3.90, S.D. = 0. 72). Where only a few of them agreed that they use word oriented strategy (M = 3.33, S.D. = 0. 98). For LP group less-active listener strategy was the most used strategy and always employed by the participants (M = 4.49, S.D. = 0.61). It was followed by scanning strategy (M = 4.34, S.D. = 0.62), when they tried to catch the speaker's main point while engaged in listening tasks. In addition to that, nonverbal strategy was followed (M = 4.31, S.D. = 0.76). It was followed by word oriented strategy (M = 4.12, S.D. = 0. 71). Moreover, the participants tended to use less of both fluency-oriented strategy (M = 3.94, S.D. = 0. 78), and getting the gist strategy (M = 3.54 , S.D. = 0.91). On the contrary, only the minority of the students reported that they rarely tried to negotiate what they heard or understand with others; this can therefore be interpreted that the least applied strategies while listening was less negotiation for meaning strategy (M = 3.45, S.D. = 0.78).

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to find out the strategies employed by students of Adel's university and to explore the differences in the listening proficiency levels of HP and LP students in the use of listening strategies while learning English in the classroom. As all of the most frequently reported listening strategies are classified as achievement strategies, it could be concluded that learners view these listening strategies as the most useful to achieve success of the listening process. According to Pica (1996) the use of these listening strategies can improve students' opportunities to learn the foreign language through the interaction process; studies by Williams (1987) also supported Pica's view. Many researchers such as (Huang & Van Naerssen, 1987; Moradi, 2013; Nakatani, 2005) have studied communication strategies from different angles and points of views. The majority of them agreed on the positive influence of the use of communication strategies on achieving the flow of the communication. As Hyde (1982) explained that, lower level students applied more frequent use of communications strategies than proficient ones. This is because; they usually face more problems in conveying their messages to their peers. Some studies also supported this view like Liskin (1996) and Poulisse (1990) studies which concluded that low proficiency students use more CSs in particular reduction strategies

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that students of Adel's university of two different groups (High proficiency 'HP' and Low proficiency 'LP') were able to employ different listening strategies based on their proficiency level. HP students were able to employ a great number of negotiation strategies in order to comprehend a listening text (Goh, 2002). This supported by Nakatani's study (2010) which highlighted that high proficiency students applied or resort the communication strategies as tools to fill communication gaps when they face difficulties, HP students used a lot of negotiation strategies to improve the level of communication and understanding with their partners. Moreover, the studies conducted by (Tyler & van, 2001; Nakatani, 2010; Naughton, 2006) proved the role of negotiation strategies to improve the process of communication. The strategy of getting the gist also was used a lot by HP students to get the general meaning of what they listed to in order to understand and this result was in line of the (Chiang 2011; Vandergrift, 1999; Vogely, 1995) studies which proved that using getting the gist strategy to improving the communication.

The studies of Bialystok & Frohlich (1980) and Bialystok (1990) proved the strong relationship between the students' choice of specific types of strategies and their proficiency level. In other words, low proficiency level students LP in order to overcome their linguistic deficiencies, they used some lexical items from their mother tongue more often than high level students and this result was in the line of this study when LP students used less-active listener strategy. Both of HP and LP used a lot of non verbal strategies, the result of this study was supported by previous research on strategies generally maintained the effectiveness and usefulness of non-verbal strategies (Murphy, 1991; Allen, 1999; Canale & Swaine, 1980).

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that high proficiency students were more able to use their linguistic knowledge, they were aware of their linguistics repertories and they knew when to restore them when they were encountered by any difficulty in the communication situation. As a result of this, in some cases they were able to handle the difficulties of the communication by choosing more appropriate effective strategies (Smaoui 2015).

In contrast, it was clear that low proficiency students who have limited linguistic knowledge were unable to express what they wanted to say or to deliver their intended messages to their peers. In other words, low proficiency students due to their poor lexical repertoire were not able to restore the appropriate meaning they wanted to express and therefore they chose to use the negative strategies such as less active strategies by using their mother tongue or scanning strategies by focusing on specific aspect of what they are listening such as verbs or nouns. This reaction was translated by using reduction strategies rather than effective strategies (Chen, 2009; Nakatani 2006; Kavasoglu ,2011). The most consistent findings across this study focused on the proficiency level and its effect on the choice of listening strategy. It was concluded that all the students used listening strategies, but this use was based on their proficiency level. It was noticeable that both of HP and LP used a lot of non- verbal strategies while listening such as eye contact facial expressions and gestures. There was a strong relationship between the choice of listening strategies and students' proficiency level in which HP tended to use a lot of negotiation strategies as well as getting the gist strategy on order to improve their level of communication.

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APPENDIX

Strategies for Coping with Listening Problems Questionnaire

Please provide your answer to the following questions by putting a check (√) in the given box or writing the response where necessary from the following choices:
 1. *Never* 2. *Seldom* 3. *Sometimes*4. O*ften* 5. *Always*

Types of Listening Strategies	*Frequency of Listening Strategy Use*				
Negotiation for Meaning While Listening	*Never*	*Seldom*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
I ask for repetition when I can't understand what the speaker has said.					
I make a clarification request when I am not sure what the speaker has said.					
I ask the speaker to use easy words when I have difficulties in comprehension.					
I ask the speaker to slow down when I can't understand what the speaker has said.					
I make clear to the speaker what I haven't been able to understand					
Fluency-Maintaining Strategies	*Never*	*Seldom*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
I pay attention to the speaker's rhythm and intonation.					
I send continuation signals to show my understanding in order to avoid communication gaps.					
I use circumlocution to react to the speaker's utterance when I don't understand his/her intention well.					
I ask the speaker to give an example when I am not sure what he/she has said.					
I pay attention to the speaker's pronunciation.					
Scanning Strategies	*Never*	*Seldom*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
I pay attention to the subject and verb of the sentence when I listen.					

	Neve r	Seldo m	Sometim es	Ofte n	Alwa ys
I especially pay attention to the interrogative when I listen to WH-questions.					
I pay attention to the first part of the sentence and guess the speaker's intention.					
I try to catch the speaker's main point.					
Getting the Gist Strategies	Neve r	Seldo m	Sometim es	Ofte n	Alwa ys
I don't mind if I can't understand every single detail.					
I anticipate what the speaker is going to say based on the context.					
I guess the speaker's intention based on what he/she has said so far.					
I try to respond to the speaker even when I don't understand him/her perfectly.					
Nonverbal Strategies While Listening	Neve r	Seldo m	Sometim es	Ofte n	Alwa ys
I use gestures when I have difficulties in understanding.					
I pay attention to the speaker's eye-contact, facial expression and gestures.					
Less Active Listener Strategies	Neve r	Seldo m	Sometim es	Ofte n	Alwa ys
I try to translate into native language little by little to understand what the speaker has said.					
I only focus on familiar expressions.					
Word-Oriented Strategies	Neve r	Seldo m	Sometim es	Ofte n	Alwa ys
I pay attention to the words which the speaker slows down or emphasizes.					
I guess the speaker's intention by picking up familiar words.					
I try to catch every word that the speaker uses.					
I pay attention to the first word to judge whether it is an interrogative sentence or not.					