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**LISTENING ANXIETY FROM SAUDI EFL LEARNERS'
PERSPECTIVES**



**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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2018**



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of Arts And Sciences

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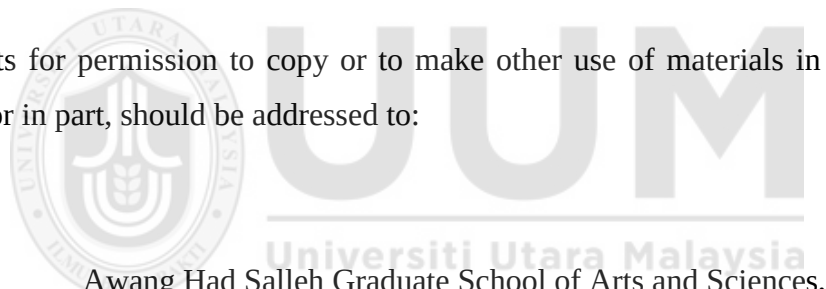
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Abstrak

Kemahiran mendengar penting untuk komunikasi yang berkesan. Kajian telah menunjukkan bahawa pelajar Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) mengalami kebimbangan mendengar ketika membuat tugas atau aktiviti mendengar dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Walau pun kebimbangan mendengar telah dikaji secara meluas di banyak negara di dunia, kebimbangan mendengar di negara Arab masih belum diterokai. Oleh itu, kajian kes kualitatif ini telah dijalankan dengan objektif berikut: a) untuk meneroka punca kepada kebimbangan mendengar, b) untuk memahami kesan daripada kebimbangan mendengar dan c) untuk mengenal pasti strategi yang digunakan oleh pelajar Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) Saudi dalam mengatasi kebimbangan mendengar. Kajian ini berpanduan tiga model iaitu Wheelless's Receiver Apprehension, Model MacIntyre's Recursive Relations dan Model Inverted-U. Data diperoleh daripada 15 orang pelajar dan lima orang pensyarah melalui dua teknik pengumpulan data, iaitu temu bual dan analisis dokumen. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Kajian ini menunjukkan punca kepada kebimbangan mendengar daripada perspektif pelajar berkait dengan masalah daripada sifat mendengar, jenis soalan atau topik, tahap kemahiran bahasa Inggeris pelajar yang rendah, perbezaan budaya dan persekitaran bilik darjah. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa terdapat tiga jenis kesan yang berkaitan kebimbangan mendengar, iaitu kesan peribadi, kesan sosial dan kesan akademik. Berkaitan dengan strategi yang digunakan pelajar untuk mengatasi kebimbangan mendengar, empat strategi utama diperoleh, iaitu strategi kognitif, strategi metakognitif, strategi afektif dan strategi memori. Dapatan kajian ini boleh membantu pelajar EFL mengurangkan tahap kebimbangan mendengar dalam bilik darjah dengan menggunakan strategi mendengar tertentu dan juga dapat menambah pemahaman mengenai kesan kebimbangan mendengar. Selain itu, kajian ini dapat meningkatkan pengajaran kemahiran mendengar. Kajian ini juga mencadangkan agar Kementerian Pendidikan Arab Saudi memperkenalkan pengajaran mendengar di peringkat sekolah.

Kata kunci: Punca kebimbangan mendengar, Kesan kebimbangan mendengar, Strategi kebimbangan mendengar, Tugas mendengar Bahasa Inggeris, Pelajar Saudi Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL)

Abstract

Listening skill is essential for effective communication. Studies have shown that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners experienced listening anxiety when dealing with English listening tasks or activities. In spite of listening anxiety being extensively studied in different parts of the world, listening anxiety in Arab countries remains unexplored. Therefore, this qualitative case study was conducted with the following objectives: a) to explore the causes of listening anxiety, b) to understand the effects of listening anxiety, and c) to identify the strategies that the Saudi EFL learners used to overcome their listening anxiety. This study was guided by Wheelless's Receiver Apprehension, MacIntyre's Recursive Relations Model and Inverted-U Model. Data were gathered from 15 students and five lecturers through two data collection techniques which were interviews and document analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The study revealed that the causes of listening anxiety from the students' perspectives were related to the problematic nature of listening, the types of question or topic, the low English language proficiency of the students, cultural differences and the classroom environment. The study also found three types of effects pertaining to listening anxiety, which are personal effects, social effects and academic effects. With regard to the strategies used by the students to reduce listening anxiety, four main strategies found were cognitive strategy, metacognitive strategy, affective strategy and memory strategy. This study can help EFL learners reduce the level of anxiety in listening classes by using certain listening strategies and can also enrich understanding about the effects of listening anxiety. Furthermore, this study helps to improve the teaching of listening skill. It also suggests that the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia introduces the teaching of listening at school level.

Keywords: Causes of listening anxiety, Effects of listening anxiety, Listening anxiety strategies, English listening tasks, Saudi EFL learners

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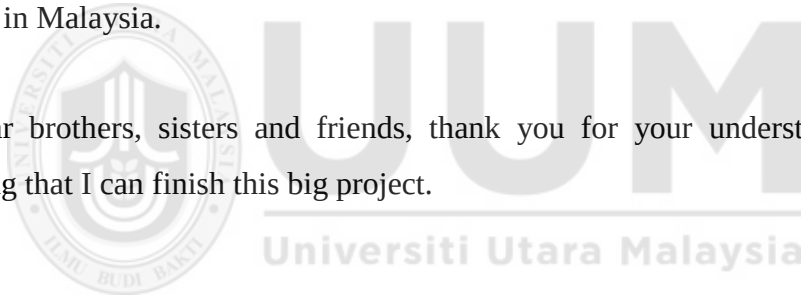


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List of Abbreviations

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
TVTC	Technical and Vocational Training Corporation
PYP	Preparatory Year Program
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
FLCAS	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale
FLRA	Foreign Language Reading Anxiety
FLLAS	Foreign Language Listening Anxiety

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Studies on English as a foreign language (EFL) are increasing especially because English is considered to be an international language (Jenkins & Leung, 2013). English plays a vital role in many sections like business, education, medicine and engineering. Thus, English is often chosen as a way of communication between speakers with different first-language backgrounds. For this reason, the demand for learning English has increased, and the need for investigations on foreign language learning has become crucial for researchers. Moreover, some researchers believe that learning a foreign language is fundamentally different compared to learning other subjects. For example, Cohen and Norst (1989) have suggested that a double-bind dilemma exists when learning a language but absent in learning other subjects. The double bind dilemma means that “language and self are so closely bound, if not identical, that an attack on one is an attack on the other” (Cohen and Norst, 1989, p.61).

In English, the four basic language skills are listening, reading, speaking, and writing. According to Aydoğar and Akbarov (2014), these four basic skills are related to each other through two parameters: 1) the communication mode: oral or written, and 2) the communication direction: receiving or producing the message. Listening is a receptive skill in the oral mode, which means understanding what is heard. Speaking skill is a productive skill in the oral mode, which means pronouncing words comprehensively. These two skills are related to each other because “Listening cannot

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APPENDIX A

(PILOT STUDY)

Interview guide

Between the researcher and the students

Introduction

You have been chosen to help me understand your experiences when listening to English language in your classroom at Majmaah University. This interview focuses on the listening classes or exams of English that you have taken in Majmaah University. You can answer in English or Arabic. If you do not understand a question you can ask me to clarify or translate it for you. Your co-operation is highly appreciated. Confidentiality is assured. First of all, I want to explain the meaning of listening anxiety for you. Listening anxiety means the feeling of tension or apprehension associated with listening to English language.

Information related to listening comprehension

- 1) Which language skill (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) do you consider as the most difficult? Why?
- 2) What do you usually prefer to listen to? Probes: movies, lectures, or song.
- 3) How would you describe the experience of learning “listening comprehension”?
- 4) What do you feel when you listen to listening tasks or activities?
- 5) What makes listening tasks difficult for you?

Information related to listening anxiety in general

- 1) Have you experienced the feeling of anxiety while listening to English in a test or in the classroom?

2) In which level do you rate your listening anxiety in English?

Probes: “low, average, or high”.

3) What kind of the English listening task makes you anxious?

4) In which situations you are less anxious and performance better understanding for listening?

Information related to the questions of the study

1) What do you think has caused your anxiety in listening to English language?

2) What kind of changes occurs to you when you are listening to English?

3) How do you feel when listening to English during tasks or exams?

4) Have you shared your experience of listening anxiety with your classmates?

5) How does listening anxiety situation affect you personally?

6) To what extent do you think that listening anxiety affects your performance in learning English language?

7) What are the strategies that you use to reduce listening anxiety?

APPENDIX B

CONSENT AGREEMENT FOR INTERVIEW SESSIONS

Research Topic:

Exploring causes of listening anxiety, the effects of listening anxiety, and strategies to reduce the listening anxiety on EFL Saudi learners.

Benefits:

There are no direct benefits to you in participating in this research. You will be given some token of appreciation. The study may help the researcher gains insight into the listening anxiety phenomenon in the learning of English in Majmaah University.

Confidentiality:

The information that you given in the study will be kept confidential. Your name will not be revealed in the study.

noitapicitrapp yratnuloV:

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary.

Who to contact (the researcher)

Ibrahim Oteir

Majmaah University, PYP

Majmaah

Saudi Arabia

Agreement:

I agree to participate in the study.

Further contact:

You will be contacted again for member checks i.e. taking the data and tentative interpretations back to you and checking if you agree with the results of the study.

Name:.....

Signature:.....

E-mail:.....



APPENDIX C

Students' Interview

Interview Guide (PARTICIPANTS)

Between the researcher and the students

A. Introduction

You have been chosen to help me understand your experiences when listening to English language tasks in your classroom at Majmaah University. This interview focuses on the listening classes or English language listening examination that you have taken in Majmaah University. If you do not understand a question you can ask me to clarify it for you. Your co-operation is highly appreciated. Confidentiality is assured. First of all, I would like to explain the meaning of listening anxiety for you. Listening anxiety is described as a receiver's apprehension, fear of misinterpreting, inadequately processing or not being able to adjust psychologically to messages sent by others.

B. Personal Information

- 1) How old are you?
- 2) Have you ever studied in an English speaking country?
- 3) What is your major in Majmaah University?
- 4) Is this your first semester in Majmaah University?
- 5) Where do you live in Saudi Arabia?

C. Listening anxiety in English

- 6) Which language skill (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) do you consider as the most difficult? Why?

- 7) Do you think that listening in English is difficult to students? Why?
- 8) How would you describe your experience in listening process in English? (bad, medium, interesting).
- 9) Which kind of listening do you believe may cause problems to students?
- Probes: short conversation, long conversation, listening to people face to face.
- 10) What makes listening tasks difficult for you?
- 11) What do you prefer to listen to? What kinds of listening topics are difficult for you? What kind of physical reactions occur when you feel that listening to English language is difficult?
- 12) Do you experience anxiety while listening to English? Probes: in most situations?
- 13) How do you rate your listening anxiety in English?
- Probes: “low, average, or high”.
- 14) What kind of English listening tasks make you anxious?
- 15) In which situations do you experience low anxiety and perform better in relation to listening?
- 16) What is the difference between listening to English in a classroom and other situations? Why?
- 17) What do you think are the causes of listening anxiety or factors that can lead to listening anxiety? Why?
- 18) In your opinion, why do some students experience anxiety in doing listening tasks? Do you think that your teacher or peers may make you more anxious in this issue?
- 19) How do you feel when listening to English language tasks or examinations?
- 20) How does listening anxiety affect you personally?
- 21) Have you shared your experience of listening anxiety with your classmates?

- 22) To what extent do you think listening anxiety affects you in learning English language?
- 23) Describe your physical reactions when you feel anxious in English listening class?
- 24) What are the strategies that you used to reduce listening anxiety?
- 25) Do you have any ideas or ways to make the listening classes less stressful?



APPENDIX D

(EXCERPTS FROM A STUDENT'S INTERVIEW)

B. Personal Information

1) How old are you? 20 years old

2) Have you ever studied in an English speaking country?

No.

3) What is your major in Majmaah University?

Engineering

4) Is this your first semester in Majmaah University?

yes

5) Where do you live in Saudi Arabia?

I live in Riyadh.

Listening anxiety in English

6) Which language skill (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) do you consider as the most difficult? Why?

I think speaking. I classify the skills from the most difficult to the simplest one. So speaking, reading, listening writing.

7) Do you think that listening in English is difficult to students? Why?

As for me, it is a slight difficult, because in the exam I try to understand the conversation and try to understand the words but at the same time I cannot stay focus with the speaker. If I do that I will lose my concentration. Also, some words are difficult for example; I cannot catch the pronunciation of the words.

8) How would you describe your experience in listening comprehension process in English? (bad, medium, interesting).

I think that listening is a medium for me. But the conversation itself that determine if it is difficult or not. For example, if I listen to simple topics it will be interesting. But if I face difficult conversation which includes strange accents, it will be bad.

9) Which kind of listening do you believe may cause problems to students?

Probes: short conversation, long conversation, listening to people face to face.

I see that the speed of speech, difficult and new vocabulary, long conversation. For instance, new vocabulary prevents me from understanding and losing the concentration because I cannot recognize the context. In addition, the duration is another cause for making problems. So, when I face that situation I cannot concentrate on the whole conversation. Another thing is if I listen to more than one speaker that will make me confused.

10) What makes listening tasks difficult for you?

I mentioned that before. In addition to that, the way of listening exams so we could not listen or repeat the dialogue. The most difficult task is the long conversation. Also, the questions that need comprehension not direct questions because I lose my concentration in those questions. Sometimes, I can't understand because of the lack of sound clarity. This problem causes anxiety for me. It also leads to losing concentration. I think that is due to sound quality, which is not clear.

11) What do you prefer to listen to? What kinds of listening topics are difficult for you?

What kind of physical reactions occur when you feel that listening to English language is difficult? I prefer to listen to one speaker not two or three. I feel confused when I listen to dialogue with more than one speaker. Also, I like to listen to conversation which includes describing something or someone describe himself. On

the other hand, I hate to listen to listen for difficult topics like academic lectures. As for the physical reactions, I start thinking in the unfamiliar words, I feel confused, nervous and stressful.

12) Do you experience anxiety while listening to English? Probes: in most situations?

Yes, I have that feeling in listening exams and exercises but in some situations not all.

Sometimes I feel shy in front of my colleagues.

13) How do you rate your listening anxiety in English?

Probes: “low, average, or high”.

Actually, I rank the anxiety as medium.

14) What kind of English listening tasks make you anxious?

I feel the exercises which require writing because I can't write some words correctly.

15) In which situations do you experience low anxiety and perform better in relation to listening?

I experience low anxiety and better performance when I listen to simple words and clear speech. In my opinion, I can all questions which include simple words and do not require understanding the context to answer.

16) What is the difference between listening to English in a classroom and other situations? Why of course, in the classroom the listening will be more difficult because you think in the mark and there are factor such as the students and teacher may affect you or make you stressful. On the other hand, the listening outside the classroom will be easy because I don't care about anything or if I understand or not. Thus, the listening will be simple and I will be comfortable.

17) What do you think are the causes of listening anxiety or factors that can lead to listening anxiety? Why?

In my opinion, the lack of practice, so I feel that listening is a new thing for me. So, I need to be familiar with it. Also, I didn't take listening in secondary school and this is a strange for me. In addition, I think the competition between students could make anxiety. I try the best to get good marks and that will make me anxious. Also, another cause is some students think that they cannot understand the listening even they believe that listening is too difficult for them. Some of them could try to practice or study on listening. Lack of concentration, the thinking in inability to understand and comprehension questions the questions which require comprehension to answer them are the main causes. Actually, I lose my focus after few sentences from the beginning of the recording. That makes me confused, and I try to focus again but it was impossible because the speaker will be moved to other ideas.

18) In your opinion, why do some students experience anxiety in doing listening tasks? Do you think that your teacher or peers may make you more anxious in this issue?

I think the exam atmosphere provoke anxiety. Some students also affect the others when they talk during the listening or if there is a noisy in the classroom that makes us confused because we lose the concentration. My peers sometimes affect me because I feel shy when I get low mark in the exam.

19) How do you feel when listening to English language tasks or examinations?

Actually, I feel that anxiety affects my grades significantly. It also affects my behaviour toward the course itself. When I feel anxious I dislike the course and attending the classes. Also, I stay thinking in that problem even outside the class. I feel that I can't understand listening anymore.

20) How does listening anxiety affect you personally? Actually, it affects me in reading or preparing for the course. I will be careless about the listening classes. In listening tasks, I always lose my concentration because I feel anxious. Being worried makes me get lost during the listening tasks. I can't focus with the speaker when I am stressed.

21) Have you shared your experience of listening anxiety with your classmates?

Yes, I always discuss this problem with my colleagues especially after the exams.

22) To what extent do you think listening anxiety affects you in learning English language?

Yes, I think it affects significantly. It also affects the other courses because I can't understand everything when I feel anxious.

23) Describe your physical reactions when you feel anxious in English listening class?

I feel confused, lose my focus.

24) What are the strategies that you used to reduce listening anxiety?

I guess that the biggest part of anxiety disappears when I listen alone or use headsets, listen more than once or read the questions comprehensively. Practice in listening daily, I always do this when I am free. I listen to my course activities. I also listen to some lessons on YouTube and listen to anything in English. Day after day, I feel that my understanding is better in listening.

25) Do you have any ideas or ways to make the listening classes less stressful?

Choosing simple words and topics to listen, the duration of listening should be short and listening to exercise separately. I use guessing to answer listening conversations. I understand the topic from the context. Also, I make predictions about what the topic is. This way helps me much in listening so I can guess 30% of the speech. Frankly

speaking, I see that eating something delicious may help you to overcome your anxiety. When I feel anxious, I go to restaurants to eat my favorite meals. So, it helps me to reduce my anxiety.



APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE (LECTURERS)

Between the researcher and the lecturers

A. Introduction

I would like to get your perspective on language anxiety phenomenon. First of all, let me explain the meaning of language anxiety. Language anxiety means "the feeling of tension and apprehension which arises from the learning of English in the classroom".

B. The questions:

- 1) How long have you been teaching in Majmaah University?
- 2) What are the English courses you have taught in Majmaah University?
- 3) Do you find learning a second language to be different from learning other subjects?
- 4) What are the major challenges that you have experienced while teaching listening skill to Saudi EFL learners?
- 5) Describe the most anxious students in listening classes?
- 6) In your opinion, what makes the students anxious while listening to English?
- 7) What are the problematic areas your students have when listening to English?
Why?
- 8) What do you think are the strategies that your students should use to reduce their anxiety when listening to English?

APPENDIX F

(EXCERPTS FROM A LECTURER'S INTERVIEW)

1) How long have you been teaching in Majmaah University?

I have been teaching here since last five years.

2) What are the English courses you have taught in Majmaah University?

I have taught first direct English including the four skills of English language. I also teach conversation course.

3) What are the major challenges that you have experienced while teaching listening skill to Saudi EFL learners?

In listening, whenever I taught that I found that because it not their first language speakers I face a problem with their comprehension language and sometimes they cannot face the vocabulary and if the listening is long they lose the concentration for example, the student wants to write if he missed it he will lose the rest of the conversation and he requires to listen again to do it correctly. also the nature of listening makes difficulty for the students in addition to the topic if the topic on the technology this could be difficult for the students. The students cannot understand from the first time they want second and third time to understand. The main thing is if the topic is interesting or not so the students have difficulty with unfamiliar topics. The other problem is that the students are poor in English they cannot answer even after the third time. The language influence is another problem so the students stay thinking in the topic in Arabic before English. I think sounds could effects also on the students' comprehension some English sounds are not found in Arabic. Big gap has felt between high school and university. Most of students come to the university below the average. For example, I have students from groups E9, M3. In E9 the students

come from international schools and their language is good while M3 they come from side cities so their language is not good. The students complain that the listening is too fast for them. A cultural gap is a big problem also they influence in the culture so they don't know the meaning of the concept in general. I give 50% to the culture that influence on the students. For example, I give the student English topics and they are not interested because it is not from their culture. I have observed that in listening the students don't understand and they feel depressed and anxious. They also that the speaker are fast and the topic is irrelevant and they have no idea about the vocabulary.

4) Describe the most anxious students in listening classes?

Actually, I don't know their names but there are good students when I play listening they start scratching heads, moving around and saying teacher it is difficult maybe they are not familiar with the topic or miss the information. They become about their marks when they got low marks they feel anxiety. There are some students don't attend their class. Sometimes the students stop listen to the text because it is not from their culture such as girl friend or something like that. I have observed three students prefer to be alone and they are afraid of their family. The class room also affects on the students such as competition, noisy, shyness).

5) In your opinion, what makes the students anxious while listening to English?

Comprehension of topic is the main cause which means the understanding the general idea about the topic. For example, last time there was a conversation about sister and brother and they didn't mention that in the speech so the listener should know from the whole conversation.

6) What are the problematic areas your students have when listening to English?

Why?

Vocabulary the students don't have idea about the words, poor students accent, time, speakers, the environment.

7) What do you think are the strategies that your students should use to reduce their anxiety when listening to English?

We have to give the students the listening in steps pre-listening while listening and post listening. Peer-sharing they can give each other real examples, separation of the students according to their interests or level, audiovisual materials, Using dictionary and other instruments. Thinking positively, try to remove the concept from the mind, concentrate on key words or telling him how to deal with listening. Saying don't panic just relax. Practice.

