

# **KASDI MERBAH UNIVERSITY- OUARGLA**

**Faculty of Letters and Languages**

**Department of Letters and English Language**



**Dissertation:**

**ACADEMIC MASTER**

Domain: Letters and Foreign Languages

Field: English Language and Literature and Civilisation

Speciality: Applied Linguistics and English for Specific Purposes

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## **Title**

**Lecture Comprehension: An Investigation of the Students' Listening  
Comprehension Problems and Strategies**

**The case of First Year Master Students (Applied Linguistics and ESP) at Kasdi Merbah  
University – Ouargla**

**Publicly defended**

**On: 05/06/2014**

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**Academic Year: 2013/2014**

## ***Dedication***

*To my family for their unconditional love, unceasing prayers and support.*

*To my friends for their loyal friendship, solidarity and mutual assistance.*

*To anyone who wants me to be a better person through their wishes, prayers and deeds.*

## ***Acknowledgements***

*I would like to thank, first, Miss Thouria Drid who accepted to supervise this work. She has sacrificed much of her time and has provided me with the necessary, invaluable and keen direction and guidance throughout this project; may she find hereby my infinite gratitude.*

*Second, my thanks are extended to Dr Bousbai who has accepted to examine my dissertation and to preside the jury. I am also grateful to Mr Doufene who has devoted his time to evaluate this research work.*

*Third, I would like to thank particularly Dr Chaouki for his assistance and guidance throughout the years of my academic studies at this university; I owe him an important debt of gratitude. My sincere thanks also go to all the teachers in the English Department for their devotion to teaching.*

*Finally, my special thanks are extended to all the students who participated in this study. Without them, this research would not have been possible.*

## **List of Abbreviations**

**AL:** Applied Linguistics

**DMs:** Discourse Markers

**EAP:** English for Academic Purposes

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**ELT:** English Language Teaching

**EOP:** English for Occupational Purposes

**ESL:** English as a Second Language

**ESP:** English for Specific Purposes

**L<sub>1</sub>:** First Language

**L<sub>2</sub>:** Second or Foreign Language

**M<sub>1</sub>:** First Year Master Students

**N:** Number of the Participants

**SD:** Standard Deviation

**TESOL:** Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

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# **General Introduction**

## **1. Background of the Study**

Studying at university is demanding and challenging. It makes a lot of academic demands on the students. At this level of instruction, students are required to develop and master a wide range of academic skills. For instance, they should know, among other things, how to write an essay; how to listen to a spoken text; how to adapt their learning styles to the new ways of teaching; how to be responsible for their own learning; how to take notes from lectures; and, in case the students are majoring in a foreign or second language (hereafter L<sub>2</sub>), they need to be skilled most importantly at the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing.

As far as listening is concerned, it has generally been neglected as a skill in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). According to Field (2009), listening was neglected since it is not tangible in the way speaking and writing are. It is only in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the status of listening was elevated and it came since then to be regarded as an important skill in its own right. Although listening has gained ground in the research field with the interest of researchers, listening formal instruction in the ELT classroom has often failed to act upon this interest (Mendelsohn, 2006; White, 2006). Being neglected, nonetheless, listening has been considered the most difficult skill to learn out of the four skills (Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2006b).

Away from this mismatch between listening research findings and its formal instruction in ELT classroom, research has shown that listening involves a complex process which requires an L<sub>2</sub> listener to make use of a variety of sources such as phonetic, phonological, prosodic, lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic in order to understand and interpret spoken messages (Lynch as cited in Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2006b). Listening as a part of L<sub>2</sub> acquisition has been regarded as the most widely used language skill in day-to-day life (Morley, 2001; Rost, 2006). Academic listening, one type of listening, has been regarded particularly as the means par excellence whereby students learn, comprehend and accumulate content information from lectures (Richards, 1983; Rost, 2011).

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

In academic settings, teaching includes lectures mostly. Lecturing is a widely accepted practice in higher education throughout the world (McMillan & Weyers, 2006; Scevak, 2007). McMillan and Weyers (2006) claim that the essence of a lecture is to present a topic for study by introducing key points and developing understanding through explanation, provision of

examples or citation of references for further reading. It follows, therefore, that academic life requires primarily the students to comprehend lectures so that they can undertake the subsequent activities such as note-taking, reading the suggested references, revising the notes for exams and many other academic activities. Lecture listening comprehension forms therefore the basis for any further activity that the students may be required to do.

At Ouargla University, like anywhere else, a lecture is the most important instructional activity by which knowledge is transmitted to the learners. Unlike at the graduation level, where lectures are generally delivered with written handouts and other visual aids to support lecture comprehension, the handouts and visual aids are rarely provided at the level of post-graduation. *English for Specific Purposes, applied linguistics, discourse analysis* and *general linguistics* are the fundamental modules that are taught in the speciality of Applied Linguistics and English for Specific Purposes. Besides, unlike *written* and *oral comprehension* courses, *listening* and *reading comprehension* have not been included in the curriculum at the level of under-graduation, giving the impression that they are still considered as passive and secondary skills that an L<sub>2</sub> learner may need. One may question then the lack of equal treatment of the four language skills in the curriculum.

At such an advanced level, however, as Peterson (2001) points out, successful academic study requires a mastery of the listening demands in formal lectures. She goes on to state that the students' primary concern at this level is to listen in the language to learn the subject matter content. Besides, although both the form and content of the students' produced written examinations are taken into account when it comes to evaluation, Pritchard (2008) argues that, what matters most is to see the extent to which the students demonstrate their mastery of the course content. Given the importance of the subject content at this level of instruction and its place in the process of assessment, academic success and failure depend then largely on how well and how effectively a student listens to lectures.

Knowing the importance of listening skills in academic context, the kind of knowledge an L<sub>2</sub> learner uses to understand and interpret a spoken text and the educational background of the first year Master students (M<sub>1</sub> henceforth) in listening instruction, it is likely that such students face problems and difficulties when listening to academic lectures. There is, therefore, a need to investigate the problems that M<sub>1</sub> in Applied Linguistics and English for Specific Purposes branch encounter when trying to comprehend lectures and the strategies they use to understand better.

### **3. Aims of the Study**

This research aims to:

1. Identify problems and difficulties that First Year Master Students in Applied Linguistics (AL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) encounter when listening to academic lectures.
2. Identify listening strategies they use to better comprehend academic lectures.

### **4. Research Questions**

In view of what is said above, this study attempts to find answers to the following questions:

1. What problems do first year master students in Applied Linguistics and English for Specific Purposes encounter when listening to academic lectures?
2. What are the listening strategies that those students use to compensate for gaps in the process of lecture comprehension?

### **5. Significance of the Study**

Once the lecture listening comprehension problems are found out and the strategies that M<sub>1</sub> in AL and ESP use to compensate for gaps in their lecture listening comprehension come to be known, it is hoped that this study may make the following contributions: First, teachers can have the chance to know the kind of lecture listening comprehension problems their learners face and they could therefore lecture them accordingly. Second, this study may help students know their own listening strategies, and this awareness could help them to employ the strategies effectively. Finally, this study may provide the university stakeholders with the M<sub>1</sub> listening profile and this may help in designing listening courses that include listening strategies when the need to teach and introduce listening courses in the curriculum is felt since curriculum renewal is part of any educational programme life.

### **6. Means of Research**

In this study, data are collected by means of one research tool, a questionnaire, to survey the maximum possible respondents. The questionnaire is administered to the first year master students in Applied Linguistics and English for Specific Purposes for gaining insights into their lecture listening comprehension problems and strategies.

## 7. Structure of the Thesis

The structure of this dissertation is as follows: Chapter One is devoted to reviewing the literature related to listening in general. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature on academic listening, which includes the potential problems faced when listening in an academic context along with strategies used to comprehend better. Chapter Three, Methodology, Results and Discussions describes, first, the research design of the study, along with the participants, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures. Second, it presents the findings derived from the questionnaire used in the study and offers an interpretation of the results. Lastly, some recommendations are formulated and the chapter ends with the limitations of this study.

## 8. Definition of Key Terms

**Listening comprehension** is regarded as a complex and interactive process in which listeners are actively engaged in a dynamic construction of meaning on the basis of whatever information that seems available at the time. In such a process, listeners apply to the incoming spoken message the various types of knowledge which range from linguistic to non-linguistic knowledge (Vandergrift, 1999; Buck, 2001).

**Listening skills:** listening involves an interaction of various sub-processes such as, among others, the ability to chunk input into syllables, recognizing words, and recalling relevant schemata. These sub-processes are the skills of a competent listener; listening skills are automatic and their use is subconscious when listening in one's native language or with proficient second language listeners (Peterson, 2001).

**Listening problems** are defined as either the internal and external characteristics which might interrupt text understanding and therefore cause comprehension difficulties or real-life processing problems directly related to cognitive procedures that take place at various stages of listening comprehension (Goh, 2000).

**Listening strategies** are conscious and deliberate plans to deal with incoming speech, particularly when the listener, particularly an L<sub>2</sub> listener, knows that he or she must compensate for gaps in his or her understanding like when the listening comprehension process breaks down for some reason (Rost, 2001; Field, 2009).

# Chapter One: The Listening Skill

## Introduction

In our everyday life, we do engage ourselves into various and different listening activities. We listen to the radio or TV; we listen to a friend telling a story; we listen to a child reading a book; we participate in conversations and discussions wherein our role shifts, from time to time, from the one of the listener to the one of the speaker; and we do involve ourselves in many more listening activities. Listening takes much of our everyday life; it is central to our day-to-day communication. Listening seems natural and simple to the point that we tend to take it for granted. The seeming simplicity of this skill is however questionable. Although listening seems a simple process, we are unlikely to listen in the same way when engaged in different listening activities. Some activities demand more attention and concentration than others do, whereas other listening situations may present listening difficulties and therefore lead to comprehension failure more than others.

The present chapter deals with the nature of listening. This chapter does not however claim to review all there is about the skill of listening. It rather tries to review some of its aspects, especially the ones which are of direct relevance to the nature of the topic under study in this dissertation. It is divided into eight interrelated sections. The first section defines the skill of listening; section 2 presents briefly the different views which have underlain the different approaches to language listening teaching and learning; section 3 provides classifications of listening activities; section 4 discusses the types of knowledge that listeners bring to a text; section 5 discusses the distinctive features of spoken language; section 6 provides descriptions of listening comprehension processes; section 7 presents the various factors affecting listening comprehension; and the final section presents the relationship between listening in an L<sub>1</sub> and in an L<sub>2</sub>.

## 1. Defining Listening

There is a general belief according to which 'He who can hear can also listen'. Unlike reading and writing, which require at least some basic instruction even in the first language, listening, especially in the L<sub>1</sub> does not often and necessary require such instruction. Nonetheless, whether that makes listening and hearing the same thing or not needs to be questioned.

According to Anderson and Lynch (1988), listening comprises two aspects: speech perception, which means hearing what is said, and interpretation, which means understanding what is meant. Wolvin (2010) argues that an effective definition of listening should account for the four elements of the listening process: (1) the physiological dimension, which has to do with the biological or physiological ability to receive the vocal message , (2) psychological dimension, which is the mental and cognitive capacity of assigning meaning to the incoming sound, (3) sociological dimension, which has to do with how a listener responds to the message once it has been received and interpreted, and (4) the communication dimension, which has to do with how a listener cooperates for the purpose of communication.

It follows from what is argued above by both Anderson and Lynch (1988) and Wolvin (2010) that hearing is a receptive process which is related to the physiological or biological system which allows listeners to receive a sound whether it be meaningful or not. It is hearing which underlies and presupposes listening and not the other way round. Hearing provides, therefore, a basis for listening. Hearing is a prerequisite to listening comprehension.

As far as the definition of the skill of listening is concerned, both L<sub>1</sub> listening researchers such as Witkin, Coakley and Glenn (as cited in Dunkel, 1991) and L<sub>2</sub> listening researchers such as Rost (2011) note and express their concern about the lack of a generally agreed upon definition of listening. According to Rost (2011), this disaccord concerning definitions of listening may be due two reasons. First, both individuals and specialists tend to define listening depending on their personal or theoretical interests. Second, it may be due to the nature of listening i.e. the fact that listening is a temporary and invisible mental process which makes it difficult to define and describe. He goes on, after the review of the definitions of listening in the literature, to argue that almost each definition of listening revolves around one of the following four orientations:

- (1) *Receptive orientation*, where listening means receiving what the speaker actually says (e.g.: listening means catching what the speaker said; listening means decoding the speaker's message)
- (2) *Constructive orientation*: listening means constructing and representing meaning (e.g.: listening means figuring out what is in the speaker's mind; listening means finding out what is relevant for you)

- (3) *Collaborative orientation*: listening means negotiating meaning with the speaker and responding (e.g.: listening means responding to what the speaker has said; listening is sharing the emotional climate of the speaker), and
- (4) *Transformative orientation*: listening equals creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy (e.g.: listening is taking to heart, being moved and appreciating; listening is showing empathy with the speaker).

Similarly, this lack of an agreed upon definition of listening is also noticed in the history of ELT. Listening has been defined differently. Each definition reflects the role that listening has been given in any approach and theory to L<sub>1</sub> or L<sub>2</sub> teaching. The next section deals with the most important views which have underlain any approach to language listening teaching and learning.

## **2. Views of Listening**

In the history of ELT, listening has been viewed differently. As the approaches to language teaching have been changing over time, so has been the status of listening and the way it has been regarded. Although there have been many approaches and thus many views about listening, such views are grouped under three important theoretical positions, namely the environmentalist, innatist and interactionist views.

### **2. 1. The Environmentalist View of Listening**

In the field of language learning, the environmentalist view of listening had been dominating until the end of 1960s (Martínez-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2006a). It was a product of two theories: structuralism (Bloomfield, 1933) in linguistics and behaviourism in psychology (Skinner, 1957). Structuralism viewed language as consisting of different elements (phonemes, morphemes, words, and sentence types) related to each other in a linear way by means of a series of rules. On the other hand, behaviourism, a then dominant learning theory, viewed all learning as being habit-formation which became stronger with reinforcement; this learning theory is based on three elements: stimulus, response and reinforcement.

Under this environmentalist approach, language learning was believed to take place by imitating and practicing the same structure over and over again. Learning a language was considered to be a mechanical process (Martínez-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2006a). In consequence, a listener was viewed to be acting as a tape recorder (Anderson & Lynch, 1988) and listening as

a passive process whereby a listener's role was to recognize and discriminate sounds rather than to understand what they were listening to (Brown, 1990).

## **2.2. The Innatist View of Listening**

The theory underlying this innatist approach to language learning also stemmed from the many changes witnessed in the fields of linguistics and psychology. In linguistics, Chomsky's innatist theory (1957, 1965), according to which children are born with the innate mental ability which predisposes them to acquire any language no matter the complexities of its rules, came as a major challenge to behaviourism.

Following Chomsky's innatist theory, many researchers working in the field of psycholinguistics undertook many studies which aimed to test Chomsky's innatist theory of language acquisition. For instance, studies such as the ones carried out by Klima and Bellugi, Slobin and Brown corroborated Chomsky's theory and showed that children were active rather than passive in the language learning process (as cited in Martínéz-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2006a). In consequence, listening came, therefore, to be seen as an active mental process whereby listeners make use of their cognitive strategies to understand what they were listening to (Martinez-Flor &Uso-Juan, 2006b).

## **2.3. The Interactionist View of Listening**

This view of listening stemmed from the developments that were taking place in the fields of linguistics, cognitive psychology and sociolinguistics by the 1970s and onwards. In linguistics, research began to turn attention away from the study of isolated sentences to discourse (or language beyond the sentence). Within the field of cognitive psychology, researchers interested in understanding the processes involved in the listening comprehension act made some significant advances (Atkinson & Schiffrin; Schank & Abelson as cited in Martínéz-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2006a). Their findings were of two types: First, comprehension of a given message only occurred when it was internally reproduced in the listeners' mind. Second, listeners did not merely receive and process meaning, but rather constructed such meaning according to their own purposes for listening as well as their prior knowledge. These findings of listening highlighted, thus, the complex nature of the listening act as well as listeners' active participation in it (Martínéz-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2006b).

With the advent of the schema theory during the 1980s, prior knowledge and experience that is stored in listeners' memory came to be seen as factors external to the text which assist the process of comprehension. In addition to those major changes in linguistics and cognitive psychology, sociolinguistics emerged in the 1970s with some theories such as the work of

Hymes (1971, 1972) with the ideas that language is used in social context and its use complies with the norms of appropriateness (Martínez-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2006b). From this interactionist view, listening is considered to be a complex, social and interactive process wherein the listener is actively engaged in constructing meaning on the basis of whatever information that seems relevant at the time of listening (Vandergrift, 1999; Buck, 2001).

### 3. Types of Listening

There are many types of listening. Language researchers have identified and classified them according to two criteria: whether or not listeners have an opportunity to respond or intervene in listening communicative events they are engaged in, and the purposes for listening.

With regard to the first criterion, Lynch (1996) has identified two categories of listening: (1) *one-way communication*, where a listener has no chance to respond or to intervene like when listening to the radio, and (2) *a two-way event*, like a conversation, where a listener has an opportunity to ask for help if needed from the speaker. This dichotomy, ‘one-way communication / a two-way event’, is referred to by Buck (2001) as ‘non-collaborative / collaborative’ and by White (2008) as ‘non-reciprocal / interactive’. Buck (2001) goes on, however, to point out that there is not always any clear-cut distinction between the two. He argues that listening texts range along a non-collaborative - collaborative continuum, with truly non-collaborative texts at one end and truly collaborative texts at the other end. Along the continuum are to be placed certain listening texts, such as classroom interaction or presentations, in which a group of people talk together with one person doing most of the talking and the others listening and saying very little.

Another group of language researchers has classified listening according to its functions. Brown and Yule (1983), in spite of not being interested particularly in L<sub>2</sub> listening in their work, have categorised two functions of language: *the transactional function* which is expressed when language is used to communicate and convey information, and *the interactional function* which is fulfilled when language is used to establish and maintain social relationships.

Following this dichotomy, some L<sub>2</sub> researchers have formulated listening categorisations according to the purposes of listening. Nation and Newton (2009) have identified two types of listening: *transactional listening*, a one-way listening which generally

occurs in formal listening settings such as lectures and which is typically associated with learning new information, and *interactional listening*, a two-way listening, which occurs mostly in our everyday interactions such as face-to-face conversations and which is typically associated with social relationships maintenance. This distinction, ‘transactional / interactional’, is referred to by Richards (1983) as ‘academic / conversational’.

Recently, Rost (2011) has also classified listening by its function. His categorisation comprises six types of listening: (1) *intensive listening*, like when listening for specific details, the function of listening being to decode the linguistic input; (2) *selective listening*, it is to listen with a planned purpose in mind by attending to specific information that needs only to be heard; (3) *interactive listening*, a kind of collaborative conversation in which learners interact with each other leading the learner to understand what was not understood before; (4) *extensive listening*, which can include both academic listening and listening for pleasure, refers to listening for an extended period of time while focusing on meaning; (5) *responsive listening* which is a type of listening practice in which the listener’s response is the goal of the activity; and (6) *autonomous listening* which refers to independent listening in which an L<sub>2</sub> listener is in full control of the input with no direct guidance of an instructor.

#### **4. Types of Knowledge Used in Listening**

Understanding what people mean by what they say is not an easy task. Listeners are not to attend to a listening text empty-handed but are rather required to make use of a wide range of types of knowledge. There is a general consensus among researchers that such knowledge is of two types: linguistic and non-linguistic.

##### **4.1. Linguistic Knowledge**

Linguistic knowledge that people make use of when attending to a listening text is of different types. It comprises exclusively knowledge of the language system, i.e., knowledge of phonology, lexis, syntax, semantics, and discourse structure (Anderson & Lynch 1988; Flowerdew 1994; Lynch 1996; Buck 2001).

##### **4.2. Non-linguistic knowledge**

According to Anderson & Lynch (1988), Lynch (1996) and Buck (2001), the non-linguistic knowledge which listeners use in order to reach a reasonable level of comprehension is also of different types: knowledge about the context in which the text is heard and schematic or background knowledge which is general knowledge about the world and how it works (socio-

cultural and factual knowledge). Schematic knowledge covers a wide range of information and experience stored in memory and is different from one person to another.

From what is said above, the knowledge that listening comprehension requires is now known: linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge. What is not known yet, however, is the nature of the spoken language, its characteristics. Thus, the next point deals with distinctive characteristics of speech.

## **5. Distinctive Features of Spoken Language**

Spoken language is different from written language in many ways; each does have its own distinctive characteristics (Brown & Yule 1983; Buck 2001; Flowerdew & Miller 2005). Features which are distinctive of spoken language are grouped under two main categories: first, the real-time nature of spoken language, and, second, phonological and lexico-grammatical features.

### **5.1. The Real-time Nature of Spoken Language**

A listening text exists in time rather than space. Speech is thus instantaneous and must be processed as it is uttered, for there is often no chance to listen to it again although situations like interactional listening and modern recording technologies which can be rewound do make an exception (Flowerdew 1994; Buck 2001; Flowerdew & Miller 2005; Richards 2008). But, as Buck (2001) argues, 'In normal language use, we (listeners) just get one chance at comprehension, and only one' (p.6). Consequently according to him, unlike readers who can refer back to the written text, listeners are to suffer these two consequences: First, the text is to be processed at a speed determined by the speaker, which is generally quite fast. Second, there is no chance to refer back to the text but the listener has rather to rely only on his memory of what was heard.

### **5.2. Phonological and Lexico-Grammatical Features**

Spoken language is characterised by a frequent use of prosodic features such as stress and intonation. Such prosodic features, together with pauses and the speaker's voice quality effects such as the pitch and loudness of the voice, perform the functions in speech that punctuation, capitalisation, italicisation and paragraphing perform in written language (Brown & Yule, 1983; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Brown (1990) and Buck (2001) argue that, in English, intonation and stress, together with false starts and hesitations may present particular challenges to L2 listeners. Furthermore, Richards (2008) asserts that spoken texts are generally spoken with many different accents, from standard or non-standard to regional, native, non-native, and so on.

In addition to those phonological features, spoken text has its own particular lexicogrammatical features: spoken language usually makes use of short phrases or clauses rather than sentences (Brown & Yule, 1983; Richards, 1983; Buck, 2001), is loosely structured (Buck, 2001; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005), its grammar and lexis tend to be far more colloquial and much less formal (Richards, 1983; Buck, 2001), is mostly referred to as unplanned discourse (Buck, 2001), and is often marked with processes of construction such as hesitations, fillers, vocabulary repair, and sometimes with grammatically incorrect sentences (Richards, 2008). Another feature is that spoken language is accompanied by a range of paralinguistic features such as facial expression, postural and gestural systems which can also influence comprehension and hence be challenges to a listener (Brown & Yule, 1983; Flowerdew & Miller, 1997).

## **6. Listening Comprehension Processes**

There have been differing views about how listeners apply their knowledge i.e. linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge, to the incoming sound during the comprehension process. Three models of comprehension processes have been developed to account for the spoken language comprehension process: bottom-up, top-down and interactive processing.

### **1. Bottom-up Processing**

According to Nunan (1993), Buck (2001), Saville-Troike (2006), Nation and Newton (2009), and Flowerdew and Miller (2010), in bottom-up processing, comprehension is assumed to take place in a definite order, starting with the lowest units of language and moving up to the highest level. Listeners build understanding by starting with phonemes, and these are then combined into words, which, in turn, together make up phrases, clauses and so on until they arrive at a literal understanding. The literal meaning is then interpreted on the basis of whatever information that seems relevant at the time in order to understand what the speaker means. Listening comprehension is reached piece-by piece from the speech stream, going from the parts to the whole. According to this view, for comprehension to happen, prior knowledge of the language system is a prerequisite.

### **2. Top-down Processing**

This model operates in the opposite direction from the previous one. Listeners make sense of discourse by moving from the highest units, prior knowledge of content, context and culture to the lowest, knowledge of the language. In processing a text, emphasis is on the use of previous knowledge rather than relying upon linguistic knowledge (Nunan, 1993; Seville-



## **7. Factors Affecting Listening Comprehension**

Listening comprehension can be affected positively or negatively by a wide range of variables. For instance, as Buck (2001) points out, any characteristic of the listener, the speaker or the situation can affect listening comprehension. In this study, such factors are grouped into two categories: factors internal to the listener and factors external to the listener.

### **1. Factors Internal to the Listener**

Factors internal to the listener which can influence listening comprehension are of various types. They revolve around the linguistic knowledge, schematic knowledge and psycho-affective factors that a listener brings to a listening text.

Firstly, language knowledge is very important in understanding a text. Although important it is, such knowledge however varies among listeners. L<sub>2</sub> listeners may fail to understand due to the lack of enough linguistic knowledge, i.e., knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and phonology, required for understanding a text (Faerch & Kasper as cited in Dunkel, 1991; Buck, 2001), and the inability to perceive relations among elements of the discourse (Carroll as cited in Dunkel, 1991).

Secondly, listeners also vary in terms of the background knowledge they use to comprehend a text. Listening comprehension can be affected positively or negatively by the degree of familiarity with the topic or the cultural elements contained in the discourse (Carrell & Connor as cited in Chiang & Dunkel, 1992), degree of sociocultural competence (i.e., the listener's degree of familiarity with the sociocultural content of the message conveyed by the speaker) (Faerch & Kasper cited in Dunkel, 1991), and knowledge about the topic and genre of a listening text (Brown, 1990). Concerning this prior knowledge, Brown (as cited in Buck, 2001) points out that different listeners often understand different things from the same text due to the effects of background knowledge they bring to a text. It follows from this that the more a listener knows about a topic, the much easier the comprehension process will be.

Thirdly, comprehension can also be affected by the psycho-affective characteristics of a listener. Watson and Smeltzer (as cited in Dunkel, 1991) have highlighted some of the many internal factors that can hinder listening comprehension: (1) personal internal distractions such as hunger, headaches, and emotional disturbance; (2) disinterest in the topic of the message; (3) inattentiveness such as daydreaming; (4) jumping to conclusions about what a person is going to say before it is said; and (5) over-reacting to the language of the speaker (e.g. speaker's use of slang, cursing). In the same line, Carroll has also identified the listener's degree of motivation and the amount of interest in the topic of discussion to be some of the affective variables that

can influence comprehension (as cited in Dunkel, 1991). With regard to the affective factors, Flowerdew and Miller (2010) argue that ‘Comprehension can take place only if individuals are motivated to listen’ (p.168). It follows from this that motivation, interest, and many other feelings may strengthen or weaken the acoustic input to be processed due to lack of attention.

## **2. Factors External to the Listener**

Listening comprehension can also be influenced by factors external to the listener. Any characteristic of the speaker and the situation in which the listening activity takes place can affect positively or negatively the listening comprehension process.

On the one hand, any characteristic of the speaker (gender, age, known opinions, level of education, or accent) and the different attitudes they can adopt towards the listener or towards the topic can hinder or enhance comprehension (Brown, 1990). For instance, the speaker’s accent (regional, non-native or native), language ability, speed of speaking, prestige and personality (Boyle as cited in Dunkel, 1991) can affect listening comprehension. Grice (as cited in Buck, 2001) argues that spoken interaction is a cooperative endeavour and both the speaker and listener must share the burden of making the meaning clear. A speaker must thus adhere to the four Gricean maxims of cooperation: (1) the *maxim of quantity*, which suggests that speakers are to make their contribution as informative as is required; (2) *the maxim of quality*, which suggests that speakers should not say what they believe to be false or something for which they lack adequate evidence; (3) *the maxim of relation*, which suggests that speakers should say what is relevant and (4) *the maxim of manner*, which suggests that speakers should be clear, avoid any ambiguity, be brief and orderly in what they say (Grice as cited in Yule, 1996). Thus, the extent to which a speaker abides by this *cooperative principle* will affect comprehension positively or negatively.

On the other hand, any characteristic of the situation in which the listening activity occurs can also affect comprehension. The background noise (Buck, 2001), phones ringing and other voices (Watson & Smeltzer as cited in Dunkel, 1991) may distract the listeners’ attention and hence affect comprehension. In addition to that, Buck (2001) claims that the listening situation can determine the topic, the kind of language to be used (informal or formal), the degree of interaction and the nature of social relationship between the interlocutors, and the function of the interaction.

## **8. Listening in L<sub>1</sub> vs Listening in L<sub>2</sub>**

There is no much research into the processes of L<sub>2</sub> language comprehension (Anderson & Lynch, 1988) and much less is the work that explicitly looks at the difference between L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub> processing (Lynch as cited in Buck, 2001). However, both Anderson and Lynch (1988) and Buck (2001) assert that the available research on L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub> processing suggests that the processes are similar. Contrary to what the existing work claims, both Anderson and Lynch and Buck argue that, when problems arise in listening, they are generally due to different factors with respect to whether the listening activity is taking place in an L<sub>1</sub> or in an L<sub>2</sub>. Problems in L<sub>1</sub> listening are often due to the degree of attention and motivation; whereas in an L<sub>2</sub> they are primarily associated with insufficient linguistic knowledge or a lack of the reasonable schematic knowledge required to understand the content of the message, and, secondly, with the varying degrees of motivation that L<sub>2</sub> listeners bring to the listening text.

Buck (2001) summarises the main difference between L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub> as follows:

I believe that the difference between L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub> listening is not that the processes are fundamentally different in any way, but only that the knowledge necessary to understand is often grossly inadequate for the L<sub>2</sub> listener. This may often be a double disadvantage, in that they lack both the knowledge of the language and also the background knowledge to compensate for that. (p.51)

In the same line with what is said above, Saville-Troike (2006) argues that it is assumed that sufficient prior linguistic knowledge is automatically and unconsciously available to L<sub>1</sub> and to highly skilled L<sub>2</sub> listener for interpretation of meaning, but it is the language knowledge of L<sub>2</sub> learners which is often insufficient for comprehending spoken input.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, an attempt to review the literature related to listening in general has been made. The skill of listening, although natural and simple it seems in our everyday interaction, is very complex. As a result, listening has been defined differently, partly due to its complexities and also due to the differing interests that people defining it have. Different listening types have also been categorised according to the degree of the listener's verbal participation in a listening activity or according to the purposes for listening.

When listening, we listen to spoken language for comprehension so that our purposes for listening can be served. Comprehension requires, however, a wide range of knowledge: linguistic and non-linguistic. Different models of listening comprehension have thus been developed to explain how listeners apply their knowledge to the incoming linguistic input. With L<sub>2</sub> listeners, such knowledge can be problematic and this can lead to comprehension breakdown. There are several factors, factors ranging from factors internal to the listener to factors independent of the listener, which can affect comprehension positively or negatively.

## **Chapter Two: Academic Listening**

### **Introduction**

At university, students are involved into various listening activities. They can attend lectures and tutorials; they can also participate in or attend seminars and workshops. Such listening activities are, however, intended to serve different purposes, and, thus, students are likely to listen differently. In some listening activities, students may listen, whereas in others they may listen and participate interactively. In other listening activities, they may listen and do some practical activities at the same time. Some listening activities are fundamental whereas others are secondary and only supplement and complement what has been done in one listening activity. Besides, prior to attending each listening activity, students may be required to do some specific and extra work which may vary from one listening activity to another.

This chapter concerns itself with academic listening. It reviews the literature relevant to academic listening and the requirements needed to comprehend when listening in an academic context. Besides, like when listening in every-day life, academic listening also does have its own difficulties. The present chapter therefore also reviews the potential listening comprehension problems that listeners may encounter and the strategies that successful listeners use to compensate for gaps in their comprehension.

### **1. The Nature of Academic Listening**

In academic settings, there is a wide range of instructional media at the disposal of teachers, namely, speech events such as seminars and tutorials, materials such as videos, or activities such as writing and reading assignments, among others; but, the lecture ‘remains the central instructional activity’ (Flowerdew, 1994, p.1). In the same line, Lowes *et al.* (2004) argue that, at university, calculations show that students spend over 50 per cent of their time listening and, according to Armbruster (as cited in Scevak, 2007), 80 per cent of which is spent listening to lectures. Scevak (2007) supports this primacy of the lecture within the field of academic study by claiming that tutorials, seminars and workshops are used as teaching media only to complement the lecture series. It follows from what is said above that academic life and success requires to master lecture listening skills. In this study therefore, academic listening means lecture listening although academic listening means, as Benson (1989) states, the listening that enables most learning in university lectures, tutorials, and seminars.

Lecture listening, like any type of listening activity, requires different processes. With regard to lecture comprehension, Richards (1983) has proposed a list of lecture listening micro-skills which include among others the ability to identify a lecture's purpose and scope, ability to identify topic of lecture and follow topic development, ability to identify role of discourse markers in signalling structure of a lecture (e.g., conjunctions, adverbs, gambits, routines), ability to deduce meanings of words from context, ability to recognize function of intonation to signal information structure (e.g., pitch, volume, pace, key), ability to follow lecture despite differences in accent and speed, familiarity with different styles of lecturing: formal, conversational, read, unplanned, ability to recognize irrelevant matter: jokes, digressions, meanderings, and the ability to recognize function of nonverbal cues as markers of emphasis and attitude. Similarly, Flowerdew (1994) has reviewed the academic listening skills required for lecture comprehension process; they are as follows: (1) knowledge of the specialist subject matter; (2) ability to distinguish what is relevant and what is not relevant; (3) ability to focus on the information to be conveyed; (4) ability to concentrate on and understand long stretches of talk; (5) ability to take notes; and (6) the ability to integrate the incoming message with information derived from other media such as handouts, textbooks, blackboard notes, and overhead projector materials. Given the skills required for comprehending lecture and the primacy of a lecture in the field of academic study, Lowes *et al.* (2004) claim that academic listening is a very special skill which even native speakers may find problematic.

## **2. The Lecture Genre**

The word lecture is derived from the Latin word *lectura* which means 'reading'. A lecture is usually a monologue, a talk by one person, and it lasts for several minutes, generally around one hour (McMillan & Weyers, 2006). Lectures are the most common way of communication and teaching at university throughout the world (McMillan & Weyers, 2006; Scevak, 2007). This academic instructional spoken genre is not however of today; it dates back to medieval times and has survived in different forms, although from the very beginning lectures were readings by the teachers from their handwritten notebooks as printing was to be invented (Wood, 2000; Bernard, 2003).

Although lectures have been the most common medium of dissemination of knowledge and ideas at university, some questions have been raised in recent years with regard to their effectiveness as a teaching methodology. A university lecture is believed to have many advantages and disadvantages. Concerning its advantages, the following are the most cited:

lectures are cost-effective, i.e., they are economical since one single lecturer can communicate with as many students as the lecture theatre can hold at any one time (Bernard, 2003; Crawford Camiciotti, 2007; Scevak, 2007), and lectures are acknowledged to lay down the foundation for understanding the topic for study or the course (McMillan & Weyers, 2006). On the other hand, they are believed not to be the best way to teach due to the following reasons: a lecture cannot obviously address the particular needs of each individual student (Bernard, 2003); lectures are not intended to tell the students all they need to know (Bernard, 2003) but rather provide a kind of introduction of the topic and this means that the students have to do a lot of supplementary work on their own or in tutorials, fieldwork or laboratory (McMillan & Weyers, 2006); and lectures are much longer than the average attention span of audiences (Bligh as cited in Crawford Camiciotti, 2007).

Despite the fact that lecturing is a widely accepted practice in higher education throughout the world, Bellés and Fortanet (2005) note that lectures are not homogeneous. They vary from one discipline to another and from one lecturer to another depending on the differing functions they are intended to serve and the personality of each lecturer (Bernard, 2003; McMillan & Weyers, 2006).

### **3. Lecturing Styles**

Many studies have identified a number of different styles for delivering lectures. Morrison (as cited in Jordan, 1997) conducted a study on science lectures and divided them into two kinds: formal and informal. The former is referred to as being ‘formal register and close to spoken prose’ (p.181), and the latter as being ‘high informational content, but not necessarily in highly formal register’ (p.181). He noted that students are likely to have difficulty in comprehending informal lectures than formal ones.

Other researchers, such as Dudley-Evans and Johns (as cited in Jordan, 1997) and Dudley-Evans (1994) have proposed other lecturing styles. According to Dudley-Evans, ‘the key to the understanding of lectures is an appreciation of lectures’ individual styles’ (1994, p. 148). They have analysed lectures in highway engineering and plant biology and they have distinguished three styles of lecturing: First, *reading style*, ‘in which lecturers either read the lecture or deliver it as if they were reading it’ (Dudley-Evans, 1994, p.148). Such a style is characterized by short tone-groups, and narrowness of intonational range with a predominance of a falling tone (Jordan, 1997). Second, *conversational style*, ‘in which lecturers deliver the lecture from notes and in a relatively informal style with a certain amount of interaction with

students' (Dudley-Evans, 1994, p.148). It is characterized by longer tone-groups and key-sequences from high to low (Jordan, 1997). And the last is the *rhetorical style*, 'in which the lecturers give a performance with jokes and digressions' (Dudley-Evans, 1994, p.148). It is characterized by wide intonational range; the lecturer often exploits high key, makes use of frequent asides and digressions (Jordan, 1997). Mason (1994) has analysed lecture modes and has identified the following modes: (1) *talk-and-chalk* in which 'the lecturer expounds the material using the blackboard as the prime visual aid' (Mason, 1994, p. 203), (2) *give-and-take* 'where the lecturer presents material to encourage discussion, questions and comments between students and lecturer' (Mason, 1994, p. 203), and (3) *report-and-discuss* in which the students' participation is very important; in such a mode, topics are allocated by the lecturer for study, presentation and discussion in the class.

In the literature regarding lecturing styles, it is noticed that the traditional lecture – a monologue – is losing its ground to the more interactive one wherein teachers are seen to be much closer since they tend to invite students to interact and participate more than in previous times (Flowerdew, 1994; Bellés & Fortanet, 2005).

#### **4. Variables Affecting L<sub>2</sub> Lecture Comprehension**

As the number of people attending lectures held in English at a tertiary level has been increasing, students' comprehension of academic discourse has become an important focus of study, most of which is ESP/EAP oriented (Flowerdew, 1994; Jordan, 1997; Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). Consequently, many of these studies have attempted to determine what variables of the lecture discourse play a role in improving non-native speakers' understanding of the content. Lecture schema, speech modifications, use of visual aids, interaction and note-taking are some of the most important variables identified (Morell as cited in Morell, 2007). For reasons of space and relevance to this study, however, only lecture discourse markers, lecture schema and speech modifications are dealt with in this sub-section.

##### **4.1. Discourse Markers.**

Discourse markers (DMs hereafter) have proved to be decisive in the successful delivery of lectures as well as in their accurate comprehension both in an L<sub>1</sub> and an L<sub>2</sub> context (Jordan, 1997; Dafouz & Nunez, 2010). Although there is no agreement among researchers as to which linguistic items are to be considered DMs, most researchers agree however on their functional definition, 'the use of discourse markers facilitates the hearer's task of understanding the speaker's utterances' (Müller, 2005, p.8). With respect to the effect of DMs on L<sub>2</sub> lecture

comprehension, Chaudron and Richards (cited in Jordan 1997) have undertaken a study in which discourse markers were divided into two categories: macro-makers which are higher-order discourse makers signalling major transitions and emphasis in the lectures (e.g., ‘what I am going to talk about today’; ‘we will see that’; ‘as you may have heard’; ‘this is how it came about’), and micro-markers which are lower-order markers of segmentation and intersentential connections (e.g., ok, right, well, so). One of their findings was that a lecture which uses more macro-markers is easier to follow and comprehend.

#### **4.2. Lecture Schema**

Schematic knowledge is of paramount importance in listening comprehension. As Chiang and Dunkel (1992) argue, the role that prior knowledge plays in language comprehension has been articulated in schema theory. The basic tenets of this theory posit that any text does not carry meaning in and of itself. Meaning, rather, occurs as a result of the interaction between reader’s or listener’s prior knowledge about the world and the text. Carrell and Connor (as cited in Chiang & Dunkel, 1992) claim that L<sub>2</sub> students can fail to understand and recall information contained in spoken and written discourse when they lack familiarity with the topic or the cultural elements contained in the discourse. In the same line, many studies, among others, Chiang and Dunkel (1992), Sadighi and Zare (2002), Hayati and Vahid (2012), and Alidoost *et al.* (2014) have investigated the effect of prior knowledge on L<sub>2</sub> lecture discourse processing. Results from these studies do lend support to the positive effect of schematic knowledge on lecture comprehension regardless of the listening proficiency of the subjects involved in the studies.

Brown and Yule (1983) and Buck (2001) argue that interpretation of each text is subjective and probabilistic. Interpretations may vary from one listener to another since the background knowledge that listeners bring to a text tends to vary. Therefore, different listeners can understand different things from the same listening text. It follows from this that a talk on a subject which violates or contradicts the listener’s expectations or about which the listener knows nothing will be more difficult irrespective of how linguistically challenging the text might be.

#### **4.3. Speech Modifications**

For a purpose of comprehension, it has been noticed that English native speakers often adjust or modify their speech so that L<sub>2</sub> listeners can understand better (Long as cited in Chiang & Dunkel, 1992). Long continues to assert that it is done so in accord with Krashen’s input

hypothesis which postulates that non-proficient listeners need comprehensible – often modified – input as a prerequisite to L<sub>2</sub> comprehension and acquisition. Speech modifications are of various types: a simplification of linguistic form in the form of simplified syntax and/or vocabulary, repetition of the information (elaborative modification or redundancy), speech rate, and the use of pauses (Chiang & Dunkel, 1992). According to Buck (2001), hesitation is another type of speech modifications and it comprises: (1) unfilled pauses, which are just periods of silence; (2) filled pauses, where the speaker uses fillers (e.g., uh, um, ah, well, anyway, let me see); (3) repetitions, where the speaker repeats the same word or part of a word; and (4) false starts, where the speaker stops and then replaces the previous word or phrase with another choice. Chiang and Dunkel (1992) note that the notion of providing L<sub>2</sub> listeners with modified input is widely accepted among L<sub>2</sub> researchers although little is known about precisely which types of modifications actually augment or obstruct the intake of aurally received information.

## **5. Effective L<sub>2</sub> Lecture Listening Comprehension**

Effective lecture listening is anything but a simple process. As Lowes *et al.* (2004) put it, ‘Listening to lectures is a very special skill. It is a skill that even native speakers may not find easy’ (p.59). They go on to define effective listening as being ‘the ability to receive, decode and interpret the message the speaker is communicating’ (p.46) Lecture listening is more difficult nonetheless due to many reasons. Firstly, as the definition of effective listening shows, L<sub>2</sub> lecture listeners are to operate a number of various skills simultaneously. They need to refer to three different areas of knowledge, i.e., schematic, contextual and linguistic in order to make sense of the message (Lowes *et al.*, 2004; White, 2008). Secondly, it requires the students to alternate between different ways of listening as there are times when they need to listen intensively for details trying to understand every word and times when they only need to get the general idea and then listen extensively (Lowes *et al.*, 2004). Thirdly, listening to lectures makes a lot of demands on the students. It requires concentration and the ability to process a lot of information. Students need therefore to do a lot of work before, during and after the lecture. The information in what follows draws upon Wood (2000), Bernard (2003), Lowes *et al.* (2004), McMillan and Weyers (2006), and Scevak (2007).

### **5.1. Before the lecture**

Students are not to attend a lecture empty-handed. They are required to do some work prior to attending the lecture. They have to prepare the topic by doing some background reading.

The benefit of doing this background reading is twofold: first, students become familiar with the lecture content and this enriches their background knowledge to which they can relate new information; second, it helps them understand the jargon – topic-specific vocabulary – related to the lecture topic or subject. Besides, they should write questions they expect the lecture to answer while reading.

## **5.2. In the Lecture**

Work done prior to attending a lecture is necessary and important, but it is not the end of the story. Students need therefore to attend the lecture and listen effectively. Thus, they should be on time since most lectures begin with an outline of what will be covered. Missing the introduction of a lecture may cause failure in understanding the logic of the lecture structure and content. They should also sit where they can hear the lecturer well and preferably also see their face.

While listening, they should listen effectively and participate actively by monitoring their understanding of what is being said. Active participation requires them to take notes and ask questions if the lecturing style allows questions to be asked. Besides, there is a wide range of strategies they can use to boost their understanding while listening: pay attention to what is being said and eliminate any distractions, listen just to get the main ideas not for every detail because the duration of a lecture makes it overloading, take account of the importance of visual information (overhead transparencies, slides, PowerPoint presentations, and blackboard), approach the lecture with a positive attitude (e.g., motivation for learning, an interest in the subject), and attend all lectures since they are the foundation of their course. Moreover, they should also note down any references as full details are to be found in the course handbook. Finally, they are not to leave the lecture early as most of the lecturers summarise key issues and sometimes introduce next lecture at the end of the lecture.

## **5.3. After the Lecture**

After the lecture, students should reflect and think back on the lecture to see if everything is in order in their mind. It is time to check if the questions they wrote before the lecture have been answered. In case they are left with questions, they should try to find the answers by asking a fellow student or consulting a text and, if still in doubt, speak to the lecturer. They should also make their notes and write a summary of what the lecture was about and keep a record of it for future use. Finally, they should do any assignments they may have been given.

## **6. Potential Listening Problems**

Lecture comprehension is a complex process even in one's native language (Lowe *et al.*, 2004). Thus, listening comprehension in an L<sub>2</sub>, where even language proficiency can be problematic, is likely to become much more difficult. Since comprehending a spoken text requires listeners to refer to three areas of knowledge, namely linguistic, schematic and contextual, problems or deficiency in any of the aforementioned areas can hinder comprehension. There are therefore three types of listening comprehension problems: language problems, contextual problems and background knowledge-related problems.

### **1. Language Problems**

Language knowledge is required to receive and then interpret the spoken message. If conditions are good and a listener has a normal hearing, the knowledge of the language sounds – phonological knowledge – is prerequisite to the message reception. Once the message is received, people make use of their lexico-grammatical knowledge and the knowledge of the text discourse structure to understand what is being said. Thus, language problems are divided into three types: phonological, lexico-grammatical and discourse problems.

#### **1.1. Phonological Problems**

Listening comprehension problems can be caused by the sound system. Thus, lack of the phonological knowledge – the complex rules that determine the pronunciation of connected speech – is likely to be reflected in reduced comprehension (Flowerdew, 1994; Buck, 2001). According to Ur (1984), Brown (1990) and Lowe *et al.* (2004), hearing the sounds in an L<sub>2</sub> can be problematic as sounds in one language do not necessarily exist or resemble to the sounds of another language. When it comes to the English sounds, L<sub>2</sub> listeners who are not used to the stress and intonation patterns can fail to hear and perceive them. Stress and intonation carry a great deal of communication information which can supplement or contradict the literal meaning of the words. For instance, things such as certainty, doubt, irony, inquiry, seriousness, humour can be implied by characteristic intonation patterns. Flowerdew (1994) argues that L<sub>2</sub> listeners may fail to recognize unit boundaries phonologically. This may be due to the fact that in L<sub>2</sub> classroom, learners do not generally experience real life speech which is too fast and redundant but are rather exposed to the sounds pronounced slowly and clearly (Brown, 1990). Accent can also be an additional problem, since as Ur (1984) claims, unfamiliarity with the speaker's accent can hinder comprehension.

## **1.2. Lexico-grammatical Problems**

There is no objection to the claim that knowledge of vocabulary and grammar is very important in listening. Language knowledge is used to fill in the half-heard words confidently and quickly given that spoken utterances once they are uttered, words and phrases are gone (Walter, 1997). Besides, good knowledge of lexis, clichés, idioms, collocations and proverbs helps the listener to make predictions of what is going to be said next (Ur, 1984). When it comes to lecture comprehension, however, the lexis needed is of special type and it varies from one discipline to another. As Swales (1990) points out, any discourse community is characterised by a highly specialised terminology. Each field of study has developed therefore its special lexis, jargon, which includes also some abbreviations and acronyms. Knowledge of these acronyms and abbreviations is required for efficient communication exchange between people belonging to the same field of study. M<sub>1</sub> in Applied Linguistics and ESP should be familiar with some acronyms and abbreviations related to their field such as ESL, ESP, EAP, EOP, EFL, ELT, and TESOL if they are to understand the lecture as some teachers may use those abbreviated forms when lecturing believing that their students know what each acronym stands for. Ur (1984) and Brown (1990) argue however that successful L<sub>2</sub> listeners do not try to understand every single word. It is tiring and counterproductive. Successful listeners listen to gather the main message by relaxing enough and by skimming over some bits of the message that seem irrelevant to the reasons and purposes for listening.

## **1.3. Discourse Problems**

Phonological and lexico-grammatical knowledge is not sufficient for comprehending a lecture. Unfamiliarity with lecture discourse structure can also cause problems. Many researchers believe that familiarity with discourse structure is very important. For example, Olsen and Huckin (1990) point out that L<sub>2</sub> students can understand all the words of a lecture and still fail to understand the main points. In the same line, Dunkel and Davis (1994) claim that lecture comprehension depends less on the meaning of the individual sentences, and more on their inter-relatedness and the structure of the whole text.

A lecture discourse has been examined and analysed and it has been found that it contains certain discourse signals which mark the structure and organisation of the information. With regard to the effect of discourse markers on L<sub>2</sub> lecture comprehension, we have seen so far that a speaker's use of discourse signals facilitates comprehension of lecture information (for instance Chaudron & Richards as cited in Jordan, 1997). Young (1994) has analysed the

macro-structure of university lectures and identified six phases into which the activity of lecturing is divided: (1) Discourse structuring phase (e.g., first, another point); (2) the Conclusion phase (e.g., today we saw, I will finish here), (3) the Evaluation phase (e.g., more importantly, it is interesting to notice that), (4) Interaction phase, (5) Theory or Content phase (e.g., I'm going to start by defining, this viewpoint is supported by), and (6) Exemplification phase (e.g., let's look at some examples). Each phase is characterised by certain linguistic devices. Commenting on those linguistic devices, Dafouz and Nunez (2010) claim that such 'devices have proved to be decisive in the successful delivery of lectures as well as in their accurate comprehension both in an L<sub>1</sub> and an L<sub>2</sub> context' (p.217). Students can thus fail to understand a lecture if they are unfamiliar with the role of such linguistic devices.

## **2. Background Knowledge-related Problems**

Language knowledge is not a once and for all solution to L<sub>2</sub> lecture comprehension. Understanding what is meant from what is said requires more than knowledge of the language system. As Anderson and Lynch (1988) argue, lack of shared schematic or contextual information can make comprehension difficult or impossible even when the language knowledge presents no obstacle. They continue to assert that such a gap in understanding is compensated for by our familiarity with the L<sub>2</sub> cultural system (i.e., beliefs, rules, ideas, and facts) as we acquire both the linguistic and cultural systems when learning an L<sub>2</sub>. Thus, gaps in our knowledge of the L<sub>2</sub> culture can present obstacles to comprehension. According to White (2008), this schematic knowledge is of different types: it includes knowledge of how discourse is organized, knowledge of how language is used in a particular society, and factual knowledge of the topic which is being talked about. Concerning knowledge of the lecture discourse, we saw in the preceding section that being unfamiliar with the lecture discourse can hinder comprehension.

Brown (1990) claims that knowledge about the topic and genre of the listening text can be of invaluable help. Genre determines the style of vocabulary items, i.e., the formality or informality of the language to be used, whereas the topic determines the content of vocabulary items. Given that the academic lecture genre usually makes use of formal and academic language, and that it is of specialised terminology specific to each field of study, Anderson and Lynch (1988) claim that attending and comprehending a lecture require knowledge of a special type. It requires familiarity with the culture of the field of study; therefore, outsiders to the field will not understand even if their language knowledge may not be a problem.

### 3. Contextual Problems

According to Carrier, 'real-listening does not occur in a vacuum but rather in a rich social context' (as cited in Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2006b, p. 34). Listeners must also pay attention to the contextual information which includes the physical setting, the participants and the co-text (what has already been said) (White, 2008). According to Brown (1990), any characteristic of the physical setting in which the message is produced or of the participants can enhance or hinder comprehension.

In academic settings, lecture listening and delivery occur between students and a lecturer in a lecture room. The identity of the speakers (gender, age, known opinions, level of education, or accent), along with it the different attitudes they can adopt towards the listener (e.g. friendly, condescending, or sympathetic) or towards the topic (interested, bored, angry, or excited) can affect the listening comprehension process (Brown, 1990). Moreover, the speakers' speed of speaking and the cultural references in their speech (e.g., jokes) can be problems when listening in an L<sub>2</sub> (Ur, 1984). Concerning the listener, on the other hand, Flowerdew and Miller (2010) argue that comprehension can take place only if individuals are motivated to listen. Factors such as internal distractions (e.g., emotional upset), lack of interest, emotional reaction to the speaker or topic and many others can hinder comprehension even in L<sub>1</sub> listening (Lynch, 2009).

With regard to the physical context in which a listening text occurs, good conditions of message reception (e.g., the absence of high winds, background noise or poor quality-recordings) are required for comprehension to take place (Lowes *et al.*, 2004). Ur (1984), Buck (2001), McMillan and Weyers (2006) and Flowerdew & Miller (2010) claim that the inability to combine information from visual and aural sources in a lecture can also cause problems. In a lecture, visual and environmental clues can be of various types: visual aids used when lecturing (e.g., overhead transparencies, diagrams, handouts and blackboard notes) and non-verbal signals, namely, extra-linguistic like body movements and paralinguistic such as the way the voice is used. Huckin and Olsen (1990), after they have found in their study that mechanical engineering relies heavily on visuals aids, concluded that the use of visual aids varies from one discipline to another. As Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan (2006b) argue however, interpreting body language and gestures is to be done cautiously as they differ considerably between cultures.

## **7. Listening Comprehension Strategies**

In the preceding section, we have seen that listening comprehension breakdown can occur whenever the listener lacks the knowledge required to receive, decode or interpret the spoken message. We have called this failure in comprehension listening problems. When problems are encountered while listening, there is a wide range of strategies that successful listeners use to overcome such comprehension difficulties. This section deals therefore with listening strategies.

### **1. Defining Listening Strategies**

Academic lecture listening is a complex process. Therefore, students can have recourse to a wide range of strategies to facilitate their understanding. In the literature related to language learning, such strategies are called learning strategies, and they include as well listening strategies. Macaro (2001), after a review of learning strategies, notes that there is a lack of consensus among researchers as to how learning strategies should be defined due to the fact that each definition reflects the researcher's main sphere of interest. Moreover, Macaro notices also that whether strategy use is deliberate or subconscious is controversial among researchers. He concludes by asserting that there is a tendency in the literature to see strategies as part of a subconscious to conscious continuum since there is no consensus as to whether strategies can be defined as conscious or subconscious.

As far as defining learning strategies is concerned, Oxford (1990) defines them as being 'specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations' (p.8). According to Chamot and O'Malley (1990), learning strategies are 'the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information' (p.1). And for Chamot (as cited in Macaro 2001), 'learning strategies are techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information' (p.17). These are just some of the many definitions of learning strategies found in the literature.

In this study, however, since it attempts to investigate strategies that M<sub>1</sub> use to compensate for gaps in their lecture listening comprehension, it seems legitimate to hold the stand of those researchers who assume that strategy use is deliberate and conscious behaviour. In consequence, listening strategies are 'conscious plans to deal with incoming speech,

particularly when the listener knows that he or she must compensate for incomplete input or partial understanding' (Rost, 2001, p. 10).

## **2. Classifying Listening Strategies**

According to O'Malley *et al.* (as cited in Flowerdew & Miller, 2005), there are hundreds of strategies (no fewer than 638 strategies) that students can choose from. In consequence, choosing the best learning strategy is not always an easy task (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Although being too numerous, learning strategies have been differentiated and classified into three categories: metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies (Chamot & O'Malley, 1990; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005).

### **2.1. Metacognitive Strategies**

Metacognitive strategies are higher order executive skills. They involve thinking about and directing the listening process or any learning activity: they include actions such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating the success of a task (Chamot & O'Malley, 1990; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). According to Macaro (2001) and Vandergrift (2008), metacognitive strategies are important because they support cognitive strategies in a sense that they oversee, regulate or direct the listening comprehension process or any learning activity.

### **2.2. Cognitive Strategies**

Cognitive strategies operate directly on incoming information. They are used to manipulate information in ways that enhance learning or facilitate comprehension or production. Examples of cognitive strategies are rehearsal, organisation, summarization, using visual images, making inferences while listening, taking notes of information to remember, and elaboration or use of prior knowledge (Chamot & O'Malley, 1990; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Although metacognitive strategies direct a learning activity such as lecture listening comprehension, Vandergrift (2008) argues that the application of appropriate cognitive strategies is prerequisite for the realisation of a learning goal.

### **2.3. Socio-affective Strategies**

Socio-affective strategies are a broad grouping of strategies which involves either interaction with another person as in conversations or the control of one's feelings. Such strategies enable learners to use others to enhance their learning and encourage themselves to continue learning. Co-operation with peers on a language task, seeking help from a teacher, and managing one's emotions are all instances of strategies from this group (Chamot & O'Malley, 1990; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005).

The following table, which is adapted from Flowerdew and Miller (2005) and Vandergrift (2008), summarises these three types of strategies in relation to lecture comprehension.

**Table 2.** *Lecture Comprehension Strategies*

<b>1. Metacognitive strategies</b>	
1.1. Planning: developing an awareness of what needs to be done to comprehend successfully the lecture listening task	
Advanced organisation	Decide what the objectives of the lecture listening task are and/or propose strategies for handling it
Directed attention	Attending to the main points of the lecture by discarding or ignoring irrelevant matters
Selective attention	Paying attention to details while listening
1.2. Monitoring: checking, verifying, or correcting one's comprehension while listening to the lecture	
1.3. Evaluation: assessing how well one has comprehended at the end of the listening task	
Performance evaluation	Learners judge how well they perform a task
Problem identification	Deciding what problems hinder comprehension
<b>2. Cognitive strategies</b>	
Inferencing	Using information within the spoken message to guess the meanings of unfamiliar language items, to predict outcomes or to fill in missing information
Elaboration	Using schematic knowledge to comprehend the task
Summarisation	Making a summary of what one hears
Resourcing	Using any available reference resources of information to aid them in their understanding, like books, articles, diagrams, peers, notes
Note-taking	Writing notes during the lecture listening process
<b>3. Socio-affective strategies</b>	
Questioning for clarification	Asking for additional explanation, verification, rephrasing or examples from a teacher or peer
Cooperation	Learners working together to pool their comprehension
Lowering anxiety	Trying to relax before listening to the message
Self-encouragement	Developing a positive attitude towards a listening task (I can do it)

Finally, it has been noted that strategy use varies among L<sub>2</sub> listeners (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). Students favour some strategies over others according to the following factors: culture, language to be learned, language level, knowledge about self – one's personality – (e.g., introvert vs. extrovert), sex, motivation, learning style, career orientation, language teaching methods and task requirement.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, listening was put in academic context, where comprehension and retention of the lecture content is the primary purpose in listening. Academic listening is, however, a very complex process even in one's native language. Although being difficult and complex, much of the academic life is, however, devoted to lecture listening. The lecture spoken genre, although it has survived in different forms, remains the central university instructional activity since medieval times. Lectures are therefore not homogeneous. Lecturing styles vary among disciplines and lecturers as the functions that the lectures are intended to serve differ as well as the personalities of the lecturers.

What makes this skill even more difficult is that it makes a lot of demands on the students prior to attending, while and after the lecture listening activity. Less successful listeners are therefore likely to encounter many listening comprehension problems which range from language problems to background knowledge and to contextual information related problems. Whenever there is a listening comprehension breakdown, there is a wide range of listening strategies that successful listeners make use of to overcome such listening comprehension difficulties.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology, Results and Discussions**

### **Introduction**

This study intends to investigate the listening problems that first year master students of English in Applied Linguistics and ESP branch at Ouargla University encounter when listening to academic lectures along with the strategies they use. This chapter presents, first, the methodology followed in this research study to achieve the aims set for this piece of research. It describes the participants, presents the instrument used in this study, and describes the data analysis procedures. Second, it presents the results of the study. Third, the major findings of the study are briefly summarised and then discussed. Finally, some recommendations are formulated and the chapter ends with the limitations of this study.

### **1. Methodology**

In order to answer the two research questions that guided the present research, this study follows a descriptive research design to collect quantitative data. According to Singh (2006), descriptive research 'is concerned with the present and attempts to determine the status of the phenomenon under investigation' (p.104). This is due to the nature of the problem under investigation in this study as it attempts to examine the kind of problems that M<sub>1</sub> in AL and ESP at Ouargla University encounter when listening to lectures along with the strategies they use to comprehend better.

#### **1.1. Sample**

To fulfil the aims set for this piece of research, the convenience sampling method is used. A sample of 43 students out of 58 students registered in the class of first year master in AL and ESP at Ouargla University for the academic year 2013-2014 is used to serve as respondents in this study. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrisson (2007), convenience sampling involves 'choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained or those who happen to be available and accessible at the time' (pp.113-114).

#### **1.2. Data-gathering Instrument**

##### **1.2.1. Description of the Questionnaire**

In this study, the instrument used to collect data is a Likert-Scale questionnaire (See Appendix). The questionnaire is divided into two sections. The first section of the survey questionnaire, which intends to investigate the listening problems that the students encounter

while listening to a lecture, was designed after a review of the literature about both factors influencing listening comprehension and lecture listening comprehension problems. It includes 20 items grouped into three categories: the listener (14 items), the speaker (4 items) and the physical setting (2 items). Problems related to the listener are further divided into five categories: phonological problems (3 items), lexico-grammatical problems (3 items), lecture discourse-related problems (2 items), background knowledge related problems (3 items) and problems related to psycho-affective factors (3 items). Section two, on the other hand, is intended to collect data about the listening strategies used in the process of lecture comprehension. This second section of the questionnaire was adapted from the listening strategy questionnaires developed by Vandergrift (2006) and Taguchi (2001). The items of those questionnaires have been modified to fit the academic listening context of the present piece of research. Besides, the items were formulated after the review of the literature relative to listening strategies (Chamot & O'Malley, 1990; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Vandergrift, 2008). It contains 30 items grouped into three categories: metacognitive (13 items), cognitive (11 items) and socio-affective (6 items) strategies. The questionnaire was designed to be answered within 30 minutes. The following is a table summarizing how the different Likert-Scaled items of the listening questionnaire have been categorized.

**Table 3.** *Description of the Likert-Scaled Items of the Listening Questionnaire*

<b>Section One: Listening problems (20 items total)</b>	<b>Item Numbers</b>
I. Listener (14 items)	
a) Phonological (3 items)	10, 12, 15
b) Lexico-grammatical (3 items)	1, 2, 19
c) Discourse	4, 20
d) Background knowledge	3, 13, 14
e) Psycho-affective	11, 17, 18
II. Speaker (4 items)	5, 6, 7, 8
III. Physical setting (2 items)	9, 16
<b>Section Two: Listening Strategies (30 items total)</b>	
I. Metacognitive (13 items)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22, 26, 27
II. Cognitive (11 items)	12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25
III. Socio-affective (6 items)	7, 13, 19, 28, 29, 30

### 1.2.2. Administration of the Questionnaire

In order to meet the aims of the current study, the survey questionnaire was administered to the participants, i.e. the first year master students in Applied Linguistics and ESP, in the

lecture room during the last 45 minutes of one of their regular lecture sessions. It took about five minutes to explain the survey intentions and instructions. The questionnaires were then distributed to the students and they were completed within a 35 minute period of time.

## **2. Data analysis and Results**

### **1. Data analysis**

In this study, participants were asked to rate statements on a 5-point Likert Scale in which (1) = never true of me, (2) = rarely true of me, (3) = sometimes true of me, (4) = often true of me and (5) = always true of me. Once completed, the 5-point Likert scale questionnaire data supplied an integrated score for both listening problems and strategies. The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed quantitatively. The analysis was conducted through descriptive statistics in which both the mean score and the standard deviation (SD) of each statement were computed in order to reveal both the listening problems encountered and the listening strategies used. In this study, the statistical analysis was conducted using Microsoft Office Excel 2013. Based on Oxford (1990), the criteria for the interpretation of the mean scores are as follows:

High	Always face (a stated problem) / Always use (a stated strategy)	4.5 – 5.0
	Often face/ Often use	3.5 – 4.4
Medium	Sometimes face / Sometimes use	2.5 – 3.4
Low	Rarely face / Rarely use	1.5 – 2.4
	Never face / Never use	1.0 – 1.4

According to these criteria, scores between 3.5 and 5.0 indicate that listening problems are highly (always or often) encountered by the participants or that listening strategies are highly used by participants; scores between 2.5 and 3.4 indicate that listening problems are moderately (sometimes) encountered by participants or that listening strategies are moderately used by participants; and scores smaller than 2.4 indicate that listening problems are less (never or rarely) encountered by participants or that listening strategies are less used by participants.

### **2. Results**

This section aims at presenting the statistical results of the data analysed through research procedures described above in order to answer the two research questions that guided the present research study. The listening problems encountered by M1 students when listening to academic lectures and the listening strategies that the subjects reported to make use of during the process of lecture comprehension are the two research questions to which this study seeks

to find answers. Therefore, the report of the results is presented in accordance with the research purposes and is divided into two main sections: (1) descriptive analyses of students' lecture listening comprehension problems, and (2) descriptive analyses of students' lecture listening strategies.

## 2.1. Descriptive Analyses of Listening Comprehension Problems

In order to present a general picture of the listening comprehension problems encountered by M1 in AL and ESP, descriptive statistics were conducted. Means and standard deviations for all the statements representing the listening problems, i.e., problems related to the listener, problems related to the speaker and problems related to the physical setting, are presented (See table 3).

### 2.1.1. Problems Related to the Listener

In this section, means and standard deviations for all the statements representing the phonological, lexico-grammatical, lecture discourse, psycho-affective and background knowledge-related problems are presented.

**Table 4.** *Means and Standard Deviations of Problems Related to the Listener*

Item N°	Statement	N	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	I find it difficult to understand a lecture containing too many unfamiliar words including specialist terminology (lexico-grammatical)	42	3.60	0.96	High
2.	Comprehending a lecture becomes difficult for me when the sentences are too long and complex (lexico-grammatical)	43	2.84	0.95	Medium
3.	I fail to understand a lecture when I lack prior knowledge about the topic (background knowledge)	43	3.09	1.02	Medium
4.	I have difficulty in recognizing signalling linguistic devices indicating that the lecturer is moving from one point to another (e.g., 'I will begin by...' and 'Passing on the next theme in my discussion...') (lecture discourse)	41	2.32	1.29	Low
10.	I have difficulty in recognizing sounds or where one word finishes and another begins due to fast speaking (phonological)	43	3.40	0.98	Medium
11.	I feel tired and distracted when listening to a long text like a lecture (psycho-affective)	43	3.51	1.08	High
12.	I can fail to understand a lecture due to stress and intonation patterns (phonological)	42	3.43	1.13	Medium
13.	It is difficult for me to relate what I hear to what I already know (background knowledge)	42	2.02	0.75	Low

14.	While listening, I find it difficult to guess the meaning of unknown words by linking them to known words (background knowledge)	41	3.02	1.08	Medium
15.	I find difficult to understand the natural speech of a lecture which is full of hesitation and pauses (phonological)	43	3.23	1.29	Medium
17.	I stop listening when I have problems in understanding a lecture (psycho-affective)	43	2.88	1.42	Medium
18.	Before listening to a lecture, I fear that I cannot understand what I will hear (psycho-affective)	42	2.12	1.23	Low
19.	I fail to understand abbreviations and acronyms related to my field of study (e.g., TEFL, EAP, ELT, TESOL and ESP) when the lecturer uses them (lexico-grammatical)	43	2.37	1.02	Low
20.	I have difficulty in recognizing which phase we are in when the teacher is moving through the different phases into which the activity of lecturing is divided (e.g., introducing a topic, providing a definition, giving examples, presenting a theory, concluding, ...) (discourse)	43	2.37	0.98	Low
<b>Average</b>			<b>2.87</b>	<b>1.08</b>	<b>Medium</b>

As Table 4 shows, all the participants in the study reported that problems related to the listener were moderately ( $M = 2.87$ ) encountered. This means that all the participants, when taken as a group, do sometimes face listening problems due the listener's insufficient knowledge he or she brings to an academic listening task. From the results, it can be interpreted that the most difficulties the participants have are as follows: a lecture containing too many unfamiliar words including specialist terminology does often cause listening comprehension problems (a lexico-grammatical problem, Item 1,  $M=3.60$ ) and a feeling of fatigue and distraction which happens when listening to a text of long duration (a psycho-affective problem, item 11,  $M=3.51$ ). The listening problems that are reported to be moderately (sometimes) encountered are, among others, a failure to understand a lecture due to stress and intonations patterns (a phonological problem, Item 12,  $M=3.43$ ) and a failure to chunk the flow of speech into individual sounds or words in order to assign meanings to them when the lecturer is speaking fast (a phonological problem, Item 10,  $M=3.40$ ). Finally, the least difficulties they have within this category are (1) to make a linkage between the new information they hear and what they already know (a background knowledge-related problem, Item 13,  $M=2.02$ ) and (2) to fear before listening to the lecture that they will not understand (a psycho-affective problem, Item 18,  $M=2.12$ ). Both indicate that the participants rarely face such difficulties.

### 2.1.2. Problems Related to the Speaker

The following table presents the mean scores and standard deviations of all the statements representing the listening problems pertaining to the speaker.

**Table 5.** Means and Standard Deviations of Listening Problems Related to the Speaker

N°	Statement	N	Mean	SD	Interpretation
5.	I fail to understand a lecture when the teacher does not use discourse signals indicating the structure of the lecture (e.g., ‘I will begin by...and then I will go on to...and I will end by...’)	43	2.81	1.40	Medium
6.	I have difficulty understanding a lecture delivered in a form of monologue in which students are given no opportunity to participate	42	3.10	1.23	Medium
7.	I find it difficult to understand when the lecturer speaks too fast	43	3.70	1.08	High
8.	I find it difficult to follow a lecture if handouts and blackboard notes are not provided	43	2.67	1.32	Medium
<b>Average</b>			<b>3.07</b>	<b>1.26</b>	<b>Medium</b>

As shown in table 5, problems pertaining to the speaker have mean scores which range between 3.70 - 2.67. In general, the participants sometimes ( $M=3.07$ ,  $SD= 1.26$ ) face problems within this category. The most encountered problem is the difficulty to understand a lecture when the lecturer speaks too fast which is at a high level ( $M=3.70$ ) indicating that the participants do often face such a difficulty. The least encountered problem within this category is the difficulty to understand due to the non-provision of handouts and blackboard notes which is at a medium level ( $M=2.67$ ,  $SD=1.32$ ) indicating that the participants sometimes face lecture comprehension problems when handouts and blackboard notes are not provided. Difficulties to comprehend due to the absence of discourse signals indicating the structure of a lecture and a lecture delivered in a form of monologue are also sometimes ( $M=2.81$  and  $M=3.10$  respectively) encountered by the participants.

### 2.1.3. Problems Related to the Physical setting

Table 6 shows the results of the statistical analyses of the listening problems related to the physical setting in which the activity of lecturing takes place.

**Table 6.** Means and Standard Deviations of the Problems Related to the Physical Setting

N°	Statement	N	Mean	SD	Interpretation
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9.	It is difficult for me to concentrate with noises in the lecture room	43	4.58	0.96	High
16.	I have difficulty concentrating when the weather is hot or cold	43	2.98	1.30	Medium
<b>Average</b>			<b>3.78</b>	<b>1.13</b>	<b>High</b>

Regarding problems pertaining to the physical setting in which the activity of lecturing takes place, table 6 indicates that they are highly ( $M=3.78$ ,  $SD=1.13$ ) encountered. This means that the participants do often encounter the difficulties found within this category. Whenever there are noises in the lecture room, the respondents reported that they always ( $M=4.58$ ,  $SD=0.96$ ) have difficulty to concentrate and follow the lecture. When it is hot or cold, on the other hand, they reported that they can sometimes ( $M=2.98$ ,  $SD=1.30$ ) have difficulty to concentrate and this can sometimes cause the students to switch off and stop listening.

#### 2.1.4. Overall Lecture Listening Comprehension Problems

The following table, Table 7, indicates the overall results of the listening comprehension problems encountered by the participants.

**Table 7.** Means and Standard Deviations Indicating Participants' Listening Problems

Listening problems encountered	Descriptive statistics			
	Means	Min.-Max.	SD	Interpretation
Listener	2.87	2.02 – 3.60	1.08	Medium
Speaker	3.07	2.67 – 3.70	1.26	Medium
Physical setting	3.78	2.98 – 4.58	1.13	High
Overall total	3.24	–	1.16	Medium

In order to answer research question 1, i.e., the kind of listening problems that M1 in AL and ESP encounter when listening to academic lectures, several statistical methods were used to analyse the data. The table above summarises the listening problems they encounter and the extent to which such problems are encountered. The descriptive statistics for overall listening problems ( $M=3.24$ ,  $SD=1.16$ ) indicate that the participants are at a medium level which means that they sometimes face listening problems related to the listener, the speaker and the physical setting (a lecture room) in which the activity of lecturing takes place.

## 2.2. Descriptive Analyses of Listening Strategies Used by the Participants

In this section descriptive analyses are carried out in order to reveal the listening strategies that M1 in AL and ESP use in the process of lecture comprehension. Means and standard deviations for all the statements representing frequency of use of metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies are presented.

### 2.2.1. Metacognitive Listening Strategies

The frequency of metacognitive strategy use by the subjects in this study is presented in the following table:

**Table 8.** Means and Standard Deviations of Metacognitive Listening Strategies

N°	Statement	N	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1.	Before the lecture, I prepare the topic by doing all the required readings	42	2.81	0.92	Medium
2.	While reading, I make sure that I understand any new key terms, i.e., jargon, topic-related specialised terminology, that appear in the readings	42	3.17	1.38	Medium
3.	I predict what the lecture content will be	43	3.19	1.22	Medium
4.	Before I start to listen, I have a plan in my head for how I am going to listen in order to achieve my purposes for listening	43	3.19	1.48	Medium
5.	Before the lecture, I think over what I already know about the topic	43	3.53	1.24	High
6.	In the lecture room, I sit where I can hear and see well the lecturer	43	4.63	0.66	High
8.	I concentrate my attention while listening	43	4.77	0.48	High
9.	I try to bring myself back to the lecture when I lose concentration	43	4.02	1.20	High
10.	As I listen, I compare what I understand with what I know about the topic	43	4.05	0.95	High
11.	As I listen, I quickly adjust my interpretation if I realize that it is not correct	43	3.84	1.11	High
22.	When I don't understand something, I try not to worry so much about it	41	3.10	1.20	Medium
26.	After listening, I think back to how I listened, and about what I might do differently next time.	41	3.59	1.02	High
27.	I review the lecture notes and reading materials soon after the lecture	41	3.41	1.07	Medium
<b>Average</b>			<b>3.64</b>	<b>1.07</b>	<b>High</b>

According to table 8, the descriptive data show that the means range from 2.81 to 4.77. The average frequency of metacognitive strategy use is at a high level ( $M=3.64$ ) indicating that

the participants do often use metacognitive strategies to comprehend academic lectures. Under this metacognitive strategies section, strategies which have the highest average frequencies are Item 8 (planning: directed attention) (I concentrate my attention while listening to the lecture  $M=4.77$ ) and Item 6 (planning) (In the lecture room, I sit where I can hear and see well the lecturer  $M=4.63$ ). The lowest frequently employed strategies are Item Num.1 (planning: advanced organisation) (I prepare the topic by doing all the required readings  $M=2.81$ ) and Item Num.22 (planning: directed attention) (When I don't understand something, I try not to worry so much about it  $M=3.10$ ).

### 2.2.2. Cognitive Lecture Listening Strategies

The following table, Table 9, shows the results of frequency of cognitive strategy use by the participants in this study.

**Table 9.** Means and Standard Deviations of Cognitive Listening Strategies

N°	Statement	N	Mean	SD	Interpretation
12.	While listening, I focus on understanding the overall meaning of the lecture content	43	4.28	0.91	High
14	I take notes of important points including any references	41	4.66	0.57	High
15.	I use my prior knowledge and personal experience to help me understand the topic	40	4.43	0.78	High
16.	Even when I have difficulty understanding unknown words or unfamiliar words and phrases, I continue listening	41	4.41	0.77	High
17.	I pay attention to the lecturer's body language (e.g., gestures and facial expressions) and use of voice as a clue to his or her messages	41	4.34	0.99	High
18.	I listen for stressed words to identify what is most important	41	3.59	1.14	High
20.	When I do not understand something, I guess the meaning from the context	41	4.20	0.81	High
21.	I make use of visual aids (e.g., blackboard notes, handouts or PowerPoint presentations) to follow the lecture	41	3.68	1.06	High
23.	I am aware of the usual way the lecturer organizes his or her lecture	41	3.59	1.05	High
24.	I pay special attention to the introduction and summary of the lecture	41	4.44	0.84	High
25.	I pay attention to signalling words like 'In today's lecture I'll be considering...' and 'To summarize the key aspects I've covered, let's remind ourselves of...'	41	4.00	0.97	High
<b>Average</b>			<b>4.15</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>High</b>

Under the cognitive strategies section, the table above shows that the mean average is 4.15 indicating that the participants do often frequently use strategies within this category. It can be summarised from that table that the most frequently used strategies are: note taking (Item 14,  $M=4.66$ ), paying special attention to the introduction and summary of the lecture (Item 24,  $M=4.44$ ) and using prior knowledge and personal experience in the process of lecture comprehension (Item 15,  $M=4.43$ ). The least frequently used strategies within this category are listening for stressed words to identify what is most important (Item 18,  $M=3.59$ ) and being aware of the usual way the lecturer organizes his or her lecture (Item 23,  $M=3.59$ ). It is to be noted, however, that each item within this category is at a high level of use indicating that all cognitive strategies are always or often frequently used by the participants.

### 2.2.3. Socio-affective Lecture Listening Strategies

Results of the statistical analyses of the statements representing socio-affective strategies are presented in the table below:

**Table 10.** Means and Standard Deviations of Socio-affective Listening Strategies

N°	Statement	N	Mean	SD	Interpretation
7.	Before listening to the lecture, I try to relax	43	4.35	0.97	High
13.	During the lecture, I ask the lecturer questions for clarification or repetition if I miss or don't understand a point	41	2.90	1.34	Medium
19.	While listening, I keep saying to myself that I can understand	39	4.05	1.23	High
28.	After the lecture, I ask my classmates about the things I did not understand about the lecture	41	4.12	1.00	High
29.	I compare my notes with the ones of my classmates	41	3.39	1.22	Medium
30.	I ask the teacher about the things I did not understand from the lecture	41	2.90	1.34	Medium
<b>Average</b>			<b>3.62</b>	<b>1.18</b>	<b>High</b>

As presented in table 10, the average frequency of strategy use of socio-affective listening strategies is 3.62. This means that the participants do often use strategies within this category in order to comprehend a lecture. It can be interpreted from the results that the most frequently used socio-affective strategies are as follows: a strategy used to lower anxiety (Item 7: before listening, I try to relax,  $M=4.35$ ), a peer-cooperation strategy (Item 28: I ask my classmates about the things I did not understand about the lecture,  $M=4.12$ ), and a self-encouragement strategy (Item 19: While listening, I keep saying to myself that I can understand,

$M=4.05$ ). The least frequently used strategies are a questioning for clarification strategy (Item 13: I ask the lecturer questions for clarification or repetition if I miss or don't understand a point,  $M=2.90$ ) and a strategy used to seek help from a teacher (Item 30: I ask the teacher about the things I did not understand from the lecture,  $M=2.90$ ).

### 2.2.5. Overall Lecture Listening Strategies

The overall strategy use by the participants in this study is presented in the following table:

**Table 11.** Means and Standard Deviations Indicating Participants' Listening Strategies

Strategy used	Descriptive statistics			
	Means	Min.-Max.	SD	Interpretation
Metacognitive	3.64	2.81 – 4.77	1.07	High
Cognitive	4.15	3.59 – 4.66	0.90	High
Socio-affective	3.62	2.90 – 4.35	1.18	High
Overall total	3.80	–	1.05	High

In order to answer research question 2, i.e., the listening strategies that M1 in AL and ESP use to comprehend academic lectures, Table 11 summarises the frequency of strategy use among the participants. The descriptive statistics for overall strategy use ( $M=3.80$ ,  $SD=1.05$ ) indicate that the participants are high strategy users. Although there is no much difference in the mean scores of strategy use among the three categories, cognitive strategies were used more frequently than the two other categories. They were followed by metacognitive strategies and socio-affective strategies respectively. The report shows that the participants do always use cognitive strategies, and often use both metacognitive and socio-affective strategies.

## 3. Discussion

This section is a consideration of the results of the study. It provides interpretation of the results reported in the previous section. It begins with a discussion of the listening problems encountered by the participants and then continues with a discussion of the listening strategies employed by the students who participated in this study.

### 3.1. Lecture Listening Problems

Based on mean scores and standard deviations of each statement in tables 4, 5 and 6 in the preceding section, some interpretations can be made in order to try to give any possible explanation to the five most encountered listening problems.

The first problem which was reported is relevant to the physical setting (lecture room) in which the lecturing activity takes place. The participants reported that whenever there are noises in the lecture room, they are always unable to concentrate and follow the lecture. Noises of any sort, whether coming from outside the lecture room or inside (e.g., classmates chatting), can prevent the listener from receiving the spoken message so that the message can be processed and then interpreted. With regard to this problem, it is in total agreement with Lowes *et al.* (2004) who stated that good conditions of message reception are prerequisite for comprehension to take place.

The second problem the students reported to be often the source of lecture comprehension difficulties is a perception of fast speed of lecture delivery. This finding corroborated one of the results of a study conducted by Flowerdew and Miller (1992) in which it was found that L2 learners generally perceive the speed of real life speech or authentic lectures to be too fast and then the source of listening comprehension. Since the participants in this study were L2 learners, it was likely that they could perceive the fast speaking of their lecturer to be a source of lecture comprehension problem.

The third problem reported was related to the difficulty to understand a lecture containing too many unfamiliar words including specialist terminology. Such a problem can be explained by two strategies which were reported to be among the five least used strategies (tables 8, 9 and 10). The two metacognitive strategies used for planning: item 1 (*Before the lecture, I prepare the topic by doing all the required readings*) and Item 2 (*I make sure that I understand any new key terms, i.e., jargon, topic-related specialised terminology, that appear in the readings*) which were reported to be moderately (sometimes) used by the participants can be the possible explanation to that problem. If they do not always or often read prior to attending a lecture, if they do not make sure they understand the jargon, the specialised terminology related to their field of study before attending the lecture, it is likely that they are to face difficulties when listening to academic lectures containing such specialised lexis.

The fourth problem was that they feel tired and distracted when listening to a long listening text. The participants often face such a listening problem due to the fact that they may not know how to listen to long texts. Texts of long duration, like a lecture, require the listener to be involved into two types of listening: intensive and extensive listening. As Lowes *et al.* (2004) pointed out, listening intensively to a long listening text like a lecture is counterproductive and tiring; listeners are rather to alternate between both intensive and extensive listening as there are times they need to listen intensively for details trying to

understand every word and times when they only need to get the general idea and then listen extensively. Besides, another possible explanation to that problem can be the lecturing style adopted by the lecturer. If it gives no opportunities to interact with the students or if it does not mark the lecture with pauses for a break, students are likely to lose concentration.

The last among the five most encountered listening problems was a failure to understand due to stress and intonation patterns. Such a finding is in accord with what other language researchers such as Ur (1984) and Brown (1990) have stated to be a potential source of listening comprehension problems to English L2 listeners.

### **3.2. Lecture Listening Strategies**

Students who participated in this study were reported to be high strategy users. In general, cognitive strategies were the most frequently used. They were followed by metacognitive and socio-affective strategies respectively although there was a slight difference between the frequency of use of metacognitive and socio-affective strategies. Although such frequency of strategy use is positive since it should lead to effective lecture comprehension, there are, however, few remarks that should be noted.

First, the students were reported to be high strategy users with cognitive strategies being the most highly frequently used. Despite the fact that cognitive strategies operate on incoming information and are therefore used to manipulate information in ways that enhance or facilitate listening comprehension (Chamot & O'Malley, 1990; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005), their use alone is likely to be unproductive. Listening comprehension also requires the use of metacognitive strategies in order to direct the listening process since they involve actions such as planning, monitoring and evaluating the success of a listening or any learning task (ibid). Closer examinations of the five least employed strategies show that they include 2 metacognitive strategies used for planning in order to direct attention and concentration which were: item 1 (*Before the lecture, I prepare the topic by doing all the required readings*), Item 2 (*I make sure that I understand any new key terms, i.e., jargon, topic-related specialised terminology, that appear in the readings*). Such metacognitive strategies reported to be moderately used strategies can be the possible causes to lecture comprehension problems for the participants although cognitive strategies were reported to be highly used.

Another point that should be noted is that socio-affective strategies were the least used by the participants. Although they were reported to be highly (often) used, which is a good thing, there are two socio-affective strategies among the five least used strategies. Both

strategies are the ones that learners use to seek help from a teacher: Items 13 (*I ask the lecturer questions for clarification or repetition if I miss or don't understand a point*) and Item 30 (*After the lecture, I ask the teacher about the things I did not understand from the lecture*). Such reluctance of using strategies of this category may be related to the culture of the participants or the language teaching methods or the learning styles of the students.

#### **4. Recommendations**

According to the findings of the present study, several pedagogical implications and recommendations can be drawn and formulated. Some of them are the following:

First, while lecturing, teachers should always make sure that discipline in the classroom is maintained so that the students who want to follow and understand a lecture can listen in good conditions. Students should also be responsible for their own learning. They should therefore make sure they are not the source of lecture comprehension problems for their classmates.

Second, it is important for teachers to help students understand and know how to use listening strategies. Teachers should encourage their students to use all categories of strategy, especially metacognitive strategies such as reading before attending the lecture as it helps the students become familiar with both the lecture content and the jargon related to the lecture topic. This strategy, when always employed, can solve many listening problems the participants in the study have reported to face.

Third, people are likely to lose concentration when listening to a long text. Students should therefore be taught how to alternate between intensive and extensive listening when listening to a lecture. Besides, lecturers should adopt a lecturing style which provides opportunities to interact with the students or teachers should mark the lecture with pauses so that the students can take a little time of break. Although a lecture is, by definition, a teacher-centred activity, such a more interactive lecturing style is characteristic of communicative approach to language teaching.

Finally, although this study was not conducted to examine if there might be any relationship between the listening problems encountered and the fact that the participants did not have a listening comprehension module at the level of under-graduation, such a course should be introduced in the curriculum so that the students should be taught how to listen and use strategies effectively.

## **5. Limitation of the study**

While trying to achieve the aims set at the beginning of this study, this piece of research has encountered some limitations. The first limitation concerns the sampling method adopted in this study. Convenience sampling method, although it is credited to be helpful in terms of saving time and efforts, there is however a little chance of generalisation of the findings to the wider population since such a sample represents itself rather than representing the wider population. The findings of this study cannot therefore be generalised to other universities. The second limitation is that no pilot study has been conducted. This could have given us an idea about which statements of the questionnaire were to give irrelevant information. Besides, the questionnaire piloting should have given the questionnaire more validity and reliability.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter was concerned with the methodology followed to investigate the listening problems that M1 in AL and ESP encounter while listening to academic lectures along with the strategies they use in the process of comprehension. Data analysis procedures are described and the findings are presented. After the analysis of their self-reported answers on a five-point rating scale, it has been found that the participants do sometimes face difficulties in comprehending a lecture. Another finding was that the participants were found to be high strategy users; they often use all types of strategies, i.e., metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies, in order to comprehend academic lectures. Besides, an attempt to give possible explanations to the listening problems encountered by the research participants was also made. Based on the findings, several recommendations have also been formulated. Finally, limitations faced when undertaking this research study have been presented.

## General Conclusion

The aim of this piece of research was to investigate two issues: First, the kind of listening problems that first year master students of English in Applied Linguistics and English for Specific Purposes branch at Ouargla University encounter when listening to lectures. The second purpose was to investigate the overall listening strategies that such students employ in the process of lecture comprehension. The results obtained from this study showed the following:

First, M1 in AL and ESP at Ouargla University can sometimes fail to understand academic lectures. When they fail to understand, it is due to different listening problems. The five most encountered problems they reported are: (1) difficulties to concentrate when there are noises in the lecture room, (2) difficulties to comprehend a lecture when the lecturer speaks too fast, (3) difficulties to understand when a lecture contains too many unfamiliar words including specialist terminology related to their field of study, (4) a feeling of fatigue and distraction when listening to a long listening text and (5) difficulties to understand due to stress and intonation patterns.

Second, concerning strategies they use to comprehend lectures, the findings show that the participants are high strategy users, which means that they always or often use all categories of strategy, i.e., cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective listening strategies. The students reported to use frequently more cognitive strategies than the two other categories. The results revealed that the students do always use cognitive strategies while they often use both metacognitive and socio-affective strategies. However, probably because they reported to use more frequently cognitive strategies at the expense of metacognitive and socio-affective strategies, it is for that reason that, among their most encountered listening problems, there are problems which can be solved by the use of some metacognitive strategies especially the ones used when planning for a lecture listening activity.

Some recommendations have also been formulated drawing upon the findings of this research study. Some of the formulated recommendations are, among others, as follows: first, since it is not to be taken for granted that university students know how to listen unless they have been taught how to listen, a listening comprehension module should be introduced in the curriculum at the level of under-graduation so that the students can be taught how to listen and how to use listening strategies effectively. Second, lecturers should adopt a more interactive lecturing style since, first, a lecture is a long listening text which is overloading and, second,

listeners do have a short attention span and are likely to lose concentration while listening to such long listening texts. Finally, limitations encountered while conducting this study have also been presented.

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## APPENDIX

### Student's Questionnaire

Dear student,

This survey is intended to investigate the problems that students encounter when listening to academic lectures. Besides, it investigates the strategies that such students make use of to comprehend better. Please, read the instructions carefully and indicate your opinion as honestly as possible, for your answers will be used for research purposes only. We would like also to remind you that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers and you do not even have to write your name on it.

#### Section One

The statements below describe some problems encountered when listening to academic lectures. Each statement is followed by five boxes (1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). Please put a cross (X) in **one** of the boxes following each statement depending on **how often** you face a given problem when listening to a lecture. Put a cross in box 1 (*Never*), in box 2 (*Rarely*), in box 3 (*Sometimes*), in box 4 (*Often*) or in box 5 (*Always*).

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

**Example:** If you **always** find listening comprehension in a foreign language to be tiring, you put a cross in box 5 as follows:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
	1	2	3	4	5
Listening comprehension in a foreign language is tiring					X

<b>1 = never</b> true of me <b>2 = rarely</b> true of me <b>3 = sometimes</b> true of me <b>4 = often</b> true of me <b>5 = always</b> true of me		<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
<b>N°</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1.	I find it difficult to understand a lecture containing too many unfamiliar words including specialist terminology					
2.	Comprehending a lecture becomes difficult for me when the sentences are too long and complex					
3.	I fail to understand a lecture when I lack prior knowledge about the topic					
4.	I have difficulty in recognizing signalling linguistic devices indicating that the lecturer is moving from one point to another (e.g., 'I will begin by...' and 'Passing on the next theme in my discussion...')					
5.	I fail to understand a lecture when the teacher does not use discourse signals indicating the structure of the lecture (e.g., 'I will begin by...and then I will go on to...and I will end by...')					
6.	I have difficulty understanding a lecture delivered in a form of monologue in which students are given no opportunity to participate					
7.	I find it difficult to understand when the lecturer speaks too fast					
8.	I find it difficult to follow a lecture if handouts and blackboard notes are not provided					
9.	It is difficult for me to concentrate with noises in the lecture room					
10.	I have difficulty in recognizing sounds or where one word finishes and another begins due to fast speaking					
11.	I feel tired and distracted when listening to a long text like a lecture					
12.	I can fail to understand a lecture due to stress and intonation patterns					
13.	It is difficult for me to relate what I hear to what I already know					
14.	While listening, I find it difficult to guess the meaning of unknown words by linking them to known words					
15.	I find difficult to understand the natural speech of a lecture which is full of hesitation and pauses					
16.	I have difficulty concentrating when the weather is hot or cold					
17.	I stop listening when I have problems in understanding a lecture					
18.	Before listening to a lecture, I fear that I cannot understand what I will hear					
19.	I fail to understand abbreviations and acronyms related to my field of study (e.g., TEFL, EAP, ELT, TESOL and ESP) when the lecturer uses them					

20.	I have difficulty in recognizing which phase we are in when the teacher is moving through the different phases into which the activity of lecturing is divided (e.g., introducing a topic, providing a definition, giving examples, presenting a theory, concluding, ...)					
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## Section Two

This section is about strategies used to comprehend academic lectures. Please answer the way you did in the previous section. Check the box that describes best how **frequently** you use each listed strategy.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

<b>1 = never</b> true of me <b>2 = rarely</b> true of me <b>3 = sometimes</b> true of me <b>4 = often</b> true of me <b>5 = always</b> true of me		<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
N°	<b>Before the lecture</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1.	I prepare the topic by doing all the required readings					
2.	I make sure that I understand any new key terms, i.e., jargon, topic-related specialised terminology, that appear in the readings					
3.	I predict what the lecture content will be					
4.	Before I start to listen, I have a plan in my head for how I am going to listen in order to achieve my purposes for listening					
5.	I think over what I already know about the topic					
6.	In the lecture room, I sit where I can hear and see well the lecturer					
7.	Before listening, I try to relax					
<b>During the lecture</b>						
8.	I concentrate my attention while listening					
9.	I try to bring myself back to the lecture when I lose concentration					
10.	As I listen, I compare what I understand with what I know about the topic					
11.	As I listen, I quickly adjust my interpretation if I realize that it is not correct					
12.	While listening, I focus on understanding the overall meaning of the lecture content					

<b>1 = never</b> true of me <b>2 = rarely</b> true of me <b>3 = sometimes</b> true of me <b>4 = often</b> true of me <b>5 = always</b> true of me		<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Always</i>
13.	I ask the lecturer questions for clarification or repetition if I miss or don't understand a point					
14.	I take notes of important points including any references					
15.	I use my prior knowledge and personal experience to help me understand the topic					
16.	Even when I have difficulty understanding unknown words or unfamiliar words and phrases, I continue listening					
17.	I pay attention to the lecturer's body language (e.g., gestures and facial expressions) and use of voice as a clue to his or her messages					
18.	I listen for stressed words to identify what is most important					
19.	While listening, I keep saying to myself that I can understand					
20.	When I do not understand something, I guess the meaning from the context					
21.	I make use of visual aids (e.g., blackboard notes, handouts or PowerPoint presentations) to follow the lecture					
22.	When I don't understand something, I try not to worry so much about it					
23.	I am aware of the usual way the lecturer organizes his or her lecture					
24.	I pay special attention to the introduction and summary of the lecture					
25.	I pay attention to signalling words like 'In today's lecture I'll be considering...' and 'To summarize the key aspects I've covered, let's remind ourselves of...'					
	<b>After the lecture</b>					
26.	After listening, I think back to how I listened, and about what I might do differently next time.					
27.	I review the lecture notes and reading materials soon after the lecture					
28.	I ask my classmates about the things I did not understand about the lecture					
29.	I compare my notes with the ones of my classmates					
30.	I ask the teacher about the things I did not understand from the lecture					

*Thank you for your help*

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the academic listening problems and strategies. The study employs a survey design which involves administering questionnaires of rating scales to measure the listening problems and strategies from 43 first year master students of English in Applied Linguistics and ESP branch at Ouargla University. The results of this study revealed that noises in the lecture room (whenever there are), fast speed of lecture delivery, a lecture containing too many unfamiliar words including specialist terminology related to the students' field of study, listening to a long listening text, and stress and intonation patterns can sometimes be the source of lecture comprehension problems. Besides, all participants reported a high frequency use of strategy. In general, cognitive strategies are the most frequently used. They are followed by metacognitive and socio-affective strategies respectively. The results revealed that the students do always use cognitive strategies while they often use both metacognitive and socio-affective strategies. Concentrating one's attention while listening is the most frequently used strategy while doing background reading before attending the lecture is the least frequently employed.

**Keywords:** academic listening, listening comprehension, listening problems, listening strategies

## **Résumé**

Assister à des cours magistraux en langue étrangère peut se révéler une expérience non moins pénible pour beaucoup d'étudiants. En conséquence, cette étude avait pour objet d'examiner les problèmes et les stratégies de compréhension orale y relatifs. L'étude a utilisé une conception de l'enquête qui a impliqué l'administration du questionnaire à un groupe de 43 étudiants de la première année Master en Anglais en Linguistique Appliquée et l'Anglais de Spécialité à l'Université de Ouargla. Les résultats de cette étude ont révélé que les bruits dans la salle de conférences tel que le bavardage (chaque fois qu'il y en a), la vitesse rapide de livraison des cours magistraux, les cours magistraux contenant trop de mots inconnus y compris la terminologie spécialisée liée au domaine d'étude des étudiants, la longue durée des cours magistraux et les traits prosodiques de la langue anglaise, entre autres, l'accent tonique et l'intonation peuvent être parfois la source de difficultés de compréhension orale. En outre, les résultats ont montré que les participants dans cette étude utilisent toujours les stratégies cognitives et qu'ils emploient souvent les stratégies métacognitives et socio-affectives.

**Mots-clés:** cours magistral, compréhension orale, difficultés et stratégies de compréhension orale